



Literacy begins with play. Through playful activities, children first experiment with language. This is also when they develop attitudes about literacy. Play is a safe environment for your child to explore literacy, because play allows children to feel and act as if they are in control of their activity. This can create positive expectations about learning to read and write and motivate a child to learn.

Little Reader Blocks were developed to engage a child's imagination and creativity by providing them with an opportunity to *communicate* with written words. Instead of dictating what the child will read we are giving them the tools to express what *they* want to say through written language. **Little Reader Blocks** can be used in almost limitless ways to expose children to the written word through play.

Kids love blocks and chances are the first thing they'll do is stack them up high as they can, then knock them down, giggling all the way. This is the perfect setting to introduce your child to written language. As they play with the blocks, their natural curiosity will lead them to wonder what the symbols on the sides are. You can encourage that curiosity with the following activities:

Find and Stack the Letters

Pick out a letter to have your child find, such as the letter 'a'. Have them stack up all the 'a's' they can find as high as they can until the blocks tumble. Or, instead of stacking the found letters, have the child place them side-by-side, or build some other structure. Have them build something that begins with the letter the child is looking for. For example ask, "Can you build a bridge with all the 'b's?'" Or let the child direct the building.

Related activity: Have the child count the number of letters they have found.

I Spy- beginner

"I Spy with my little eye, all words beginning with the sound 's'" (Say 'sssss' not 'es')
Child finds all words beginning with the letter 's' ('sat', 'sleeps', 'silly', 'sticky', 'sister', 'shoe' and "school"). Repeat with other sounds.

I Spy- advanced

"I spy with my little eye, a word that *ends* in the sound 't'" (parents does not say 'tee' but approximates the actual sound that is produced, so it sounds like a 'tuh'). Child finds a word that *ends* in the letter 't' such as 'it', 'cat', or 'hat'. Repeat with other sounds.

What if....beginner

Ask child to pick a block and then ask, "What if the first letter was taken away? What word would we have?" Example 'Cat..at', 'ran...an', 'sister...ister'. Some words will be real words, others will be nonsense words, but it is important to explore with both types.

What if.....advanced

Ask child to pick a block and then ask, "What if the first letter was switched to a different sound, such as the sound 't' (recommended substitution sounds include 'p', 'd', 'l', 'g', 'n' and 'm'). *Example:* original word is 'cat'; new word is 'tat'.

Find-a-Word

Have your child pick out specific words. "Can you find 'cat'?" Make the task easier by limiting the number of blocks to choose from or more challenging by including more. Or, have the child find certain words by providing descriptive cues, for example, "Find me something you might wear on your foot." Expand number of blocks provided as child's sight-reading skills improve.

Related activity: Set out one or all of the adjective blocks, pick out a word like 'house', and have the child find adjectives that describes theirs, such as 'big', 'white', 'new', etc.

Sing-a-long

Create your own sentence and ask child to tap/beat drum/clap to the syllables or beats in each word as you would for the song “Happy Birthday to You.”

Opposites

Choose a word from the following list; ‘girl’, ‘boy’, ‘brother’, ‘sister’, ‘old’, ‘new’, ‘white’, ‘black’, ‘big’, ‘little’. Have the child create a sentence using one of these words. Lastly, ask the child what is the opposite of the word they were given.

Formulating Sentences

Formulating sentences that are meaningful to your child will help them learn *and* enjoy the process. **Little Reader Blocks** allow children to easily string together words to form sentences that have meaning to *them*. This approach is far more engaging than going through the laborious task of writing, or reading what someone else has written and is an important step in bridging the gap between literacy and comprehension.

The blocks are numbered from #1 through #18 on the seam side. The numbers are circled. Blocks are color-coded to denote the type of word.

The red blocks are pronouns (#1, #2, #13 & #14)

The blue blocks are verbs (#4, #5, #6, #17 & #18)

The green blocks are nouns (#10, #11, & #12)

The yellow blocks with green letters are adjectives (#7, #8 & #9)

The white blocks with red letters are prepositions (#3 & #16)

example: ‘I’, ‘you’, ‘we’ and ‘they’

example: ‘was’, ‘ran’, ‘sleeps’

example: ‘girl’, ‘puppy’, ‘zoo’

example: ‘big’, ‘pretty’, ‘green’

example: ‘in’, ‘under’, ‘about’

Where do I start?

To help children form sentences, start them off with just a few blocks at a time. Because young children like to talk about themselves, it’s easiest to engage them with the ‘I’ pronoun block, #13, which works with three verb blocks, #17, #4, & #5. The other pronoun blocks (#1, #2 & #14) work with all the verb blocks *except* for verb block #17. Provide a pronoun (such as ‘I’), then a verb (such as ‘like’) then a noun (such as ‘school’). Let the child turn each block over to discover how other words change the meaning of the sentence. If necessary, verbally fill in any missing words, or add a preposition block (white blocks with red letters) to the pile and let the child find the word missing word themselves. As the child learns more words, add more blocks. Following are activities to aid in their discovery:

Toss-a-Block

Take three blocks, a pronoun, a verb, and a noun. After teaching the child at least some of the words on the blocks, toss them out and see what sentence it makes. Have the child read it. Help him/her with words they haven’t yet learned. Add verbally any missing prepositions, or add a preposition block (the white block with red letters) and let the child pick which preposition goes where. As the child recognizes more and more words, increase the number of blocks in the “toss”.

Related activity: Switch the word order and explore how these change the meaning, for example “the mouse is in the shoe” vs. “the shoe is in the mouse!”

Pick-a-Block

Toss all the blocks out on the floor and have the child pick out words to make their own sentence. You can help them by providing the first few words, such as, ‘my’ ‘brother’ ‘likes’

Draw-a-Sentence

After the child has made a sentence, have them draw a picture of it. Whimsical sentences make great pictures!