

Concepts of Print – Developmental Continuum

“Concepts of Print” includes a wide range of knowledge and understanding that children build up over time with appropriate input.

It is commonly divided into four elements, each of which develop independently:

- Book handling
- Picture and story comprehension
- Looking and recognising
- Writing and story reading behaviours.

At all times, ages and stages:

- Keep enjoying reading, or look as though you do!
- Look out for signs of what the child enjoys, rather than worry about what they “should” be reading with you
- Don’t force reading together – it is OK to leave it if the child is losing interest
- Read with expression – try out different voices etc. You may feel silly, but the child won’t think so
- Adapt to the child’s varying activity levels – short episodes are fine, so is moving around if they need to
- Use books as part of daily routines - bed time, bath time, nap – whenever fits!
- Model the use of reading and writing in day to day tasks – let children see you write lists, consult texts (including online, e.g. emails), etc.

Book Handling



What you might see	Some ideas to help
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifting and dropping books • Opening and closing books • Exploring the feel of paper, crushing, tearing, etc. • Mouthing or chewing books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is OK for babies and young children to mouth and “tear” books – this is exploring • Use rubber/plastic books, e.g., at bath time • Offer books that “do” things – textures, sounds, tabs, etc • Model opening and exploring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting to look through pages • Actively exploring books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let children turn pages and explore, help them if they want – don’t worry about doing it “right” • Encourage the child to explore for themselves
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding the front and back of a book • Getting a book right way up • Understanding direction to turn pages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model and label “right way up”, talk about how you know, make mistakes for fun • Follow the child’s exploration, talk about what they are learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding that print goes from left to right • Understanding that print goes from top to bottom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let the child help read the book, turning pages, pointing to pictures, etc.

Picture and Story Comprehension

What you might see	Some ideas to help
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paying attention to pictures • Having some favourite pictures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about pictures, what they show, and what people are doing in them • Carefully watch what the child is interested in. Pause and wait for your child to comment, then talk about it with them using short sentences • It is OK to say the same things about the pictures over and over – this is how children learn
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making appropriate noises for pictures • Pointing to a picture if asked • Pointing to pictures to make a point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give positive feedback on responses and reactions • Comment, and expand on, on the child's comments • Prompt picture finding • Talk about the story while you read • Lots of repeating, over and over with the same books and pictures • Be careful not to ask too many questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excited reactions related to story • Verbally labelling pictures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use simple questions to discuss what is being read – who, where, what happened? • Use stories with clear, repeated patterns that the child can follow • Be patient with child's comments and questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic sequencing of events, beginning, middle, end • Filling in the next word 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell simple, repeating and predictable stories, including stories with actions (or songs and rhymes) • Use sequencing language in day to day life (first, next, now, etc.) • Try out pauses in a familiar story to see if the child can predict what's next; "The dog went"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipating familiar story events • Asking "why" questions • Acting out characters • Using stories help to make sense of strong feelings, e.g., fears • Pretend play based on stories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relate stories to real life experiences • Be patient if the child asks lots of questions • Build stories together out of day to day experiences • Talk about "events of the day" • Look at photos from the day, make up a story or diary

Looking and Recognising

What you might see	Some ideas to help
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Picking out a favourite book Knowing that books have stories in them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Even if you are bored with it, the child is not! Start to offer simple choices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding the difference between words and pictures Recognising logos, labels, etc. Understanding that print is made of separated words Noticing letters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure the child sees you reading for real purposes Read “the world around you” with the child – point out signs, labels, etc. When reading together, point out differences between pictures and text
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeing that words are made up of letters Seeing that sentences are made up of words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For preschool children don't worry about forcing this Point out words as you see them on signs, labels, etc Support child's attempts to scribble words Comment as you write things for them on request Respond to requests “what does that say?” Label the letters/words as you write
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detecting the starts of sentences Identifying some individual letters Becoming aware of punctuation marks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above

Writing and Story Reading Behaviours

What you might see	Some ideas to help
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bringing a book (or pointing) to request a story • Interacting with elements of a book 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even if it is inconvenient, look pleased and make time • Use books to respond to child's interests – finding pictures of XYZ, model finding information etc. • Let the child choose books, can be from a restricted list • Have some routine times for looking at books together (but don't worry if sometimes the child has other plans)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trying to repeat words from stories • Babbling along while adult reads • Enjoying "book speech", such as rhymes • Scribbling pictures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the child babbles along, or pretends to read, respond with pleasure and reinforce this • Let them have a "turn" • Use books with short, repeated phrases, rhymes or songs that the child can "join in"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picking up a book and pretending to read • Writing "notes" for people, lists, etc. • Using reading/writing in pretend play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage all these when they happen • Write notes back • Incorporate reading/writing into pretend games – e.g., playing shop or farm, etc. • Co-operate in building a story • Tell stories together as well as reading them • Let the child "add" to your notes, cards, lists, etc.

