

Concepts of Print: Ideas for Parents

By: Michigan's Mission: Literacy

Discover 16 ways to help your child learn about concepts of print — that print carries meaning, directionality in a book, front and back covers, letter and word awareness, upper case and lower case letters, punctuation (question mark, period, exclamation point), and more.

Read books to your child on a daily basis making it a pleasurable experience.

Sit beside your child or hold him/her on your lap. Hold the book yourself or ask your child to hold the book so he/she can learn how to properly handle a book. Occasionally, you may want to preview the book by holding it closed and discussing the front cover. Refer to it as “the front cover.” Ask your child to discuss the picture and make predictions about the story. Turn the book to the back cover and discuss it. Refer to it as the “back cover.” Turn back to the front cover and read the title. Refer to it as “the title” and move your finger under each word as you read the title.

When you see your child looking through a book occasionally you may want to ask him/her to show you the cover, point to the title, talk about the book as he/she pages through it, and finally to show you the back cover.

Point to words when reading with your child to show that print carries a message.

Point to words when reading with your child to show left to right movement.

Periodically ask your child to show you where to begin reading on a page.

Have your child follow along with his/her finger as you read a story.

Point to words on a sign at a store as you read the sign.

On occasion, have your child point to first/last word or letters in a story you are reading.

When your child has learned to recognize words such as “dog,” “the,” “friend,” the name of your city, etc., make a game out of looking for that word in a newspaper or magazine.

Read alphabet books to your child.

Make alphabet cookies and refer to them by name as they get eaten.

When eating alphabet shaped cereal or soup, point out the letters you eat, particularly the letters in the child’s name.

Make or purchase alphabet letters and encourage children to play with them.

Occasionally have your child find examples of specific punctuation marks in a newspaper, magazine, or story.

Model using punctuation marks in your writing. For instance, when you are writing a note to leave for someone, say something like, “I should put a question mark at the end of that word.” Read your note to your child and point to the words and punctuation.