

# Things to Do While You're Waiting: Language and Literacy



*It's happening again! You're running errands with your children and suddenly you're stuck—in traffic, at the clinic, in the checkout line. Many parents find that playful learning activities can help reduce children's impatience when they have to wait. You can help your child get ready to read and write while you're on the move!*

## **Talk and listen.**

- While you wait, try asking your child, “What are you thinking?” He will be glad to know you care about what he thinks and does.
- Create a story together. One of you starts it with a sentence or a few lines. Then everyone else takes turns adding a sentence or a few lines until “The End.” Or try retelling a favorite story or reciting a favorite poem together. Keep in mind that correcting a child's speech too often may make her want to stop talking to you! It's important to pay attention to the ideas she tries to express. If people around the child use language correctly, she will learn to do so.

## **Sing and rhyme.**

- Look for song lyrics and poems with lots of repetition. These can help your child learn sounds and language patterns.
- Try writing the alphabet on a piece of paper so your child can follow along as you sing the Alphabet Song together.

## **Look for messages around you.**

- Help your child identify the letters, words, numerals, or symbols you see. Children quickly learn to recognize road signs and logos of companies and sports teams.
- When your child knows some letters, numerals, and symbols, try playing “I Spy.” Take turns finding print and symbols around you: “I spy the letter M as in m-m-macaroni. Can you find it, too?” “I spy the Chicago Bulls logo. Can you find it, too?”

## **Write it down.**

- “Brainstorm” lists with your child: books you want to read, foods you need to buy, things you see around you, or ways to solve a problem.
- Let your child make up a story while you write down her words. She can draw pictures to go with it. Or, she can dictate a letter or text message to a relative or friend.

## **Bring a book.**

- Tuck two or three small children's books into your purse, backpack, or diaper bag—or keep some favorites on your mobile device. (Note: Children prone to motion sickness should not look at books in a moving vehicle!)
- Whenever you can, stop at the library when you run errands with your child.

## **For related Web resources, see “Things to Do While You're Waiting: Language and Literacy” at <https://illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/>**

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Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



13 Children's Research Center  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
51 Gerty Dr. • Champaign, IL 61820-7469  
Telephone: 217-333-1386  
Toll-free: 877-275-3227  
E-mail: [iel@illinois.edu](mailto:iel@illinois.edu)  
<https://illinoisearlylearning.org>



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