

Out and About with Preschoolers: Literacy Activities



It's a beautiful day to be outdoors with the children. But is there any way to help them meet language arts benchmarks while outdoors? Yes, there is! Go ahead—take literacy outside!

Take a casual walk.

- Encourage the children to look around for letters, words, signs, and symbols. Help them to make a list of what they see to share later.
- Help the children categorize the different signs that they see (advertisements, announcements, warning signs, directional signs).
- Discuss what the children notice in ways that expand their vocabularies: “Kayla noticed a bird’s nest on the blue awning above the store entrance!”
- Pause to talk about interesting things. Is the bakery especially fragrant? Invite everyone to take a sniff and describe the aroma. Are leaves falling? Collect specimens for discussion and study.
- After the walk, ask the children to dictate a report about it together. Help them think about sequence in storytelling: “What did we do first, next, after that, last?”

Stay on the grounds.

- Write simple notes for children in the sandbox: “Hi!” “Sing B-I-N-G-O.” Help them identify letters and sound out the message. Children can write their own names in dirt or sand.
- Tell stories outdoors. Be sure everyone has a comfortable place to sit and can hear you easily. (A librarian can help you find stories about the outdoors to learn and share with children.)
- Invite children to pair up and sit back to back so they can each see a different part of the grounds. Let them spend 2-5 minutes carefully drawing what they see, in silence. Then give them a few minutes to share their drawings and tell their partners about two or three things that they saw.
- Collaborate on a poem about being outdoors. Suggest that the children lie on their backs and focus for 30 seconds on what is above them. Ask them to report details of what they noticed. “How would you describe the sounds you heard? What did you see? What could you feel?” Help the group arrange their descriptive words into a poem to display for families.

 For related Web resources, see “Out and About with Preschoolers: Literacy Activities” at <http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tips.htm>.



29 Children's Research Center
51 Gerty Dr. • Champaign, IL 61820-7469
Telephone: 217-333-1386 • Fax: 217-244-7732
Toll-free: 877-275-3227 (Voice/TTY)
Email: iel@uiuc.edu
Internet: <http://illinoisearlylearning.org>

Illinois State Board of Education