

# Litera-cise

## Introduction

This handout will introduce you to some key concepts to help you to encourage and develop your child's overall literacy. Overall literacy includes speaking, listening, reading, writing and physical movement.

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### Remember

It is natural for children to learn different things at varying paces. Also children may be at one stage of development for one skill and another stage for another skill.

Pay attention to what your child can do and what your child seems ready to learn. This gives the best indication of the level at which your child is at!



## Key Concepts

**Physical Literacy** includes movement skills that allow your child to move competently and confidently in a wide range of physical activities including sports.

### 1. Fundamental movement skills

- Running, balancing, hopping, skipping, jumping, throwing, catching, kicking, striking

### 2. Physical literacy is important

- Without physical literacy, children may withdraw from physical activity and sports as they become older, limiting their range of choices during their leisure time

### 3. It's more than just the individual

- Physical literacy is developed further through the relationship between you and your child, their peers, their community and the world around them

### 4. It's more than just being physical

- Physical literacy also includes the ability to read what is going on in the environment around them and respond appropriately

## Key Concepts

**Emergent Literacy** includes important skills children need for learning how to speak, listen, read and write, often between 2 and 5 years old. There are 6 key areas:

### 1. Print Concepts

- Understanding how and why we use books

### 2. Print Motivation

- Children's interest in books and literacy

### 3. Phonological Awareness

- Understanding that larger components of language are made up of smaller parts (e.g. sentences, words, syllables, sounds)

### 4. Letter-Sound Knowledge

- Understanding that written letters represent sounds

### 5. Storytelling/Narrative Development

- Accurately telling and retelling stories with their correct parts (e.g. beginning, middle, end)

### 6. Oral language

- Having a large oral vocabulary makes it easier to understand what one has read and to structure reading, writing, speaking and listening

## Key Concepts

**Early Literacy** is the stage that often begins around kindergarten when children begin to 'crack the code' and make sense of print.

There are 5 key areas:

### 1. Phonics

- Blending and segmenting words in print
- (ex. /pl/ in play or /nd/ in bend)

### 2. Sight Words

- Learning common sight words
- Writing and recognizing high frequency words as a whole unit, without sounding them out (ex. for, and, it).

### 3. Writing

- Beginning to use their growing knowledge of letters and sounds and phonological awareness to write more of the letters in each word, especially sight words

### 4. Print Concepts

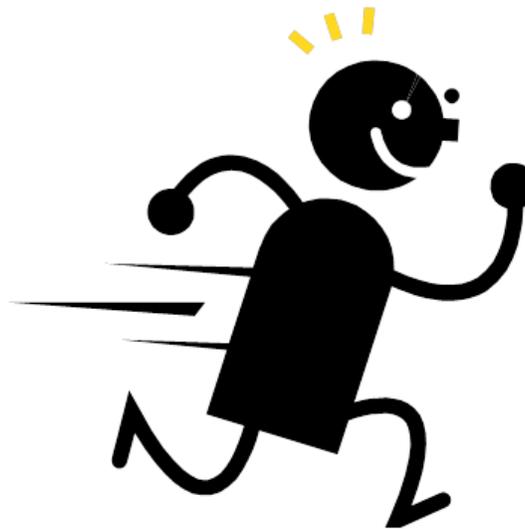
- Learning what is a sentence, what is a word, what is a letter, spaces between words, word-by-word pointing

### 5. Phonological Awareness

- Blending, combining and manipulating sounds when saying words aloud (ex. (ta + ble makes table) and (tr + ip makes trip)

## How to Encourage Physical Activity and Literacy in your Child

The next sections provide general tips for how to encourage physical activity and literacy in your child, as well as how to combine physical activity with literacy. These tips are taken directly from LEAP (Language, Education, Activity, Play), BC's Healthy Activities for Preschoolers (HOP) guide.



## Physical Activity

**Physical Activity** is defined as any body movement that works your muscles and uses more energy than you use when you are resting (ex. riding a tricycle or digging in the garden). It does not include activities such as puzzles or drawing.

### Practical ways to encourage physical activity:

1. Play with your child
2. Play actively every day
3. Play vigorously
4. Develop movement skills
5. Build physical activity into your day
6. Use physical activity to support learning and social development
7. Promote creativity and self-expression

- 1. Play with your child:** Joining in connects you with your child. While you have fun, you are also helping your child develop in many different ways. As a bonus, playing with your child is a great way for you to be active.
- 2. Play actively every day:** Children need at least two hours of active movement every day. They shouldn't be inactive for more than an hour at a time, except when sleeping.
- 3. Play vigorously:** Children need opportunities every day to use up energy. Running, jumping, and skipping are great because they use the large muscles in the legs and trunk and burn energy. Healthy body weight, bone strength, cardiovascular fitness, and muscle strength come from large muscle activity.

- 4. Develop movement skills:** Children need many opportunities to practice and gain confidence in basic movement skills. These skills are the building blocks of more complex movement patterns and include:

  - Skills to manipulate objects such as throwing a bean bag, catching a scarf, and kicking a ball. Manipulative skills are also called “eye-hand” and “eye-foot” coordination activities
  - Locomotion skills are the basic ways to move, such as hopping, jumping and skipping
  - Body control skills such as balancing and making different body shapes
  - Body awareness skills such as moving in a space and timing of movement
  
- 5. Build physical activity into your day:** A healthy lifestyle includes choosing active options when you can. For example, walking to drop off children at school or taking the stairs instead of an escalator. Young children learn from what they see us do.
  
- 6. Use physical activity to support learning and social development:** Play time is when your child can actively explore the environment, practice cooperating, sharing, and dealing with conflict. Play strengthens thinking skills, language and literacy development.
  
- 7. Promote creativity and self-expression:** Children need opportunities to express themselves through movement and imaginary play. Play that allows children to create new ideas and solutions helps to develop their thinking and social skills.

## Literacy

**Literacy** is defined as interpreting and using the symbol systems (ex. letters, numbers, images, music) valued by society through speaking, listening, reading and writing.

### Practical ways to encourage literacy:

1. Support play and activity with talking and other forms of communication
2. Vary the vocabulary
3. Play with as well as emphasize the letters and sounds of the language. Read aloud with your child
4. Promote pretend play
5. Count, sort, classify, and predict
6. Draw, paint, and write with your child
7. Be a role model
8. Honour your home language

### 1. Support play and activity with talking and other forms of communication:

Play and movement activities offer powerful opportunities for children to build and strengthen their language and literacy skills.

- Talk or sign about what you're doing: show, do, describe as you go and encourage your child to do the same
- Read with your child (ex. signs, labels, books, poems)

2. **Vary the vocabulary:** Children are like “language sponges” eager to absorb new words and test their meanings. Descriptions of movement provide endless opportunities for vocabulary enrichment:
  - Movement words: climb, scramble, balance, race, hop, etc.
  - Directional words: left, right, sideways, backwards, down, etc.
  - Describing words: lightly, rambunctiously, softly, etc.
  - Analogies/similes: “limp like a puppy with a sore paw”
  
3. **Play with, and emphasize, the letters and sounds of the language:** Playful exposure to similar sounding or rhyming words (ex. bat, mat, cat), songs, and chants provides children with a natural and pleasurable way to distinguish between and manipulate sounds.
  
4. **Promote pretend play:** Pretending allows young children to take on new roles, new characters, and “live” through both new and familiar scenarios (ex. “Okay, pretend I’m the baby unicorn and you’re my sister.”). Pretend play stretches and frees the child’s use of language, and powerfully supports learning.
  
5. **Count, sort, classify, and predict:** Counting, tallying, sorting, sequencing, comparing, measuring, categorizing, and predicting builds mathematical understanding and thinking skills.
  
6. **Draw, paint and write with your child:** Creating lists, maps, drawings, signs, and recipes as part of everyday activity provides opportunities to explore how written language works, and demonstrates how experiences can be recorded and represented.
  
7. **Be a role model:** Young children learn from what they see adults doing. They need to see adults enjoying and taking pleasure in language and activity.
  
8. **Honour your home language:** Talk and read with your child in the language most comfortable for both of you. This provides a strong bridge to competence and literacy in additional languages.

**Litera-cise =**

**Literacy + Physical Activity**

For children who love moving and have a hard time sitting still to listen to a story, you can tap into their love of movement by weaving early literacy skills into movement games.

Likewise, children who are less active can be encouraged to move more through active games that use their emergent/early literacy skills.

1. **Kinaesthetic learning:** Learning by experiencing things with your body. Most children learn best this way.
2. **Spatial Orientation is important for symbol recognition:** When children learn the difference between left and right, top and bottom by using their bodies, they can use this skill to tell the difference between similar letters and become better able to write letters correctly.
3. **Rhythm helps emergent/early literacy skills:** Children who clap or move to the rhythm of words in poems, sentences, or songs are able to hear and feel the rhythm in words. This is an important skill for learning to read and write.
4. **Sequencing helps emergent literacy skills:** Children who act out stories, or tell stories about things they have physically done, are better able to sequence the events. This is important for learning storytelling skills.

## More Resources

- LEAP (Language, Education, Activity, Play), BC's Healthy Activities for Preschoolers (HOP) guide  
<http://decoda.ca/children-families/leap-bc/hop/>
- Ideal Curriculum  
<https://www.idealacademy.org/ideal-curriculum>
- Early Literacy Alliance of Waterloo Region  
<http://www.elawr.org/resources.html>
- International Songs and Rhymes in Different Languages  
<http://bpl.bc.ca/kids/embracing-diversity/more-songs-and-rhymes>
- Lettercise Song  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0q7IPo7j1jc>