

Children begin learning literacy skills right from birth. Early literacy is what children know about reading and writing before they can actually read and write. Researchers have identified six skill areas that librarians, parents and caregivers can help develop.

## **Six Pre-reading Skills Children Can Start Learning from Birth**

### **Print Motivation - an interest in and enjoyment of books**

Children who enjoy books and being read to will want to learn how to read.

### **Vocabulary - knowing the names of things**

Research shows that children who have larger vocabularies are better readers. Knowing many words helps children recognize written words and understand what they read. Even infants benefit; by the time children are two years old, they understand 300-500 words. The more words children know, the better able they are to recognize words and understand what they read.

### **Print Awareness- noticing print, knowing how to handle a book and knowing how to follow the words on a page**

Being familiar with printed language helps children feel comfortable with books and understand that print is useful.

### **Narrative Skills - being able to describe things and events and tell stories**

Being able to tell or retell a story helps children understand what they read. Ask open-ended questions about the books you read like, “what do you think will happen next?”

### **Letter Knowledge - Knowing letters are different from each other, knowing their names and sounds and recognizing letters everywhere**

Help children see and feel different shapes and the shapes of letters; help them see that the same letter can look different. Knowing the names and sounds of letters helps children figure out how to say written words.

### **Phonological Awareness - Being able to hear and play with the smaller sounds in words.**

Say rhymes, sing songs and play word games with the children. Being aware of the smaller sounds that make up words helps children sound out written words as they begin to read.