

## Wee Builders (3 - 4 years): Fun Ways to Build Language & Literacy Skills in Young Learners



What makes a successful reader? The journey starts in early childhood classrooms and homes, where young children are laying a foundation for their lifelong language and literacy skills. Children who hear more words and are exposed to more language games and activities will be better prepared for reading success.

**Tell a book by its cover.** Try this at your next story time session: Before you even open the book, do a mini show-and-tell session with the cover. Point out the title, author, and illustrator, and have the child read and repeat the words after you.

**Put on a play.** Engage children in storytelling by helping them reimagining a favorite book as a play or puppet show. It does not need to be a big production, you can keep the props, costumes, and scenery simple. Involve children in pre-show activities that boost literacy skills: making tickets, putting together programs, etc.

**Decode directions together.** Are you reading directions to a new toy or game? Involve your child in decoding and following the directions. See if they can point out letters or words they know on the instruction sheet. Even if they cannot read yet, they might be able to recognize the pictures and help figure out the directions.

**Make books.** Have your child make a picture book that shares basic information and fun facts about themselves. They can include names, family members, favorite color, favorite book, etc. If they are practicing letter-writing skills, they can caption the pages.

**Pay attention to letters in the environment.** Remind your young learners that there are letters and words all around us, and point them out whenever you see them.

**Make word and sentence puzzles.** Write some words, phrases, or sentences from a well-known book or song on index cards. Then cut each card like a puzzle, splitting the words between syllables or between onset and rime (for example: Good | night) Have children match up the two parts of the text.

**Give books as special gifts.** You can communicate the value of books by giving them as gifts to the children in your life and encouraging them to give their own favorites to their friends.

**Plan an imaginary trip.** Tap into your child's sense of adventure by planning an imaginary trip together. Decide with your child where you'd like to go, and then plan the process in ways that expand their language skills (i.e., collect travel or tourism brochures, look up information online and read it together)

**Go on a scavenger hunt.** Give your child a list of things to find and check off (i.e. a specific type of animal, a red car, etc.) Review the list before your trip to make sure each child can read/understand all the items. (If your child cannot read yet, you can use picture or color clues to help them out.) You can also have a "letter scavenger hunt" right in your backyard or neighbourhood.

**Set aside special times for reading and conversation.** Throughout the day, actively work in small celebrations of language and literacy: read stories, play word games, start conversations during meals, etc. because parents play a key role in reinforcing the skills taught at school.