

Family Learning Resource Guide



Clare Family Learning Project

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Family Learning Resource Guide

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Foreword

It is a great pleasure to be associated with the production of the Family Learning Resource Pack. The Pack is the result of many years of field work and research by a devoted team of practitioners. From very humble and inauspicious beginnings in west Clare in 1994, through the Integra funded 'Clare Family Learning Project' (1996 - 1997), family learning in Ireland has, with this new publication, acquired a firmer foothold within the Adult Education field.

Co. Clare Vocational Education Committee and the Clare Reading & Writing Scheme developed an interest in family learning as a direct response to numerous requests from adult literacy learners for advice on supporting their own children's educational development. Five years on, it has become evident that the original insight accurately identified the inter-generational character of literacy and the potential of the parent's role.

Family learning initiatives, which work with both children and adults, seek to address the inter-generational effects of educational disadvantage. The approach is through the parent or carer to the child. The Family Learning Resource Pack is based on adult education principles and practices, combined with the experience of pre-school and primary school teachers, and the direct involvement of parents.

The publication of the Family Learning Resource Pack with its Resource Guide, parent workbooks, original Photopak, storybook, and poster will, I feel sure, enhance the work of your organisation in addressing the inter-generational issues now so apparent in basic education work.

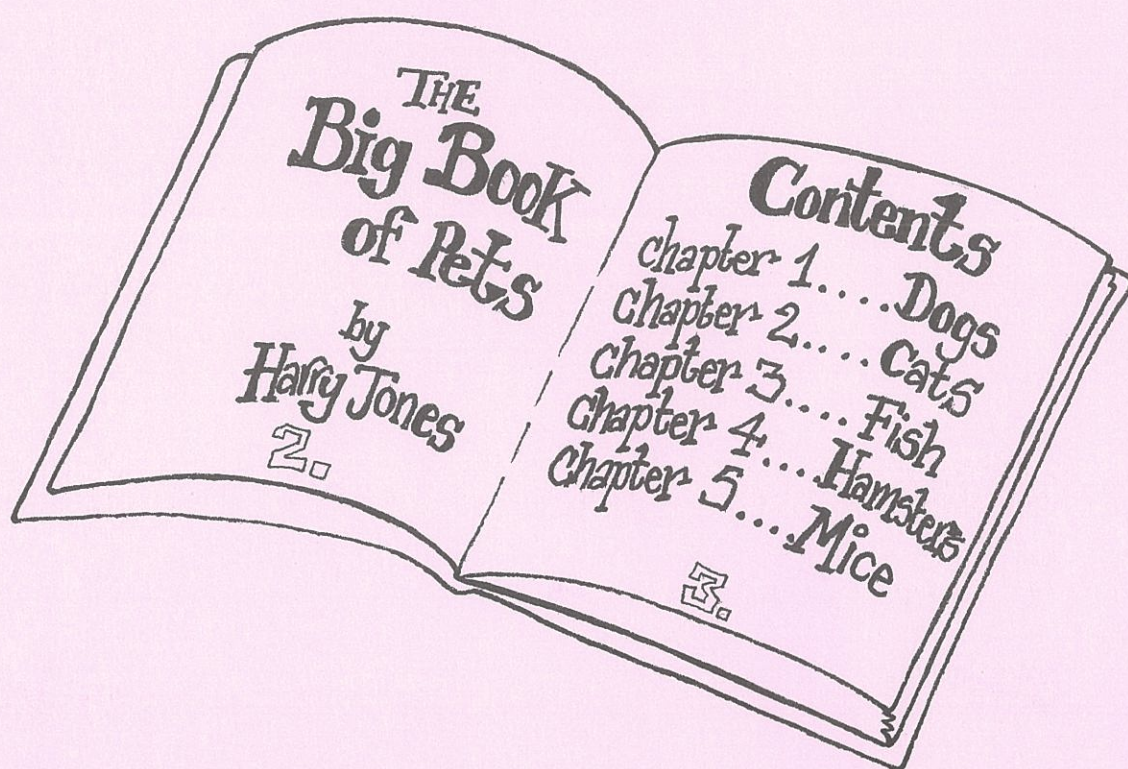


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Introduction





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From *family literacy* to *family learning*

What is family literacy?

In her book, '**Family Literacy: Young Children Learning to Read and Write**', Denny Taylor (1983) introduced the phrase *family literacy* as a way of describing the reading and writing practices she observed during a three year ethnographic study of six American families. In particular, Taylor's research highlighted ways in which young children engage in reading and writing as they explore and imitate everyday social activities. Taylor also provided evidence showing that school experiences of literacy are influenced by individual family practices.

Since then, *family literacy* has been used as an umbrella term to describe a wide variety of literacy intervention programmes that include an inter-generational focus in their design and delivery. While there is an adult-child dimension to these types of programmes, the adult participant might be a grandparent, an older child, or a teacher's helper as well as a parent. The focus of these programmes, for example *Read Aloud Parent Clubs* or *STaR (Story Telling and Retelling)* has been to increase opportunities for children to read books and talk about stories. (Dickinson, 1994)

In particular, the term *family literacy* has been used to describe a specific type of programme initiative, which attempts to break the inter-generational cycle of school failure and under-education by focusing on parents and children simultaneously, providing both adult basic skills training and early childhood education. These family literacy programmes emphasise that parents are their children's first and most important teachers, and that they should be encouraged and supported in this role. Central to the aims of a family literacy programme is the development of real partnerships between parents, children and teachers which will promote the learning potential of both the home and school environments.

A family literacy programme based on this model typically aims to:

- improve the skills and attitudes of educationally disadvantaged parents;
- enhance the quality of parent-child relationships;
- improve the developmental skills of young children;
- foster better relations between home and school;
- unite parents and children in a positive educational experience.

Laying the groundwork for family literacy

The theoretical groundwork for family literacy is based on:

- the lessons of earlier intervention strategies;
- a substantial body of research leading to the advancement of new theories and definitions of literacy;
- the work of cognitive psychologists in formulating socially oriented theories of language and learning.

Earlier intervention programmes recognised the role of family background and parental involvement in literacy and schooling, but were based largely on the assumption that 'targeted educational programmes could compensate for socio-economic disadvantage'. A well-known example of this programme model developed in the sixties is the United States' *Project Headstart*, where children from 'disadvantaged' families were given the opportunity to attend a pre-school enrichment programme emphasising reading readiness skills and language development. This programme did not involve parents directly in the learning process, but rather sought to make up for the presumed deficiencies in the home environment. (Wolfendale, 1996)

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In the seventies and early eighties, programmes in the US, England, Australia and New Zealand were aimed more directly at involving parents in the development of their children's reading skills. These programmes included prescriptive methods for hearing children read, such as 'paired reading' (Glynn, 1996) and 'pause prompt praise' (Topping 1996). Other programmes aimed simply to ensure that children had more exposure to books before entering school. However, none of these initiatives took into account parents' own literacy levels, nor did they acknowledge the home environment itself as a source of literacy and numeracy experiences. (Wolfendale and Topping, 1996)

The experience and 'hindsight wisdom' of these programmes led educators and researchers to consider the broader dimensions of intervention measures such as:

- the effects of a home-school reading programme on other family members;
- how a programme might meet needs in addition to developing reading skills;
- the significance of recognising the home environment as a place of learning;
- the importance of building on children's previous experiences within the social context of the family. (Wolfendale, 1996)

Investigating the roots of literacy:

This shift in focus from what happens in the classroom to what happens before children arrive in the classroom was backed up by the work of a significant number of researchers carrying out investigations into how children learn to read. In his book, **'The Theory of Emergent Literacy'**, Nigel Hall (1987) consolidated the findings of a number of research studies to challenge conventional beliefs that literacy is a neutral, value free skill best taught in a systematic and sequential way. He presented, as an alternative, the view that literacy 'emerges' from the child's observation of and participation in meaningful literacy practices in the home and elsewhere. (See selected reading 1: 'The discovery of emergent literacy' by Nigel Hall.)

Among others, Hall cited the work of New Zealand researcher, Marie Clay. Contrary to the traditional 'blank slate' perception, Clay's studies into what young children know about print suggested that children learn important concepts about print before they start school. Through the repeated experience of having books read to them, children learn about what readers do, e.g. use their eyes to look at the page, use their hands to hold a book, have a purpose for reading, identify clues to give meaning. They also learn about how a text works, e.g. that print is made up of words and marks and spaces, that print is different from pictures, or that there are relationships between print and the spoken word. (Hall, 1987)

Yetta Goodman, another key figure in early literacy research, looked at the development of literacy as learned behaviour that occurs naturally through the child's experience of, and interaction with, print in familiar social contexts. She found that some of this learning can be almost haphazard, for instance, recognising a familiar food package or identifying a birthday card; while other learning takes place through repeated encounters, such as book reading. These developmental experiences help to establish what Yetta Goodman termed the 'roots' of literacy in a child. (discussed in Weinberger, 1996, pp. 3-4; Hall, 1987, pp. 7-9)

Goswami and Bryant (1990) explored how hearing and saying rhymes from an early age could contribute to children's literacy development. They found that children developed an awareness of sound patterns through their experiences with nursery rhymes, nonsense rhymes, advertising jingles and songs. Later, when learning to read, their

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sensitivity to sound patterns helped them to make analogies between words that share the same beginning or ending sounds. This was a useful strategy for helping them to learn new words and also for learning to spell. (Weinberger, 1996)

In further studies focusing on the relationship between talk and reading, Carol Fox (1983) investigated the narrative features in the storytelling of a group of children aged three and a half to six years. She found that the children's experience of having stories read to them greatly enhanced their own storytelling abilities. Children readily and competently used narrative devices, for example, to provide an introduction to the story, to embellish the story with descriptive details, and to keep the audience interested and in suspense. Also evident was the rich use of 'book language' in children's own made up stories. Fox's study showed that children learn a great deal about complex narrative rules as a result of their experiences with books, and that their level of understanding is often above that of 'reading scheme' texts used in schools. (discussed in Hall, 1987, pp. 35-37)

Catherine Snow's research on children's early experience with books focused on the 'talk' that occurs during book reading activities. She found that 'book reading talk' was more complex than talk that took place during caretaking or play. Snow suggested that book reading, often thought of as an activity, can perhaps better be viewed as a 'micro-environment' within which certain events are likely to occur, for example:

- learning new words,
- asking 'what' questions and 'why' questions,
- acquiring factual information,
- seeing connections between one's own life and others' lives.

Snow went on to suggest that the benefits of parent-child book reading may have as much to do with how to think and how to talk as with how to read. (Snow, 1994)

Studies on literacy environments also featured Shirley Brice Heath's research (1983) into the literacy practices of three different communities in North and South Carolina, which she labelled, Maintown, Roadville and Trackton. Heath identified cultural differences in the ways children learn to use and make sense of print, and also differences in the ways they learn to use talking and writing to convey their knowledge of the world.

For example, the literacy practices associated with reading a book were quite different in each community. In Maintown, book reading was very similar to school book reading activities, with parents reading stories to their children while at the same time asking questions, encouraging imaginative and exploratory talk, and praising their children's efforts to retell a story from the pictures or from their imagination. Readers in the Roadville community, however, tended to see distinct roles for parents (as readers) and children (as listeners). The Trackton community provided a third approach to story reading with 'the book' serving as a starting point from where oral interpretation, laced with imagination and fictionalisation, took over. Heath suggested that children whose early experiences of literacy are different from the mainstream school expectations may be starting school with a disadvantage, not because of lack of exposure to literacy, but because of cultural differences in the home and school environments. Her research has played an important part in shifting interest within the field of literacy from a focus on skills to the recognition that literacy is always embedded in social practice. (discussed in Czerniewska, 1992, pp. 11-15)

(See selected reading 2: 'What is early literacy development?' by Jo Weinberger.)

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Parents are natural teachers:

Interest in the home environment as the prime source of children's early literacy development inevitably focused attention on the parents' role in supporting their children. Prof. Peter Hannon, Ph.D. of Sheffield University, a noted researcher in the field of early literacy development, undertook a detailed observational study into how parents could be supported in helping their children to develop literacy skills. A significant finding of this research was that, contrary to the myth of the 'bad parent', virtually all parents, regardless of their own levels of literacy, were anxious to help their children. (Hannon, 1995) This finding was supported by the research of Sheffield colleague, Dr. Jo Weinberger, in her longitudinal study of literacy experiences, the role of parents, and children's literacy development. The Elmswood Study (Weinberger, 1996) describes how more than 40 parents from a variety of backgrounds contributed to their children's literacy development. Both these research findings are further backed up by the experience of adult literacy schemes, where being able to help their children has been a prime motivating factor for adults attending literacy classes.

In the *REAL (Raising Early Achievement in Literacy) Project*, the Sheffield research team developed and piloted a framework for parental involvement in literacy across four strands - environmental print, books, writing, and oral language skills. The framework emphasises the parents' role as natural teachers in providing:

- **Opportunities** for their children's learning;
- **Recognition** of their children's efforts;
- **Interaction** in support of these efforts;
- **Modelling** to encourage imitation of literacy skills. (Nutbrown & Hannon, 1996)

The ORIM framework has been incorporated into a number of projects in England and has significantly influenced the core structure for the *Clare Family Learning Project*. (See selected reading 3: 'Understanding the case for involvement' by Peter Hannon.)

The role of social interaction:

If there is one common element evident across the range of family literacy initiatives, it is the desire to increase parent-child interaction. Indeed, the very concept of '*family literacy*' implicitly acknowledges the role of social interaction in literacy. It follows, too, that in building on the significance of social interaction, in any programme design, (whether it's about promoting storytelling, exploring environmental print, or talking about books) there must be a key emphasis on oral language development.

The focus on social interaction and the development of literacy is supported by the work of Jerome Bruner, a leading contemporary exponent of the view that language and learning develop in children through the processes of social interaction. Bruner, whose work is strongly influenced by the theories of Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, proposes that all babies are born with innate cognitive capacities which predispose them to learn language:

- the capacity to be goal oriented or to learn with a purpose;
- the capacity to communicate and be sociable;
- the capacity to recognise patterns, sequence, and order;
- the capacity to abstract and generalise their learning.

Right from birth, infants are goal oriented towards social communication (e.g. seeking a response from the mother or primary caretaker) and are facilitated to be communicative through their use of these innate 'cognitive endowments'. The development of language then follows as an outcome of an infant's desire to communicate. Once children begin to acquire language capabilities, the use of language itself further

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activates their innate cognitive capacities by making possible more flexible thinking for planning, constructing, abstracting and generalising about their observations and experiences. Finally, since it is the desire for communication that stimulates the acquisition of language, the major form of assistance provided by adults for their children's language development is social interaction. (Bruner, 1994)

Bruner proposes that, from the beginning, babies and parents form a unique partnership, with babies seeking and parents responding, guiding and encouraging. Like Hannon, Bruner suggests that there are distinct parental behaviours built around social interactional frameworks, in the form of familiar and routinised work and play activities which facilitate learning. Through these highly predictable routines, such as peek-a-boo, reading books together, bath or meal times, the parents (already fine-tuned to the capabilities and capacities of their children) can steadily raise their expectations of their children's language and learning. Children learn not only new speech, but also:

- how to extend their speech into new contexts;
- how to meet the social pre-requisites of different communication tasks;
- how to maintain topics while taking turns;
- how to know what's worth talking about;

in other words, how to interact effectively using language. (discussed in Garton & Pratt, 1989, pp. 44 - 48)

Bruner's social interaction theories (and those of other exponents) extend to the development of reading, writing and number skills. As learning language is an outcome of the social and communicative intentions of children, if children are given opportunities to participate purposefully in reading and writing activities, and in using numbers to communicate information and ideas, they are likely to see the acquisition of these skills as an extension of their language development. That is, they will discover for themselves a purpose for learning.

Family literacy, then, has developed from the findings of a significant body of language and literacy research, coupled with the lessons of earlier initiatives, which focused on identifying and addressing the inter-generational effects of literacy problems. This emerging concept of 'family literacy' is the result of:

- a shift in attitude from seeing the home environment as a site of deprivation to seeing it as a site of learning opportunities;
- increased awareness that the best placed individuals to stimulate early language and literacy development are children's own family members, and most especially their parents;
- the realisation that, just as there is always a social context for speaking, there is always a social context for literacy;
- the recognition that the prime motivating factor in learning to talk also motivates a child to learn to read and write, that is, the desire to be socially communicative.

Models of family literacy

The *Parents and Child Education (PACE)* programmes piloted in Kentucky in 1986 are recognised as being the first *family literacy* programmes. The basic core of these programmes included:

- literacy education for parents,
- a quality pre-school programme,
- parent education and support group,
- regular parent and child interaction.

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The original projects were all located in primary schools, and parents and children attended the project for three or four days each week throughout the school year. As an additional part of the programme, parents were encouraged to volunteer in various ways in the schools, gaining work experience, getting to know school personnel, and becoming more comfortable in the school setting. Programme results were reported to be positive: parents' expectations for their children's future education improved, parents' literacy levels improved, and children's learning skills improved. The *PACE* programme model evolved into the *Kenan Trust Family Literacy Project* and has since been replicated throughout the United States under the auspices of the *National Centre for Family Literacy*. The US Department of Education is also funding a national *Even Start* programme which provides services to families with children from birth to age seven. (Connors, 1996)

In 1993, the British government funded four pilot family literacy programmes, which were set up by the *Basic Skills Agency*. The programmes were based on the American model, but also combined elements of earlier English projects aimed at involving parents in their children's reading, such as the work of the Sheffield researchers already mentioned. The triple aims of the demonstration programmes were to boost: 'children's literacy, parents' ability to help their children, and parents' literacy.' (Brooks et al, 1996)

The executive summary of the evaluation report, produced by the *National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)*, noted that, overall, the aims of the demonstration projects were fulfilled. Children made significant gains in all three aspects of language development - reading, writing and oral skills. In relation to the parents' ability to help their children, there were 'substantial increases in literacy-related home activities' and in parent-child interaction. Parents reported that they felt more confident in their own abilities and were able to pass this confidence on to their children. Parents also demonstrated gains in literacy skills, with ninety five per cent of all the participants gaining partial or full accreditation of a level of *City & Guilds Wordpower*. Additionally, parents seemed to feel that 'a barrier between school practice and home activities had been crossed' and that they were now better able to communicate with their children's teachers. Moreover, the evaluation showed that the gains made during participation in the programme were sustained after the parents and children had finished the course. (Brooks et al, 1996)

(See selected reading 4: 'The effectiveness of family literacy' by Keith Topping.)

Family literacy in Ireland

The *Clare Family Learning Project* was developed in response to a need identified by the *Clare Reading & Writing Scheme* for a programme which would help parents with poor literacy and numeracy skills to help their own children with learning. In September 1994, our first initiative in family learning took place in an area of social disadvantage in Kilrush, a small town in west Clare, and was funded by a grant from the 'International Year of the Family Committee'. We ran a six week course that focused on enhancing parent-child interaction to support language development and awareness of environmental print. This short pilot course was then repeated in several other locations in Clare.

During the pilot courses, participating parents from different parts of Clare revealed similar concerns regarding the educational needs of their children and their own circumstances. The parents were anxious to support their children, but they felt that their abilities to help their children with schoolwork were limited because of their own educational background and because they were unfamiliar with parts of the primary

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school curriculum and most of the secondary school curriculum. They were worried about their children leaving school before completing second cycle, as they knew from their own experience the limitations this would put on opportunities for employment. They also felt marginalised from the school culture. Some parents expressed a belief that the school system was not interested in their children, that they were labelled low achievers from 'day one'. It was evident that addressing these needs was beyond the scope of the short courses currently being offered.

In January 1996, through funding received under the *EU Human Resources Initiative, EMPLOYMENT-INTEGRA (formerly HORIZON)*, and with the support of the *Clare Vocational Education Committee, the Adult Education Board* and the *Clare Reading & Writing Scheme* established the first 'family literacy' programme in Ireland.

The *Clare Family Learning Project* modelled their first programmes on the *Kenan Trust Family Literacy Project* and the English demonstration model operating in Norwich, *Learning Together*. Before setting up the project in Clare, the project organisers consulted with Prof. Peter Hannon in Sheffield and also with Andrea Mearing, Project Director in Norwich. Through discussions with Prof. Hannon, the project team decided to adopt the ORIM strategy as their core framework, but with the addition of a fifth strand - numeracy.

In Norwich, as the team observed the *Learning Together* programme in action, Director Andrea Mearing emphasised that actions aimed at building parents' confidence and creating positive links with schools were as important to the programme's success as the activities designed to improve parental skills and increase parent-child interaction. She also suggested that the term *family learning* rather than *family literacy* more accurately reflected the holistic approach to programme design.

Further reflections from the Norwich team (and consultations with participants in Ennis) identified parental concerns beyond the scope of the early years focus. The project team therefore decided to simultaneously develop programmes aimed at providing ongoing support for parents, particularly in the areas of homework help for primary school children and helping the older child make the adjustment to secondary school.

Programme models:

The *Clare Family Learning Project* developed and delivered three programme models at the *Adult & Community Education Centre* in Ennis:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Learning is Fun: | a 60 hour programme in which both parents and children engaged in home-based learning activities designed to enhance the school performance of their children. |
| Homework Help: | a 16 hour programme designed to build parental confidence and assist parents in helping their children with homework. |
| Moving On: | a 12 hour programme which gave parents the opportunity to address some of the fears and concerns associated with their children's transition to secondary school. |

Crèche facilities were available for those with very young children, as well as a pre-school room where children could learn alongside their parents. The children's room was designed to promote home-based learning activities. At various times during the

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programme, parents and children worked together on learning activities which the parents had discussed and developed in their own sessions.

Particularly during the *Learning is Fun* programmes, the mothers were inclined to raise other issues relating to their own situations which the project team then attempted to address through developing sessions on topics such as money management, health and nutrition, and first aid. Parents were also encouraged to explore other opportunities offered by the Adult & Community Education Centre. The subsequent uptake by parents of additional adult education classes was seen as a significant programme benefit.

In all aspects of design and development, the project embraced a learner-centred philosophy. Programmes were planned in consultation with the participants and ongoing evaluation by the parents was very much a part of each course. The philosophy was 'start where the parents are at' by valuing existing parental competencies. While the programme planners did target parental gains in literacy competence, motivation and self-image, they recognised that parents - even in very disadvantaged circumstances - were already active in trying to help their children to learn, especially to learn to read.

Throughout the project there was a policy of close collaboration between the adult education service, the participating parents, and the local primary schools. This collaboration aimed to improve links between schools and parents who have felt marginalised from the educational system, and to promote a greater sense of partnership in education. Joint actions between the family learning course team and the staff of the local schools included: giving parents a better understanding of the schools' expectations, providing opportunities for parents to meet informally with members of staff from the local schools, and encouraging positive discussion on problem areas. All sides have at times identified key issues which were then addressed through the project's programmes. This open and responsive approach was crucial to the overall success of the project.

During interviews for the evaluation report, parents were very positive about the outcomes of their participation in the programme.

They reported that:

- their participation in the project enhanced their relationship with their children;
- their own literacy and numeracy skills improved;
- they read more to their children and felt more confident in choosing books;
- they felt more confident about making contact with schools;
- they considered increased self-confidence and a more positive attitude towards learning as the most significant gains from the programme.

In October 1997, the *Clare Family Learning Project* sponsored a national conference on family learning which was attended by more than 100 delegates. Prof. Peter Hannon, Sheffield University, and *Learning Together* project director, Andrea Mearing, were speakers at the conference. The then director of the Clare Family Learning Project, Mary Reid, gave an overview of the project's activities, and identified key issues for the further development of family learning in Ireland. The response to the conference was enthusiastic and heartening. It was clear that, while the model presented by the *Clare Family Learning Project* was new to Ireland, interest in a family-centred approach to educational problems has been here for some time.

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Since then, a number of initiatives in *family literacy* have been started around the country. Similar to the situation in other countries where family learning programmes have been developed, a variety of approaches are being tried in response to different needs and interests, depending on the availability of funding and other supports. It will be important now in Ireland to share experiences and reflections as a range of initiatives are implemented, with a view to identifying models of good practice which can be promoted and replicated throughout the country.

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Developing the *Family Learning Resource Pack*

Promoting good practice

Family learning is still a relatively new field. Much of the evidence for the success of family learning programmes is anecdotal and even where research evidence is provided, the timespan is often short. There is a need for more research and monitoring of what goes on in programmes identified as providing 'family learning'. However, though the picture for *family learning* is still incomplete, some key elements of a successful programme design are beginning to emerge. In writing this guide, we have tried to take into account the prevailing wisdom as to what constitutes best practice in family-centred approaches to learning.

Recommendations include:

- Recognise first that the parents in your target group are already playing an active role in supporting their children's learning. Affirm their efforts and aim to build from the positive.
- Tailor the programme to the needs of your local community, but start small. Programme organisation and content can be complex. It is easier to enlarge your programme and attract more participants with a record of success, than to be overly ambitious at the start.
- Co-operate with the relevant agencies and services in your local community. Inform them of your plans and invite their support. But be clear about the scope and focus of your programme and don't commit yourselves beyond these boundaries.
- Establish links between home and school. Consult regularly with local school staff. Invite some staff members in to talk to the parents on specific topics, for example, how reading is taught today. Arrange for the parents to make group visits to the school.
- Make provision for transportation and childcare and be prepared to deal with problems that will inevitably arise during the course. For example, make allowances for future participation if a parent needs to take 'time-out' from the course.
- Use staff with backgrounds in both adult and early childhood education. Build in joint staff training to encourage collaboration and to maintain a balance.
- Choose topics, activities and materials appropriate to the needs and interests of your target group. If necessary, design your own.
- Supplement the formal programme with take-home materials such as books, story puppets, home-made games, and writing kits.
- Provide opportunities for parents to learn for themselves as well as for their children. But be aware that many parents do not see their own learning as an issue in the beginning. Respect their choices and focus your sessions accordingly.
- Adhere to good adult education practice. Encourage parents to participate in the design and content of the course. Continue a policy of close collaboration throughout and 'evaluate' the course together at the end of the programme.

Developing the *Family Learning Resource Pack*

The *Family Learning Resource Pack*

The project team and collaborators have produced the *Family Learning Resource Pack* to share their ideas about family learning with others. In order to make these materials accessible to a wide audience of schemes, organisations and agencies interested in setting up similar programmes, the course described in the pack is designed to be:

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Portable | The <i>Family Learning Resource Pack</i> contains a <i>movable feast</i> of suggestions, ideas and activities for family learning programmes. All of the equipment and materials needed for the sessions can be easily transported from one centre to another in the boot of a car. |
| Affordable | In the interests of keeping the course costs to a minimum, none of the activities described in these sessions require the use of computers or audio-visual equipment, though where these are available they can certainly be used. Most of the materials for these sessions can be gathered at home, or in your centre, or purchased inexpensively. Also, local organisations and suppliers may be willing to donate or loan some materials. |
| Adaptable | In keeping with good adult education practice, the needs and interests of each family learning group should be taken into account when planning a course. The sessions are therefore designed to be flexible. For example, you might prefer to adapt some of the activities using methods you feel more appropriate for your group; or use some of the activities in a particular session, but not others; or incorporate some of the topic areas into another programme. |

What's included in the *Family Learning Resource Pack*?

The *Family Learning Resource Pack* includes:

- the *Family Learning Resource Guide*,
- a *Photopak* containing pictures of everyday activities involving literacy and numeracy,
- accompanying *Parents' Packs* with activities to try out in the home,
- a children's story - '*Jason's Day*',
- a family learning poster - *Once upon a time for learning...*,
- course certificates.

The *Family Learning Resource Guide*

The fourteen sessions in the *Family Learning Resource Guide* contain the basic conceptual framework for a programme designed to help parents maximise the potential of the home learning environment for literacy and numeracy development. Each session emphasises group activity and hands-on learning and is planned to last approximately two hours. Facilitators are encouraged to organise sessions to include a ten to fifteen minute break, as well as time to explore any lending materials such as books, games, videos and audio-cassettes. The guide also includes relevant background readings and a list of suggested resources for further support in implementing a family learning programme.

Session 1 - Getting started explores the concept of family learning and discusses the parents' own aims and expectations regarding the course. This first session will provide a good opportunity to suggest topics in addition to the core programme which can then be incorporated into the overall programme. There is also a need in this first session to allow time for participants to become comfortable with one another and to be clear on the organisational ground rules.

Developing the *Family Learning Resource Pack*

Session 2 - Parents are natural teachers begins with an exploration of the parents' role as their children's first teachers. Starting with a discussion on the many skills parents have already taught their children, the session develops into an examination of the roles of 'teacher' and 'learner', how children learn and why parents are ideally placed as supporters of that learning. The session also includes exploration into the three primary learning styles and introduces the concept of a multi-sensory approach to learning.

Session 3 - Let's talk about takes a close look at the importance of oral language development. Parents are encouraged to talk early and often with their children, and especially to take advantage of the many daily activities around which conversation skills can be built. Parents also consider the differences between talk in the classroom and talk in the home and discuss ways to prepare their children for classroom routines. In each of the sessions that follow, time is also spent on examining the vocabulary needed to participate in talk about reading, writing and maths activities.

Session 4 - Rhymes, songs and poems includes activities designed to help parents develop an awareness of basic phonological skills (sound patterns), particularly focusing on rhymes. The session explores many possibilities for fostering phonological awareness through everyday activities involving rhymes, songs and poems.

Session 5 - Storytelling is designed to show parents how familiarity and understanding of story structures, such as fairy tales, encourages the development of reading and writing skills from an early age. Parents are introduced to creative strategies for enhancing the enjoyment of telling stories such as simple puppetry, costumes, and games.

Session 6 - Sharing books looks at activities that are designed to promote parents' interaction with children around books. Parents spend time examining and analysing children's literature. They are encouraged to develop their own ideas about what constitutes a 'good book' for them and their children. The session also explores strategies for supporting children's early reading skills.

Session 7 - Print is all around us examines the many opportunities for making the most of our daily experiences with the print that is 'all around us'. In this session, attention is focused on the community, as well as the home, as a valuable resource for learning.

Session 8 - Ready to write begins by asking parents to consider their attitudes toward writing. Parents will learn about the skills involved in learning to write, discuss the efforts children make to write before they start school, and examine ways that parents can further support their children's attempts to write.

Session 9 - Everyday writing explores the development of early writing skills through children's many play activities, their observations of writing events at home and in the wider community, and their own attempts at producing real writing for real purposes. As in the sessions on reading and oral skills, these sessions also attempt to look at some of the later classroom approaches for which early home activities lay a solid foundation.

Session 10 - Maths in action takes a look at the many ways children experience maths every day in the home. Parents are asked to explore some of the maths tools found in the home and to consider the many maths words we use to name and describe things, to communicate ideas and to solve problems. Parents are also asked to take a hands-on approach to solving some real life maths problems and to consider how they might involve their children in these activities.

Developing the *Family Learning Resource Pack*

Session 11 - Having fun with maths focuses on the many practical and fun home activities which encourage an early understanding of basic number concepts. This is organised through 'learning centres' where parents are invited to experiment with maths activities and games in a hands-on situation. The session also explores the educational value of games and ends with a game-making activity.

Session 12 - Making a book is designed as a stand-alone session to show parents how simple home-made books can incorporate many aspects of learning. Facilitators may want to plan to have it follow the 'reading' and 'writing' sessions, as writing down stories is also a natural step to take after telling and reading stories. However, it may be used at any time throughout the programme. The bulk of the session is devoted to planning and creating a home-made book.

Session 13 - Putting it all together centres on activities which encourage the parents to review their experiences on the course and consolidate their learning. Particular emphasis is placed on recognising the links between all the learning strands, oral language, reading, writing, and maths. The story book, *Jason's Day* lays the groundwork for a final project, which is designed to appeal to all types of learners by providing several suggestions for project construction.

Session 14 - Making connections focuses on encouraging parents to explore their own educational needs and interests. Activities involve exploring community resources for further learning and family support. This session also includes a course evaluation and suggestions for final closing activities.

Parents' Pack

The *Parents' Pack* is a set of seven workbooks that have been designed to supplement the activities in each session. Each workbook contains the Home Activities, which are assigned at the end of each session, as well as practical information and ideas for helping parents to support learning in the home.

- A - Getting started; Parents are natural teachers
- B - Let's talk about; Rhymes, songs and poems; Storytelling.
- C - Sharing books; Print is all around us.
- D - Ready to write; Everyday writing.
- E - Everyday maths; Having fun with maths.
- F - Making a book; Putting it all together; Making connections.

Jason's Day: a story book for children which incorporates some of the elements of the family learning course.

Photopak

The *Photopak* is a set of fifty photographs of families participating in everyday activities at home and in the community. Each photograph contains a variety of family learning opportunities. The photopak is designed to be a supplementary resource for use with many of the session activities.

Developing the *Family Learning Resource Pack*

Ideas for using the *Family Learning Resource Pack*

In designing a family learning programme, as with all good adult education practice, much of the emphasis of the course should be on a learner-centred approach.

We recommend that before you finalise your course content, you consult with the parents interested in taking the course, get to know their needs and interests, and consider in what ways these are likely to be met through the course. Then plan and adapt your sessions accordingly, taking into consideration your own budgets and the time allocated for the course. You may choose to use all fourteen sessions or select only sample activities for inclusion in your programme. Here are some suggestions:

- **Offer a taster course to introduce the concept of family learning.**
Use selected sessions to run a short 'taster course' focusing on one or two topics, for example, Books and Storytelling. This can be an easy and inexpensive way to stimulate interest in family learning.
- **Offer a 'parents only' programme.**
Include all the sessions presented here, plus additional adult learning sessions, for a parents only programme model with parent-child activities taking place in the home. This is the next least expensive option for groups introducing family learning programmes.
- **Offer a 'parent and child' programme.**
The sessions can be easily adapted to a parent and child model. Simply parallel the topic presented with appropriate activities for the children's sessions, and then use the Home Activities as parent and child activities within the course time. This is a more expensive and complex model which requires additional staff, a larger 'premises', and careful planning.
- **Use the sessions as part of an integrated programme.**
Family learning courses can be included in the curriculum of another programme. For example, you could incorporate a number of the sessions into the curriculum of a course on parenting skills or childcare. You could also use some sessions in parallel with other courses, e.g. communications or personal development.
- **Expand the sessions to give an in-depth focus on one or two topics.**
Each session provides a number of selected activities focused on young children. However, topics such as books and stories or writing skills could be discussed across the ages, from babies and pre-schoolers through the different school ages, to adulthood.

Once the course has started, continue to 'check-in' with the parents from time to time to see how they are getting along. You will find that, as parents become more comfortable, they are likely to look beyond their primary interest in the course (i.e. their children's learning) to their own interests in learning. You can facilitate this process by making suggestions for additional sessions, providing taster classes, establishing links with local adult education staff, offering follow-up sessions, offering an educational guidance service as part of your programme.

Good Luck!

Symbols



Parents' Pack activity, also included in the Resource Guide.



Activity for home, also included in the Parents' Pack.



Photopak is needed for this activity.



Facilitator will need to use a flipchart and markers in the activity.



Facilitator will need to gather and organise materials ahead of time.



Tutor tips for enhancing or extending activities and sessions.

Additional notes

He/she, his/her

We have tried to address the issue of gender equity in the following way:

The pronoun 'she' is used in all odd numbered sessions.

The pronoun 'he' is used in all even numbered sessions.

'The parents'

We refer to the participants in the course as 'the parents'. This is meant to be a general reference for facilitators which implies an assumption about the participants' particular status as primary caretakers.

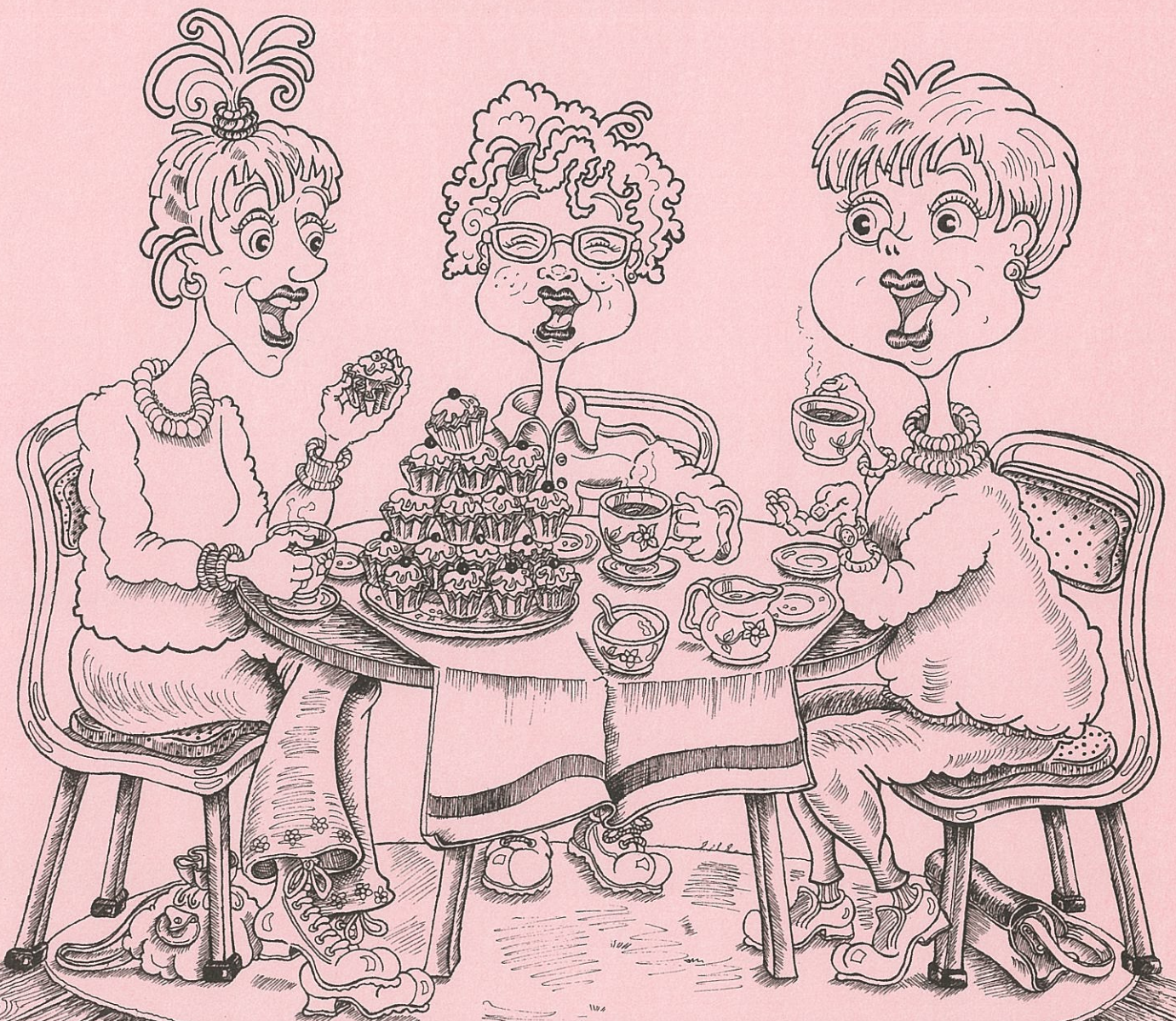
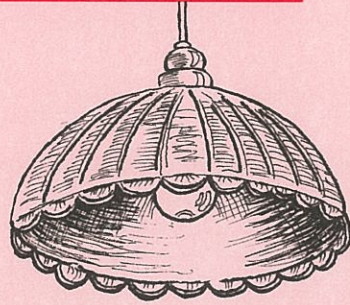
Session Notes

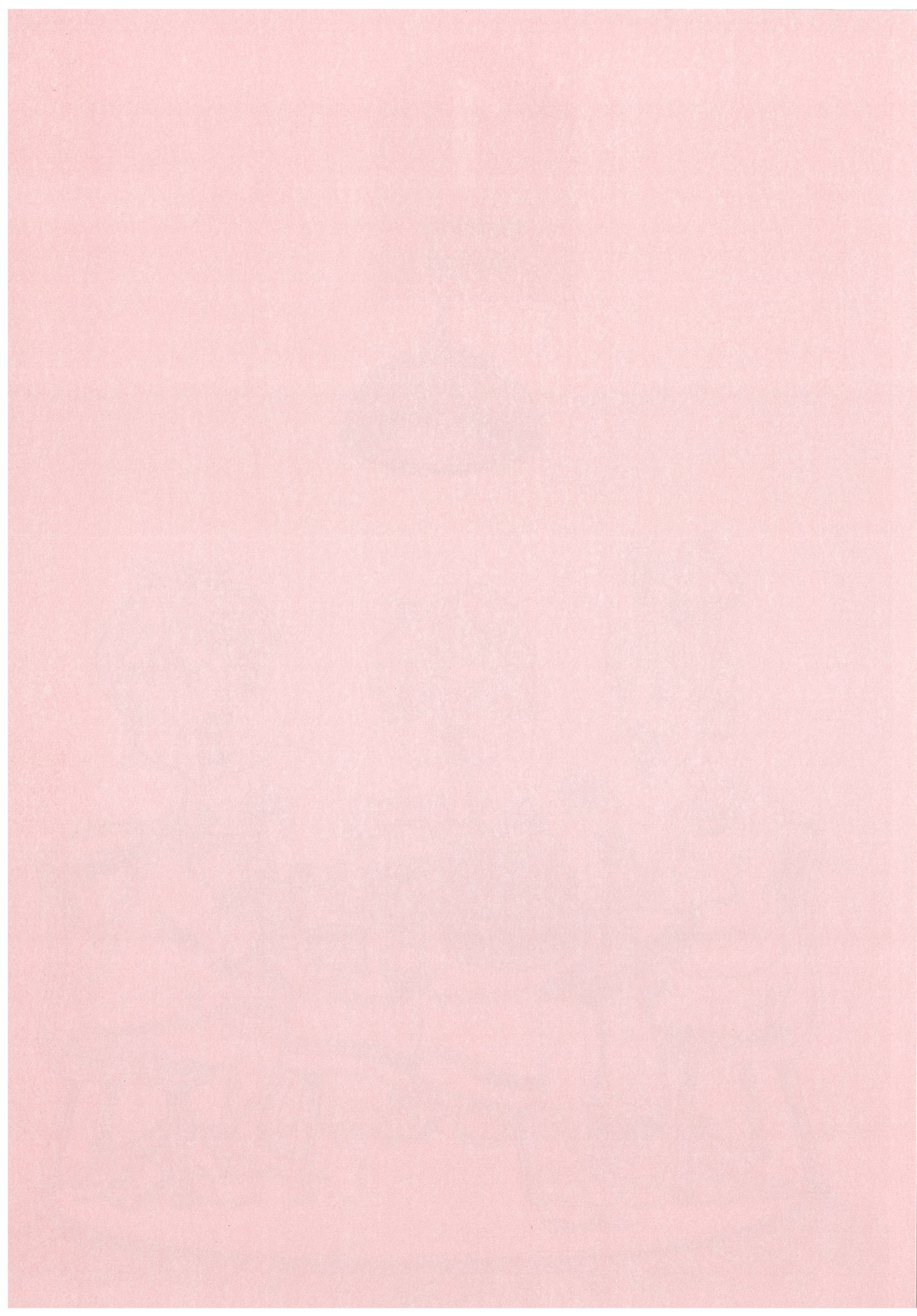
One page is left at the end of each session for your own notes on each session.

You should photocopy this page as needed.

1

Getting
started











In this session parents will:

- become familiar with the concepts of family learning;
- discuss their own aims and expectations for the course;
- establish a level of comfort within the group;
- acquire information regarding dates, times, support available;
- develop an awareness of how the learning process differs in the home and school.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	28
 What is a family learning programme?			29
Icebreaker	1	10 mins.	30
What's in a box?	2	20 mins.	31
Looking at learning	3	20 mins.	32
Looking at home and school learning	4	20 mins.	33
 Home and school learning			34
Expectations and establishing ground rules	5	20 mins.	35
 Core topics + Other possible topics			36
Session Summary		10 mins.	37
Home Activity 1 - Learning at home			37
 Learning at home			38
Session Notes			39



Introduction

To prepare:



Before you begin each session, arrange the chairs informally in a circular or semi-circular style. If you plan to include any practical tasks, have tables available as well. Check that heating and lighting are adequate. Have your flipchart set up in advance.



Create a visual display of family learning activities for the parents to view. Use Photopak pictures, your own pictures, posters, etc.



You will be referring to **Parents' Pack A, p. 2 - What is a family learning programme?**

Write the key phrases on a flipchart.

What to do:

As the parents arrive, welcome them and invite them to look at the visual display while the group is assembling. When you are ready to begin, introduce yourself and explain a little bit about your group or organisation.

Refer to **Parents' Pack A, p. 2 - What is a family learning programme?** and discuss.





What is a family learning programme?

Family learning programmes recognise that parents are their children's first and most important teachers.

One of the goals of a family learning programme is to encourage and support you in your role as your child's first teacher.

Family learning programmes recognise that there are all kinds of opportunities for learning in the home.

A second goal of the programme is to explore activities that can help your child make the most of home learning.

Family learning programmes also recognise that parents are busy people who often find it hard to get a bit of time for themselves.

A third goal of the programme is to provide a little time and space for you to talk about your own interests in learning and, if you like, to take advantage of adult learning opportunities both during and after the programme.

Family learning programmes are about:

- building skills,
- building confidence,
- sharing ideas,
- having fun!





10 mins.

Icebreaker

If the parents in your group do not already know one another, you might like to begin with a short icebreaker.

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

What to do:

Explain to the parents that icebreakers are intended to help people relax and get comfortable within the group. Sometimes participants are unhappy in a course, not because the course is too long, or too difficult, but because they don't feel at ease with other participants. This icebreaker exercise will help the parents to get to know each other.

Ask the parents to sit beside someone they don't know and talk with each other for about five minutes, making sure to introduce themselves and find out a little about each other (names of children, course expectations, how they heard about the course). Tell them that, at the end of the five minutes, they will be asked to introduce their partners to the whole group.

While you are hearing from each member of the group, make a note on the flipchart of any comments made about course expectations. Once you have heard from everyone, thank them for their contributions and inform them that, at the end of this first session, you will give them a brief outline of your plans for the rest of the course. Tell them that, while you hope these plans will go some way towards meeting the group's expectations, the course can be adapted to suit their needs.



What's in a box?

To prepare:



You will need: a variety of boxes in different sizes, markers, Blu-Tack, paper, and a selection of household items which might stimulate ideas for this activity (e.g. shoes, toys, letters, pencils).

What to do:

Divide the parents into pairs and give each pair a box, marker and paper.

Tell the parents to describe their boxes and to brainstorm a list of ideas for using their boxes.

After ten minutes, ask each pair to talk about some of the uses they came up with for their box. They can stick their list onto the box for referral. After each pair has contributed something, write their ideas on the flipchart. When everyone has contributed, ask the parents to reflect on how they came up with the ideas for using their boxes.

For example, did they:

- use imagination?
- discuss ideas with partners?
- see what others were doing?
- estimate the size and shape of things to put in the box?
- compare the box to other things of similar size?
- think about the weight and durability of the box?
- think about changing the shape of the box, e.g. cutting it?
- think about changing the look by colouring it or putting paper on it?
- remember other boxes used in the past?
- test things left around that might fit into the box?
- think of different situations, e.g. storage, child's play?

Ask the parents to think about small children and their fondness for playing with boxes.

Do you think your child might be engaged in any of these activities when playing with a box?



20 mins.

Looking at learning

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

What to do:

Write the word **LEARNING** on the middle of a flipchart page. Ask the parents to brainstorm a little about learning. Ask them to say everything they can think of when they hear the word 'learning'.

Write their comments around the word **LEARNING** on the flipchart. Add pages if necessary. When their ideas are exhausted, ask the parents to reflect on some of their ideas.

For example, did they:

Name

- places where learning takes place?
- people they associate with learning?
- activities connected with learning?
- materials for learning?
- methods for learning?

Talk about

- feelings and emotions associated with learning?
- reasons for learning?
- tests or assessments?
- learning successes or failures?
- intelligence, memory, or styles of learning?

Identify

- particular learning tasks?
- past learning experiences?
- specific skills or knowledge gained?
- key words or phrases they've often heard about learning?

Questions for discussion:

- *Do we associate certain kinds of learning with certain places?*
- *What do we associate with learning in the community or in the workplace?*
- *What sorts of things are learned at home?*

ACTIVITY 4

1



20 mins.

Looking at home and school learning

To prepare:

Choose one of the three options for this activity and prepare your materials.



Refer to Parents' Pack A, p. 3 - Home and school learning.

What to do:

Parents often underestimate both their role as their child's natural teacher and their home as a valuable learning environment. The purpose of this exercise is to highlight the many positive aspects of the home learning environment and to emphasise that home learning and school learning are two different types of learning. The discussion is not intended to devalue or 'put down' school learning, but rather to draw attention to the equal importance of home learning.

There are three ways you can go about this exercise. You are recommended to choose the best option for your group.

- 1 Brainstorm ideas about home and school learning. Give the parents prompts by asking them to name something they learned at home and something they learned at school. Invite them to compare the two by asking the following questions: Who taught you these tasks? Was it someone the same age as you or someone older? Were you ever tested to see if you learned to do this task correctly? Did you initiate the learning or did someone else initiate the learning?
- 2 Photocopy and then cut out each phrase on **Home and school learning**. Put a piece of flipchart paper on the floor with the words *Home learning* and *School learning* identifying the two categories. Spread the cut out phrases down on the floor and invite the group to gather around the page and decide into which category each phrase should go. Give the group tape or Blu-Tack to put the phrases onto the flipchart page.
- 3 Photocopy the page **Home and school learning** and then delete about half of the phrases. Ask the parents to consider each comment on learning and invite them to fill in the blank space on the opposing side. For example, you might ask: *If we say home learning is flexible, what might we say about school learning?*



Home and school learning

Adapted from 'Literacy Home and School' by Peter Hannon, p. 39, The Falmer Press, 1995.

Home learning	School learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children can choose what they want to learn. • Learning seems fun and easy. • Children can engage in a learning activity at any time. • Children may not encounter concepts in the easiest order for learning. • There are many opportunities for adult attention. • Adults act as models for learning different skills. • Children's learning is not formally tested. • There are opportunities for extended conversations. • Learning can include children of different ages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers must follow a set curriculum. • Learning often seems like hard work. • Learning is timetabled. • Children learn skills in a planned progression. • Adult attention is shared between many children. • Adults act as instructors for teaching different skills. • Children's progress is continuously assessed. • There are limited opportunities for conversations. • Learning takes place with children of the same age.

ACTIVITY 5

1



20 mins.

Expectations and establishing ground rules

To prepare:



Write the key topics for discussion on ground rules onto a flipchart, leaving extra space for decision making.



Refer to **Parents' Pack A, p. 4 - Core topics + Other possible topics.**

What to do:

Establishing ground rules

For this section, explain the necessity of establishing ground rules - an agreement between group members, facilitator and sponsors as to how the group will operate for the duration of the course.

Start the discussion by informing the parents of any organisational policies (e.g. no smoking rules) and by outlining your expectations. Then, list key issues for group discussion and decision making.

At the end of the discussion, summarise what has been agreed and review the decisions made. Let the parents know that you will have a copy of these ground rules for everyone by the next session.

Expectations

Present an outline of the course you have planned so far. Refer to **Parents' Pack A, p. 4 - Core topics + Other possible topics.**

Remind the parents that the course is flexible, not every session is planned. You will be looking for feedback during the course so that you can revise and plan further sessions.

Encourage the parents to think about other topics that would interest them. Explain that, while they may be attending the course in order to help their children, they might like to take advantage of some opportunities for themselves, especially while crèche facilities and other supports are available.

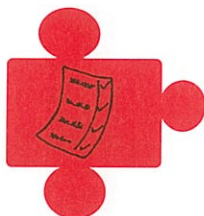


Core topics

+ Other possible topics

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1 Getting started -
what is family learning?</p> <p>2 Parents are natural teachers</p> <p>3 Let's talk about...</p> <p>4 Rhymes, songs and poems</p> <p>5 Storytelling</p> <p>6 Sharing books</p> <p>7 Print is all around us</p> <p>8 Ready to write</p> <p>9 Everyday writing</p> <p>10 Maths in action</p> <p>11 Having fun with maths</p> <p>12 Making a book</p> <p>13 Putting it all together</p> <p>14 Making connections</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computers • Arts and crafts • First aid • Family health • Stress management • Coping with children's behaviour • Money management • Helping older children with spelling • Talking with your child's teacher • Assertiveness • Consumer awareness |
|---|---|

Your suggestions:



Session Summary

Summarise the session by reviewing:

- the definition of a family learning programme,
- expectations and ground rules,
- dates, times, support available,
- questions.

Refer to the flipchart page on **Looking at learning - Activity 3** as well as the discussion in **Home and school learning - Activity 4**.

Explain to the parents that during the coming week, you would like them to reflect on their own ideas about how, where, when, and with whom learning takes place, particularly in their homes.



Home Activity 1 - Learning at home

The **Home Activity - Learning at home** is designed to encourage the parents to continue their thinking about what types of learning take place in the home and how this learning occurs.

Suggest that, during the next week, they could investigate learning in their homes.

Read the directions and questions on the worksheet and discuss them fully in order to ensure that all the parents are comfortable with the exercise.

Emphasise that it is not necessary for answers to be written.

The goal is that the parents will be able to discuss their observations when they return to class the following week.



Learning at home

During the next week, make a note of at least four times that you observe your child demonstrating a skill that has been learned at home.

Some examples might be:



looking at a book



skipping



using the toilet



painting a picture

Skills

1.

2.

3.

4.

Think about:

Did your child choose to learn these skills?

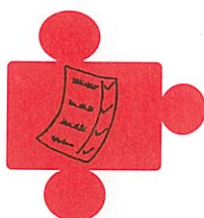
What family members were involved in helping your child to learn?

How much time did your child have for learning?

How did you know that your child learned these skills?

Did you and your child talk about her achievement?

What did you say?



Session Notes

What worked well in this session?

Were there any difficulties?

What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

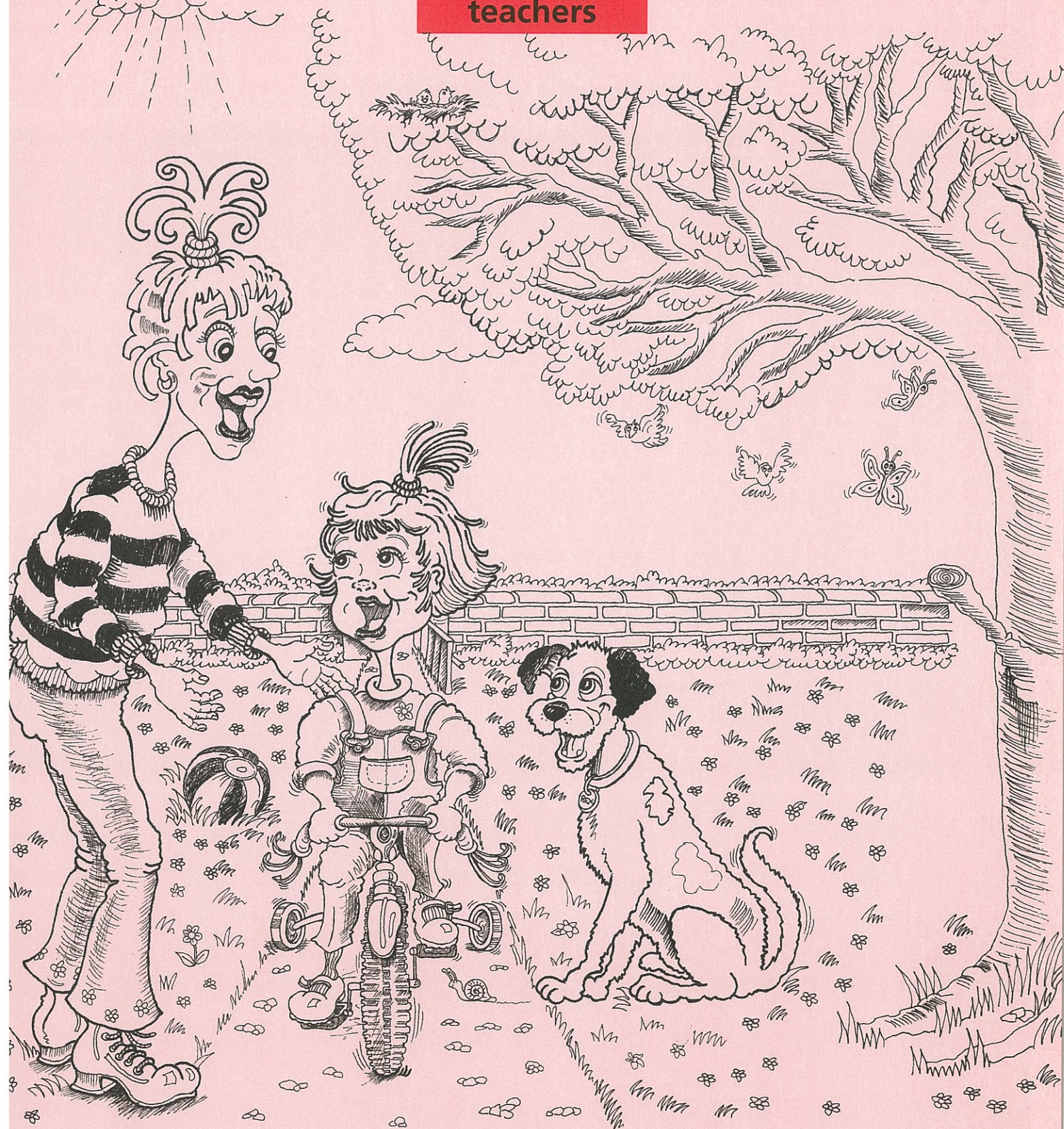
Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?

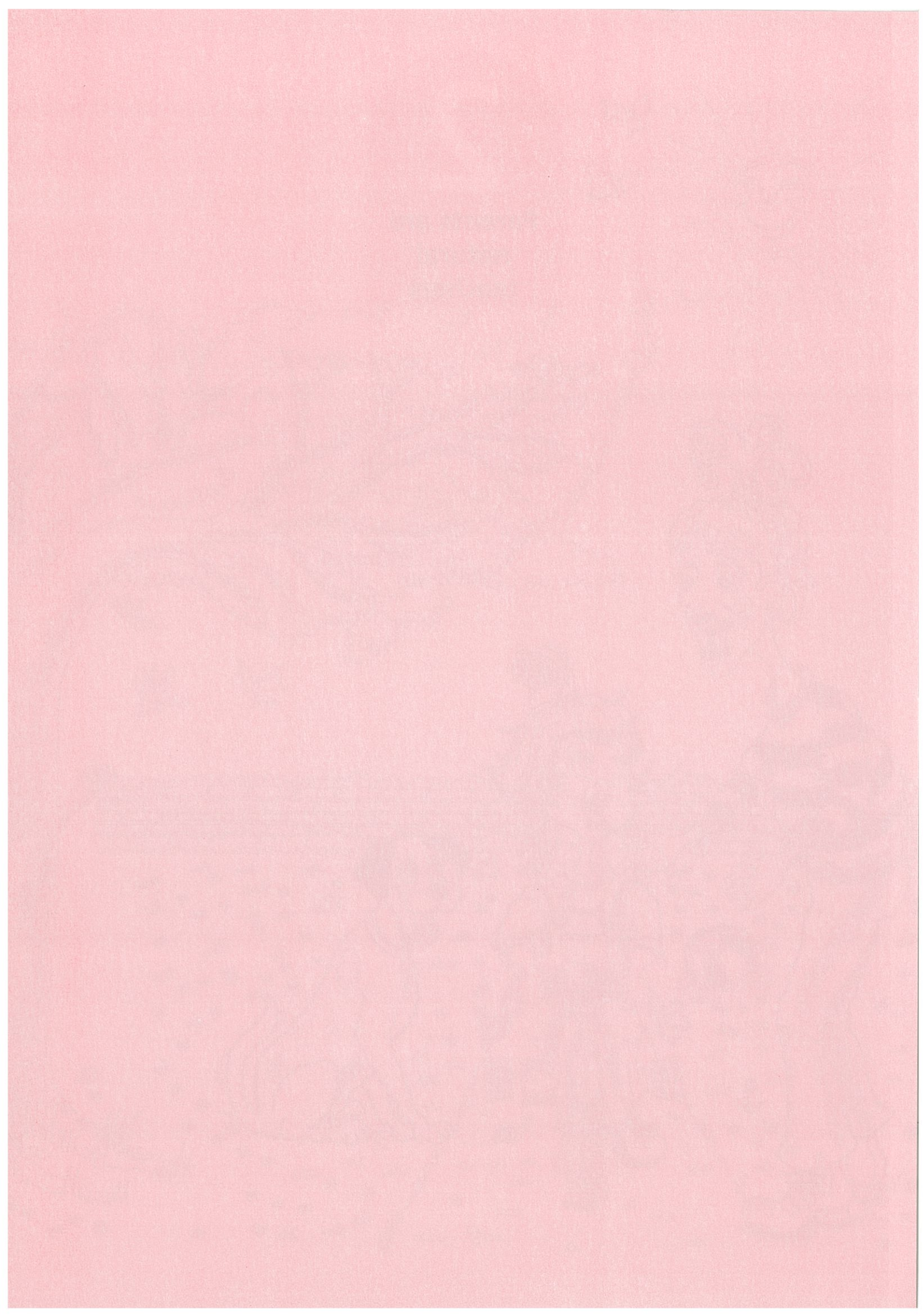
Session Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal red ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no text or other markings on the paper.

2

**Parents are
natural
teachers**












In this session parents will:

- identify learning opportunities in their homes;
- discuss the key elements of successful learning experiences;
- recognise their own qualities as teachers for their children;
- increase their knowledge of different learning styles.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	44
Parents are natural teachers	1	20 mins.	45
Teachers and learners	2	30 mins.	46
Learning styles questionnaire	3	20 mins.	47
 Identify your learning style			48-49
 Three primary learning styles			50
Discussion on learning	4	20 mins.	51
 How children learn			52
Name fan	5	20 mins.	53
 Name fan			54
Session Summary		10 mins.	55
Home Activity 2 - Learning styles in your home			55
 Learning styles in your home			56
Session Notes			57



Introduction

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

Make a copy of the ground rules for each parent.

What to do:

Begin the session by revisiting the ground rules and reviewing **Home Activity 1 - Learning at home.**

Read through the questions and ask the parents to share their observations.

Did they enjoy the activity?

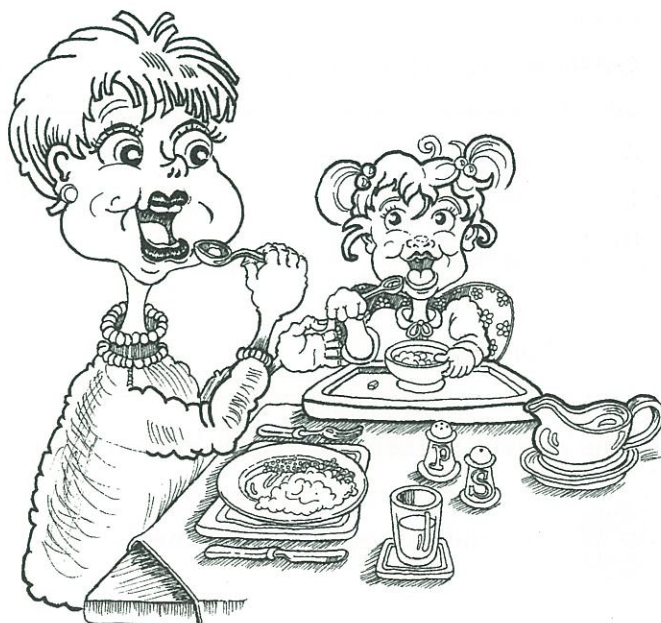
What did they discover about how learning happens in their homes?

Write their responses on the flipchart.

Explain that today's session will explore the learning process further.

Write on the flipchart:

- *Why are parents natural teachers?*
- *How do parents teach their children?*
- *How do children learn?*





Parents are natural teachers

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart, markers and Blu-Tack.

What to do:

The purpose of this exercise is to explore the parents' role as their children's teachers. Refer back to **Home Activity 1 - Learning at home** and ask the parents:

What other skills have you taught your children?

List their answers on the flipchart.

Some examples: learning to walk, to talk, to dress themselves, to pick up their toys, to use the toilet, to identify colours, to name things, to recognise dangers, to be friendly or polite, to throw or catch a ball, to clap hands, to sing a song.

Divide the parents into three or four groups. Give each group a flipchart page, a marker and Blu-Tack. Ask the parents to choose one of the learning tasks named and then list everything they can think of that might have helped their children to learn this task or skill.

After ten or fifteen minutes, reassemble the group and ask for feedback.

When each group has contributed, look over their responses and point out similarities.

For example:

- providing opportunities for practice
- providing materials
- providing support
- demonstrating how to do something
- recognising strengths and weaknesses
- giving help when needed
- talking about the activity
- giving words of praise and encouragement
- being patient

Point out that when parents are interacting with children at home, there are usually too many things happening at once for them to be able to take the time to notice how effective they are in their roles as teachers. The activities in the family learning programme will help parents to identify and develop these strengths.



Teachers and learners

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart, markers and index cards.

Write the **learning task questions** onto index cards.

Some suggestions for **learning task questions**:

- How do you play a simple card game such as SNAP?
- How do you fold a shirt/jumper?
- How do you set a table?
- How do you play noughts and crosses?
- How do you find something in the local newspaper, such as classified adverts or film times?

Provide the necessary props needed to 'teach' each task.

What to do:

The next exercise is designed to encourage further observations about the nature of the interaction between teachers and learners.

Divide the class into pairs. Ask each pair to designate one person as the learner and the other as the teacher. Ask the pairs to choose a **learning task question**. In a 'role play', the teacher should 'teach' the learner how to do the task. If time allows, give each pair an opportunity to choose another task and ask them to switch roles.

After ten or fifteen minutes, bring the parents back together and discuss the tasks.

Questions for learners:

- *How did it feel to be a learner?*
- *What did your teacher do that helped you to learn?*
- *What was difficult?*
- *What did you enjoy?*
- *Did this exercise give you any insight into your children's learning experiences?*

Questions for teachers:

- *How did it feel to be a teacher?*
- *What did you do that was helpful to your learner?*
- *What was difficult?*
- *What did you enjoy?*
- *Did this exercise add to your understanding of your role as a teacher?*

Finish this exercise by asking the parents to consider the ways in which teachers are also learners.



Learning styles questionnaire

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart, markers and Blu-Tack.



Refer to Parents' Pack A, pp. 6-7 - Identify your learning style and p. 8 - Three primary learning styles.

What to do:

Distribute the learning styles questionnaire. Read all questions aloud in order to ensure that adults with literacy difficulties can participate successfully. Allow ample time for the parents to fill in their answers. When they have finished, ask them to count up the number of times they answered with an a, b, or c.

Explain that the activity was a 'just for fun' look at learning styles. Emphasise that we all learn in a variety of ways - through sight, sound and physical movement. Some people have very strong preferences for the way they learn, others have no particular preferences for the way they learn. Invite comments.

- *What would be the value in knowing your own learning style?*
- *What would be the value in knowing your child's learning style?*

Ask the parents to reflect on some well-known teaching strategies in the classroom:

- writing information on the blackboard,
- undertaking practical activities,
- reciting the alphabet,
- using look and say for teaching words and letters.

Emphasise that in good classroom practice, teachers try to present material in a variety of ways to accommodate different learning styles.

Questions for discussion:

- *How might the learning style be determined by the learning task, e.g. learning to drive a car, trying out a new recipe, learning to use computers?*
- *How are learning experiences affected by the learning environment?*
- *What other issues might affect learning opportunities?*
- *What differences between home and school learning might affect individual learning styles?*



Identify your learning style

Adapted from the Learning Styles Questionnaire in *Learning In Practice* by Rosamund Philips, NALA 1996.

Choose ONE answer a, b, or c, for each question.

- 1. When you are going some place that you've never been before, do you**
 - a) like to have written directions?
 - b) like to have someone tell you how to get there?
 - c) like to find it as you go because you have such a good sense of direction?

- 2. When you spell, do you**
 - a) try to see the word?
 - b) try to sound out the word?
 - c) write the word down to see if it 'feels' right?

- 3. When you are angry, do you**
 - a) clam up, give others the 'silent treatment'?
 - b) quickly let others know, shout, etc.?
 - c) storm off, clench your fists, grit your teeth?

- 4. When you have spare time, would you rather**
 - a) watch TV, go to the cinema, play a video game?
 - b) listen to the radio or tapes/CDs, go to a concert or play an instrument?
 - c) do something physical, such as a sport, or go dancing?

- 5. When you have to discuss something important, do you**
 - a) prefer a face-to-face meeting, or write a few notes about what you want to say?
 - b) use the telephone?
 - c) talk it out during another activity such as walking or having a meal?

- 6. When you are talking, do you**
 - a) tend to speak quickly, particularly when you are excited?
 - b) enjoy listening, but also want to talk?
 - c) use a lot of hand and body movements?



Identify your learning style

- 7. Can others tell how you feel from your**
 - a) facial expressions?
 - b) voice?
 - c) general body language?

- 8. When someone pays you a compliment, do you**
 - a) like to have it in writing?
 - b) like spoken comments?
 - c) like physical action, such as a pat on the back or a hug?

- 9. When you try to interpret someone's mood, do you**
 - a) look mostly at the person's face?
 - b) listen to the tone of voice?
 - c) watch for body movements?

- 10. When you are bored, do you**
 - a) look around, doodle, watch something?
 - b) talk to yourself or other people?
 - c) fidget?

- 11. When you are learning, do you**
 - a) like to see demonstrations, diagrams or posters?
 - b) like listening to instructions, talks and lectures?
 - c) prefer direct involvement such as activities or exercises?

- 12. When someone tells you their telephone number, do you**
 - a) write it down as quickly as possible?
 - b) repeat it over and over again to yourself?
 - c) picture yourself dialling the number?



Three primary learning styles

Mostly a's

If your responses were mostly a's, then you are probably a visual learner. You rely on seeing as your first and most effective learning strategy.

People who are visual learners:

- like a map better than spoken directions;
- like to doodle;
- see words in their heads;
- remember what they have seen, rather than what they have heard;
- like to read information in instructions;
- are orderly and neat.

Mostly b's

If your responses were mostly b's, then you are probably an auditory learner. You learn best by listening and talking.

People who are auditory learners:

- talk to themselves;
- move their lips while reading;
- repeat information out loud in order to learn it;
- are talkative, love discussion;
- like to sound out words when learning to spell;
- remember what they have heard rather than what they have seen.

Mostly c's

If your responses were mostly c's, then you are probably a kinesthetic learner. You learn through touch and movement. You like to do the task to learn it most effectively.

People who are kinesthetic learners:

- find it hard to sit down;
- learn by manipulating and doing;
- think better when moving or walking;
- use action words;
- often use gestures;
- like to trace words and practise writing the words when learning to spell;
- remember best from doing;
- have their strongest learning channels in muscle movement.



Discussion on learning

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart, markers and Blu-Tack.



Refer to **Parents' Pack A**, p. 9 - **How children learn**.

What to do:

Discuss **Parents' Pack A**, p. 9 - **How children learn**.

Help the parents to make the connection between things they explored in **Activities 1, 2 and 3**, and the points made about children's learning.

Ask them to reflect on their own children's learning styles.

Questions to ask:

Is your child:

- a listener/questioner?
- a looker/observer?
- a doer/practicer?
- a combination of learning styles?

Do you think learning styles might change with age and development?

Finish by pointing out that studies indicate that people learn best when they see, hear, say and do.





How children learn

Children learn best when they can have direct experiences with learning tasks. Activities that are most helpful for promoting children's learning provide:

- opportunities to see, feel, hear, touch, and taste;
- opportunities to explore, to experiment and to practise;
- familiar places to learn new things, such as the home and local community;
- interaction with parents, friends, brothers and sisters, and other relations;
- opportunities for conversation, for asking questions and for other types of language experiences;
- encouragement and praise;
- opportunities to choose and plan learning tasks;
- realistic expectations;
- opportunities to see that their achievements have value.



Name fan

To prepare:



Refer to **Parents' Pack A, p. 10 - Name fan**.

You will need A4 paper or craft paper, old magazines, scissors and glue.

Prepare a sample name fan.

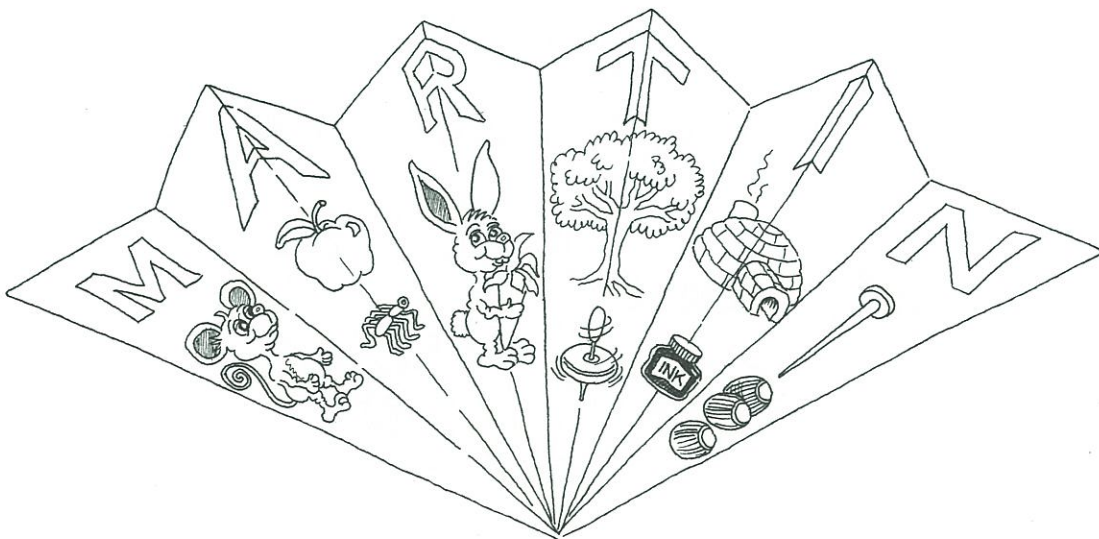
What to do:

Turn to **Parents' Pack A, p. 10 - Name fan** and demonstrate the prepared name fan.

Invite the parents to make name fans for their children using available magazines, scissors and glue.

Finish the activity by sharing name fans.

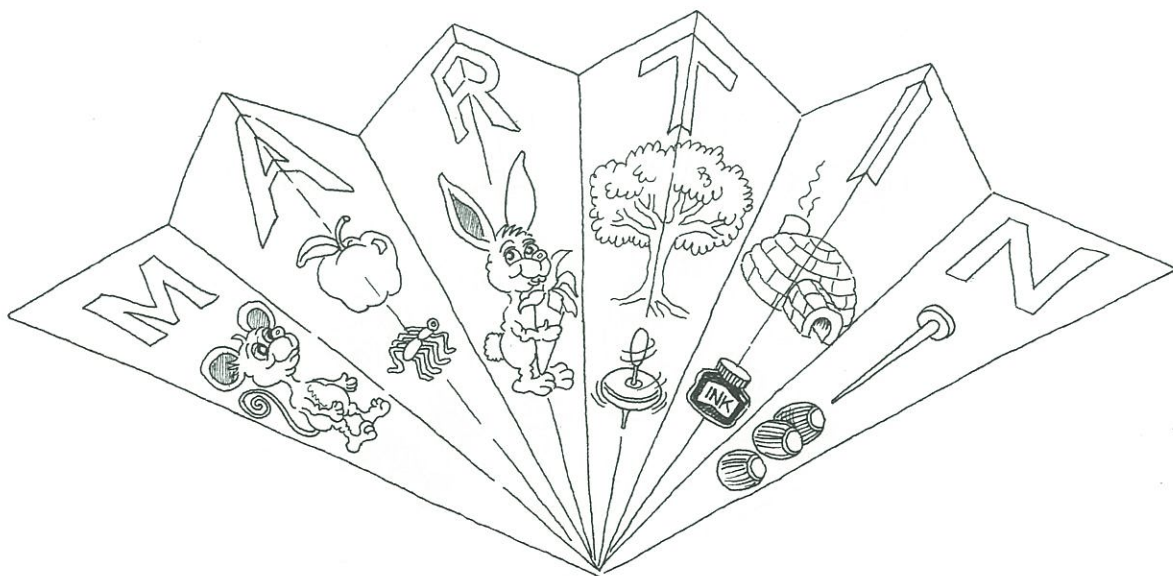
Discuss how the name fan could be used to help children learn to recognise their own names.

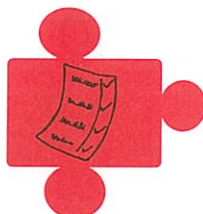




Name fan

- 1 Count the number of letters in your child's name. Make the same number of folds in the paper (accordion style).
- 2 Write the letters of your child's name across the top of each fold.
- 3 Starting with the first letter of your child's name, cut out several pictures from a magazine that have the same beginning sound. Glue them down the fold underneath the first letter.
- 4 Continue in the same way for each letter in your child's name.





Session Summary

Review the important concepts in this session by asking:

- *How are parents natural teachers?*
- *What are the three primary learning styles?*
- *How do children learn?*

Introduce the **Home Activity** as a tool for observing their children's learning styles.



Home Activity 2 - Learning styles in your home

Introduce **Home Activity 2 - Learning styles in your home** which is a version of the **Learning styles questionnaire** that the parents can use to explore their children's different learning styles. Remind them that recognising children's learning strengths is an important part of encouraging skill development. Also, when parents spend time observing their children, they are often surprised to see how much their children have already learned.

Read through **Home Activity 2** with the group. Remind the parents that they will only be asked to share their observations. Written responses are optional, and they will not be collected.



Learning styles in your home

Spend time looking at how your child learns.

Does your child:

Yes

No

Remember things that you tell him to do?

☐
☐

Enjoy taking part in conversations and listening to others?

☐
☐

Like to listen to tapes and to watch videos?

☐
☐

Like to look at books and magazines?

☐
☐

Like to colour or draw?

☐
☐

Like to watch other people do something before he tries it?

☐
☐

Like 'hands on' activities such as playdough or water play?

☐
☐

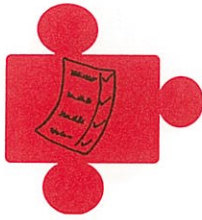
Like to build and make things?

☐
☐

Enjoy sports, dancing and other movement activities?

☐
☐

What else did you notice?



Session Notes

What worked well in this session?

Were there any difficulties?

What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

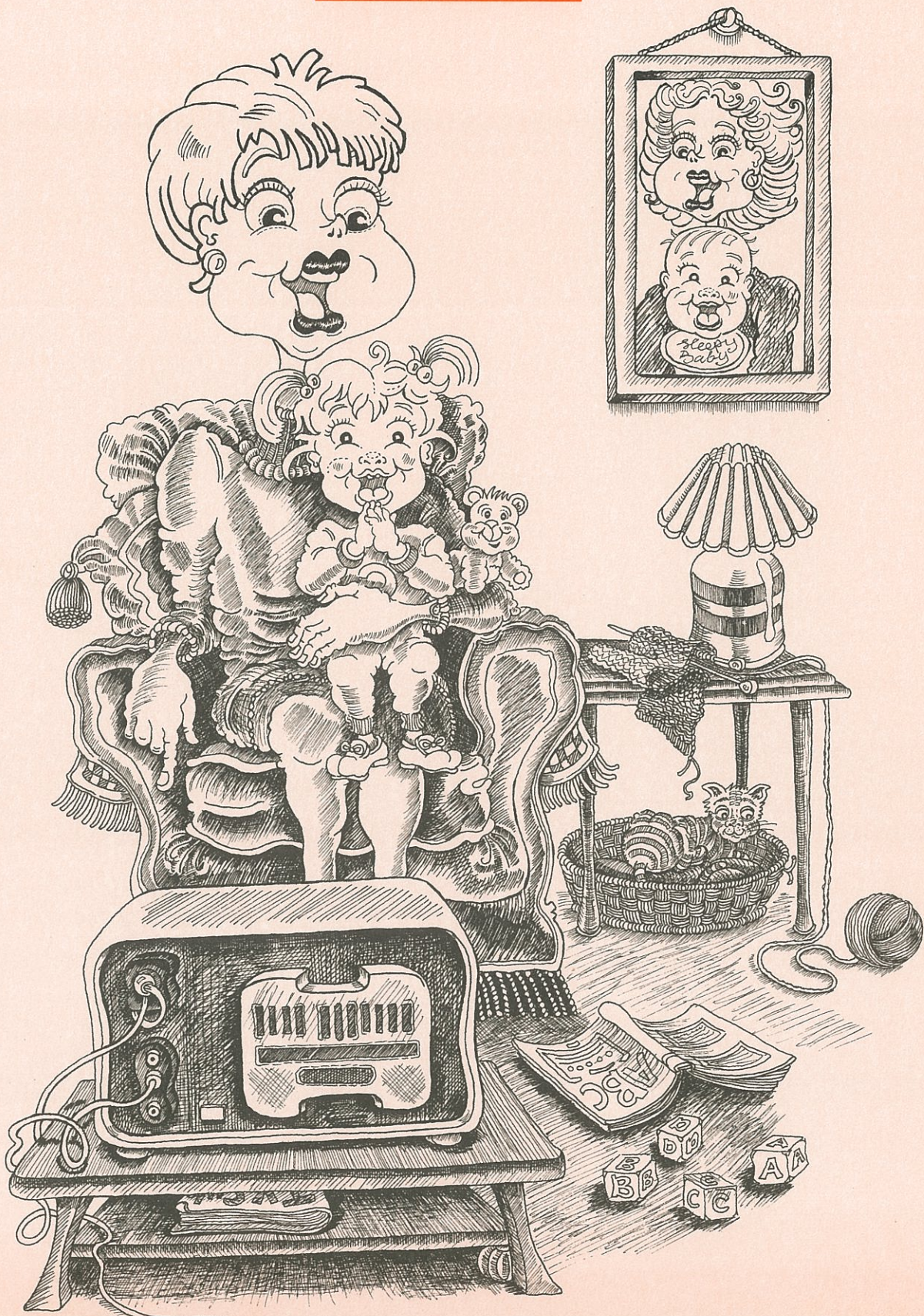
What did you do to include different interests and needs?

Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?

[illegible]

3








Let's talk
about...





In this session parents will:

- discuss the importance of talk in learning;
- suggest good opportunities for talking with their children;
- practice identifying good listening skills;
- explore games that develop oral language skills.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	62
Social situations	1	25 mins.	63
Talk and school	2	25 mins.	64
 Talk and school			65
Open and closed questions	3	20 mins.	66-67
 Open and closed questions			68
 Talking with your child			69
Listening skills	4	20 mins.	70-71
 How about listening?			72
Games that promote talking and listening skills	5	20 mins.	73
 Games for talking and listening			74
Session Summary		10 mins.	75
Home Activity 3 - Talking and listening to your child			75
 Spotlight on talking and listening			76
 Talking and listening to your child			77
Session Notes			78



Introduction

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

What to do:

Review **Home Activity 2 - Learning styles in your home.**

Introduce this session by explaining that, for a long time, educators did not recognise the links between children's oral language development and learning to read. Spoken and written language were assumed to be distinct skills. Now it is recognised that there are important connections between learning to talk and learning to read and write. The development of children's oral skills is also important to their classroom participation.

Point out that, right from birth, parents and babies are powerfully motivated to communicate with each other.

Questions to ask:

Can you remember some of the first ways you communicated with your newborn baby?

Sample answers:

- eye contact
- facial expressions
- soothing voice
- talked to babies
- responded to babies' cooing, gurgling or crying
- touch

Can you remember how you taught your child to talk?

Sample answers:

- repeating words over and over
- encouraging any word-like sound
- talking to child while feeding and dressing her
- naming things as the child pointed
- playing games
- singing songs and saying rhymes

Explain that these actions are all part of the process of helping their children to become effective communicators.

ACTIVITY 1

3



25 mins.

Social situations

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart, markers and Blu-Tack.



Select Photopak cards depicting talking scenes, or cut out pictures from magazines depicting parents and children talking.

Stick the Photopak cards onto flipchart pages and draw a dialogue bubble for each character.

What to do:

Divide the parents into small groups and give each group a flipchart page with the pictures attached and dialogue boxes drawn above them. Ask the parents to discuss what's happening in the pictures and then to write into the dialogue box what they think the characters are saying.

After ten or fifteen minutes, reassemble everyone and let each group share their dialogue bubbles. Emphasise that each of the pictures represents a social situation in which children are interacting with parents. Suggest that the parents had little trouble in guessing what might be said in these pictures because the activities are very familiar. These social situations provide rich opportunities for parents to support their children's efforts to learn language skills. Routine social situations also provide children with a familiar context for learning.

In these situations, children are usually communicating with someone they know intimately (mother, father, sister, brother, grandparent) and the activity around the talk is very predictable (meal time, bath time, getting dressed, play activities).

Ask the parents to think about social situations in the home. In addition to teaching their children words and phrases, what else do parents teach their children about everyday conversation in the home?

Sample answers:

- taking turns
- polite phrases
- talking to convey emotions/feelings
- looking at someone when you speak
- accompanying talk with gestures
- asking and answering questions
- times for talking and not talking
- different purposes for talking
- changing the tone of your voice
- doing things as you are talking

Point out that, as children learn to speak, they learn not only words but also behaviours associated with social situations. Words and actions are linked in children's minds and together they become routines.



Talk and school

To prepare:



Select Photopak cards depicting talking scenes. If possible, try to find some magazine pictures of classroom scenes depicting teachers talking to children or children talking to children.



Write the headings: **Home talk** and **School talk** at the top of a flipchart page and prepare **Home talk** and **School talk** cards by writing each sentence on a separate index card.

Home talk:

Let's do this together. I'll help you.
Are you hungry; do you want something to eat?
Why don't you go outside and play?
Don't talk with your mouth full.
Time to get up, sleepyhead.
SSShh, the baby's sleeping.
Pick those things up off the floor.
Would you like to read a story?

School talk:

You have half an hour to do this.
It's time for Big Break.
It's break time, you have twenty minutes.
If you want to talk, raise your hand.
You're late, didn't you hear the bell?
No talking.
Time to tidy up before we go.
Take out your books.



Refer to **Parents' Pack B, p. 2 - Talk and school.**

What to do:

Show the parents pictures of school situations and explain that school is a new **social situation** for children. In school, there are particular rules and conventions for communication. Ask the parents:

- *How are these different from home situations?*
- *What about the first days in a new classroom?*
- *How is this experience different from home?*

Divide the parents into small groups. Distribute the **Home talk** and **School talk** cards among the groups. Ask the parents to think about whether the language on the cards would be heard in the home or school. Ask each group to stick their cards under the **Home talk** or **School talk** headings on the flipchart. Can they think of other differences between **Home talk** and **School talk**?

Finish by discussing **Parents' Pack B, p. 2 - Talk and school.**



One of the Junior Infants teachers from your local primary school could be invited to talk about the routine of the first few days at school.



Talk and school

When your child begins school, it is important to help her to get to know the classroom routine and to feel confident in the social expectations of classroom talk.

Help your child to know the classroom environment.

Before your child starts school, play school with her.

An older sibling is often very willing to be a teacher to a younger one.

Once your child starts school let her be the teacher and you or an older sibling be the student.

This will give your child a chance to act out her impressions of the teacher's role and expectations.

You could ask your child to draw a picture of the classroom or draw it together.

Ask about places:

Where do you sit?

Where does your teacher sit?

Where is the toilet?

Where do you put your coat and school bag?

Ask about time:

When do you have breaks?

What do you do?

Ask about language:

What do you say if you want to go to the toilet?

What do you call your teacher?

Ask about events:

What do you do first in the morning?

Ask about likes and dislikes:

What did you like about the story that your teacher read today?



Open and closed questions

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

Prepare topics for exercises on open and closed questions, e.g. children, television programmes, shopping, films, food, etc.



Refer to Parents' Pack B, p. 3 - Open and closed questions and p. 4 - Talking with your child.

What to do:

Write these questions on the flipchart:

- *What do children like to talk about?*
- *Where does most of the conversation take place between parents and others in the home?*
- *When do most conversations happen?*
- *What types of conversations would children hear in the home?*

Spend a few minutes discussing these questions with the parents and then ask:

- *Could you answer any of these questions by simply saying 'yes' or 'no'?*
- *How would you word a question to get a 'yes' or 'no' response?*

Write their examples on the flipchart.

Explain to the parents that the questions you asked are called **open-ended questions**. The person responding to these questions is encouraged to elaborate on the answer, not just to say 'yes' or 'no'.

Elaborate further using Parents' Pack B, p. 3 - Open and closed questions.

Use one of your prepared topics to further demonstrate the difference between **open and closed questions**. When you feel the parents have the idea, ask them to break into pairs and hand out a different topic to each parent. Their task is to interview each other on their given topic by asking only **closed questions**. After five minutes, ask them to swap topics and ask only **open-ended questions**. Then, reassemble the group and get feedback.

Open and closed questions

Questions for discussion:

- Did you find you needed to concentrate harder to answer an **open-ended question**? Why?
- Did you find it harder to ask an **open-ended question**? Why?
- Did your own interest in the given topic make it easier or harder to ask or to answer questions? Why?

Point out that **open-ended questions** encourage children to think out ideas and organise their thoughts into speech. But add that, while asking **open-ended questions** is one way of stimulating conversation, no one asks **open-ended questions** all the time. Sometimes **closed questions** are more appropriate to the situation. Ask the parents if they can think of times when **closed questions** would be more appropriate. Encourage them to discuss what else might influence conversational styles.

Finish this activity by directing the parents to look at **Parents' Pack B, p. 4 - Talking with your child.**





Open and closed questions

A closed question requires a 'yes' or 'no' answer, or possibly a one word response:

'Did you have a good time in school today?'

'Would you like sausages for your tea?'

'Did you go to the shop?'

An open-ended question requires more information and encourages more thinking:

'What did you do at school today?'

'What would you like for dinner?'

'Where did we go today?'

'What can you tell me about your picture?'

When your child is asked an **open-ended question** she has to use more words to answer you. This also means that she has to organise her thoughts before speaking.





Talking with your child

Take time to talk with your child. Encouraging your child's oral language skills is the first step in developing her reading skills.

Give your child lots of opportunities to put thoughts into words. Be aware that everything you do - playing games, going shopping, making buns - is an opportunity for talking.

Ask your child to explain actions, describe things, express opinions or ideas. Begin questions with *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why* and *how*.

Teach your child the names of things. Ask her to point things out and name them back. Encourage your child to look at similarities and differences between things.

Teach your child words about location and direction, time, size and shape.

Above all, show that you value your child's talk by praising and encouraging her.

Talking with your child builds:

- vocabulary skills,
- communication skills,
- self-esteem.

Finding good times to talk with your child is not always easy, and every family is different. Some parents have found that the best times are:

- | | |
|--------------|--------------------|
| • meal time | • bed time |
| • bath time | • after homework |
| • in the car | • going for a walk |
| • shopping | • cooking |

What are your best times?



Listening skills

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Refer to **Parents' Pack B, p. 5 - How about listening?**

What to do:

Refer back to your opening comments in the introduction to this session. Emphasise that learning to talk is about learning to communicate. Good listening skills are an important part of having meaningful conversations with others.

It is also important to teach children listening skills in preparation for school. In school, children spend a lot of time listening to their teacher explain things and give instructions. If children are to develop good auditory learning skills, they need to become good listeners.

The parents might like to try this listening exercise. Write a short message on a piece of paper. Whisper this message to the person nearest you and ask that person to whisper the message to the next person and so on until the message has been passed through everyone in the room. Ask the last person to repeat the message, then read the original message. The two versions are usually quite different! What do the parents think made it difficult to repeat the exact message?

Ask the parents to brainstorm:

What are good listening skills?

Write their ideas on the flipchart.

Sample answers:

- paying attention
- maintaining eye contact
- looking interested, not doing other things while listening
- making appropriate responses
- not interrupting
- asking questions
- being able to repeat information given orally

Give prompts if necessary.



Listening skills

Questions for discussion:

- *In the exercise on using **open and closed questions**, did **open-ended** or **closed questions** require the interviewer to pay more attention? Why?*
- *How can you tell when someone is not listening?*
- *How do you feel when you think someone is not listening to you?*

Suggest that one way to teach children good listening skills is to demonstrate these skills to children in everyday conversation.

Add, finally, that another way to help children develop good listening skills is through games and stories.

Finish by referring to **Parents' Pack B, p. 5 - How about listening?**



Discussion on listening skills can sometimes lead to a wider discussion on interpersonal skills. If this happens, you might suggest to the parents that you could provide a further session on communication skills for adults.





How about listening?

Listening to your child is the best way to teach her good listening skills.

Here are some ideas:

- Maintain eye contact.
- Be patient.
- Give your child time to get her point across or to tell the story.
- Comment on what she has to say.
- Encourage your child to add details by asking **open-ended questions**.
- Ask your child to tell the story or to give the information to another family member.
- Encourage your child's curiosity.
- Ask for your child's opinions.
- Let her speak without interrupting.
- Praise your child when she waits her turn to speak.
- Thank your child for giving you some information.

Your ideas:



Games that promote talking and listening skills

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Refer to **Parents' Pack B, p. 6 - Games for talking and listening.**

What to do:

Suggest to the parents that, in addition to taking advantage of opportunities to talk with their children, other excellent ways to stimulate talk are through games, stories, rhymes and songs. In this last section, you will look at a number of games that promote language development.

Ask the parents if they can think of any games that promote talking and listening.

Write their suggestions on the flipchart.

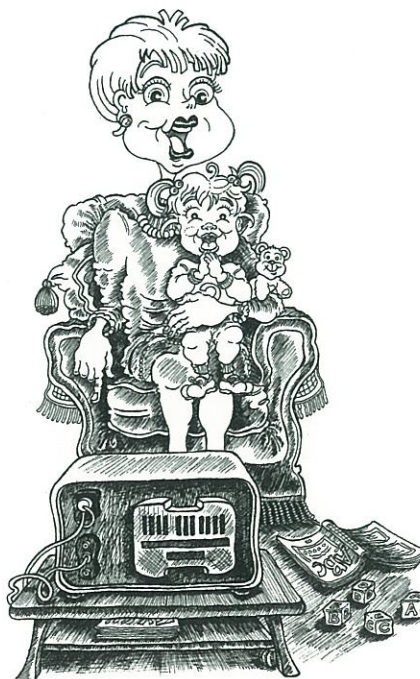
Refer to **Parents' Pack B, p. 6 - Games for talking and listening.**

Are their suggestions already included?

Have they others to add?

Check to see if everyone is familiar with the games discussed.

Demonstrate one or two games if necessary.

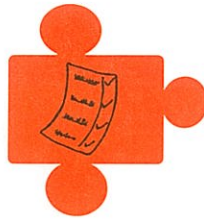




Games for talking and listening

- I hear with my little ear
- I went to the shop to buy...
- I went to the zoo to see...
- Animal Alphabet
- Twenty Questions
- Go Fish
- Simon Says
- Giant Steps and Baby Steps
- Bingo
- Board Games

Your ideas:



Session Summary

Review the session by inviting the parents to reflect on the main ideas in today's session.

Questions to ask:

- *Why is learning to communicate well (talking and listening) an important skill?*
- *How will good talking and listening skills help your children in school?*
- *Did today's session give you any ideas to try at home with your children?*

Refer to **Parents' Pack B, p. 7 - Spotlight on talking and listening**. Explain that this is the first of four **Spotlights** that are used throughout the course as tools for observing the skills that their children are developing. There are **Spotlights** for talking and listening, reading, writing, and maths.

The parents can record their children's progress by shading 'bubbles' when they notice their children demonstrating these skills. Read and discuss the skills in the **Spotlight**. Some of the bubbles are left blank because, as the parents observe their children, you will encourage them to discover and add other skills that are part of talking and listening.



Home Activity 3 - Talking and listening to your child

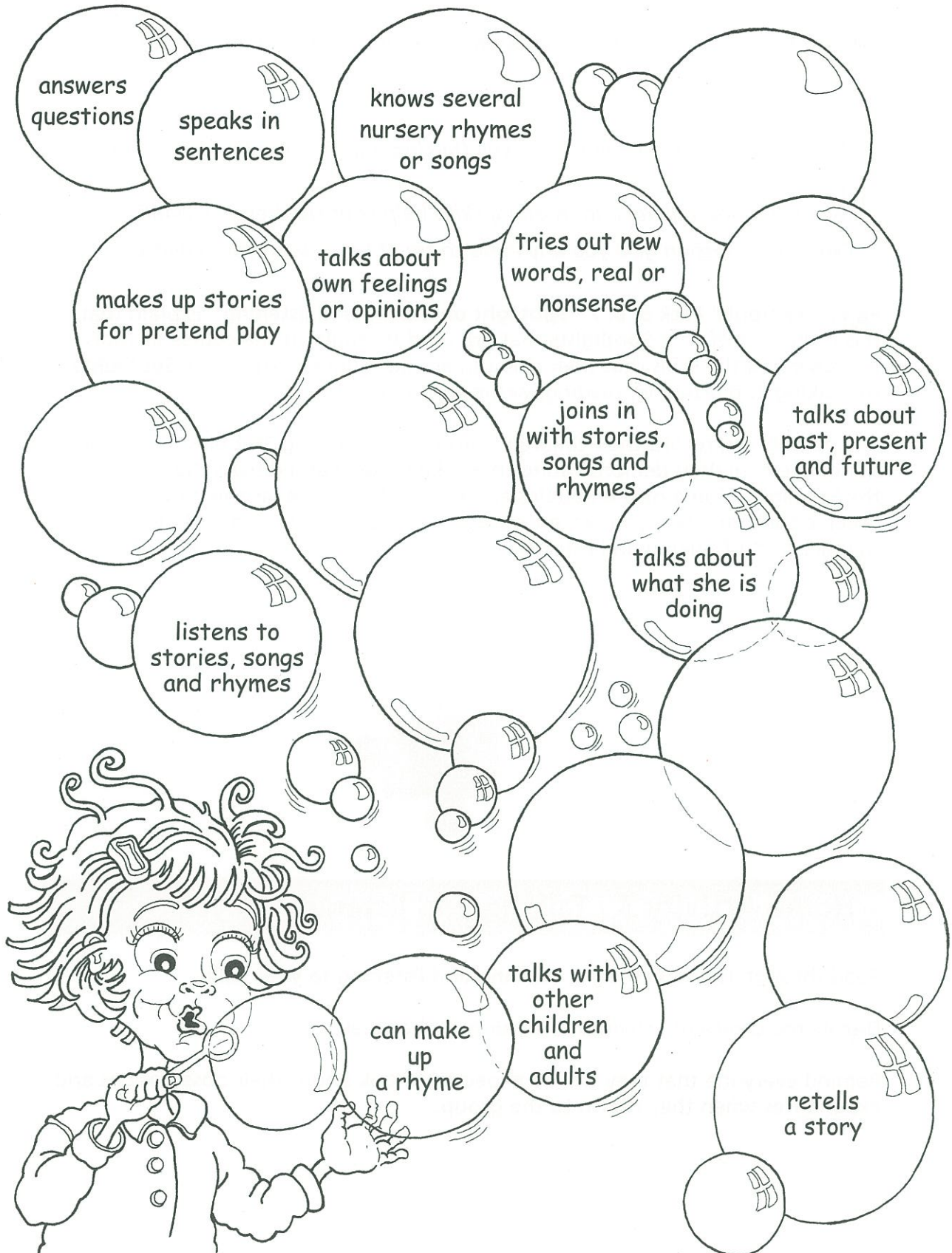
Read through **Home Activity 3 - Talking and listening to your child**.

Discuss the choice of activities to try during the week.

Remind everyone that they will be expected to talk about their observations and experiences when they return to the group.



Spotlight on talking and listening



Name _____

Age _____



Talking and listening to your child

Choose one of these activities to try with your child during the week:

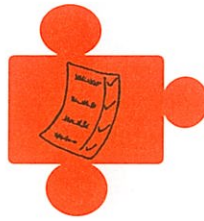
1. Open and closed questions
2. One of the games for talking and listening
3. Spotlight on talking and listening

Which activity did you choose?

When did you try this activity?

What did you learn about your child's talking and listening skills?

What did you and your child enjoy about the activity?



Session Notes

What worked well in this session?

Were there any difficulties?

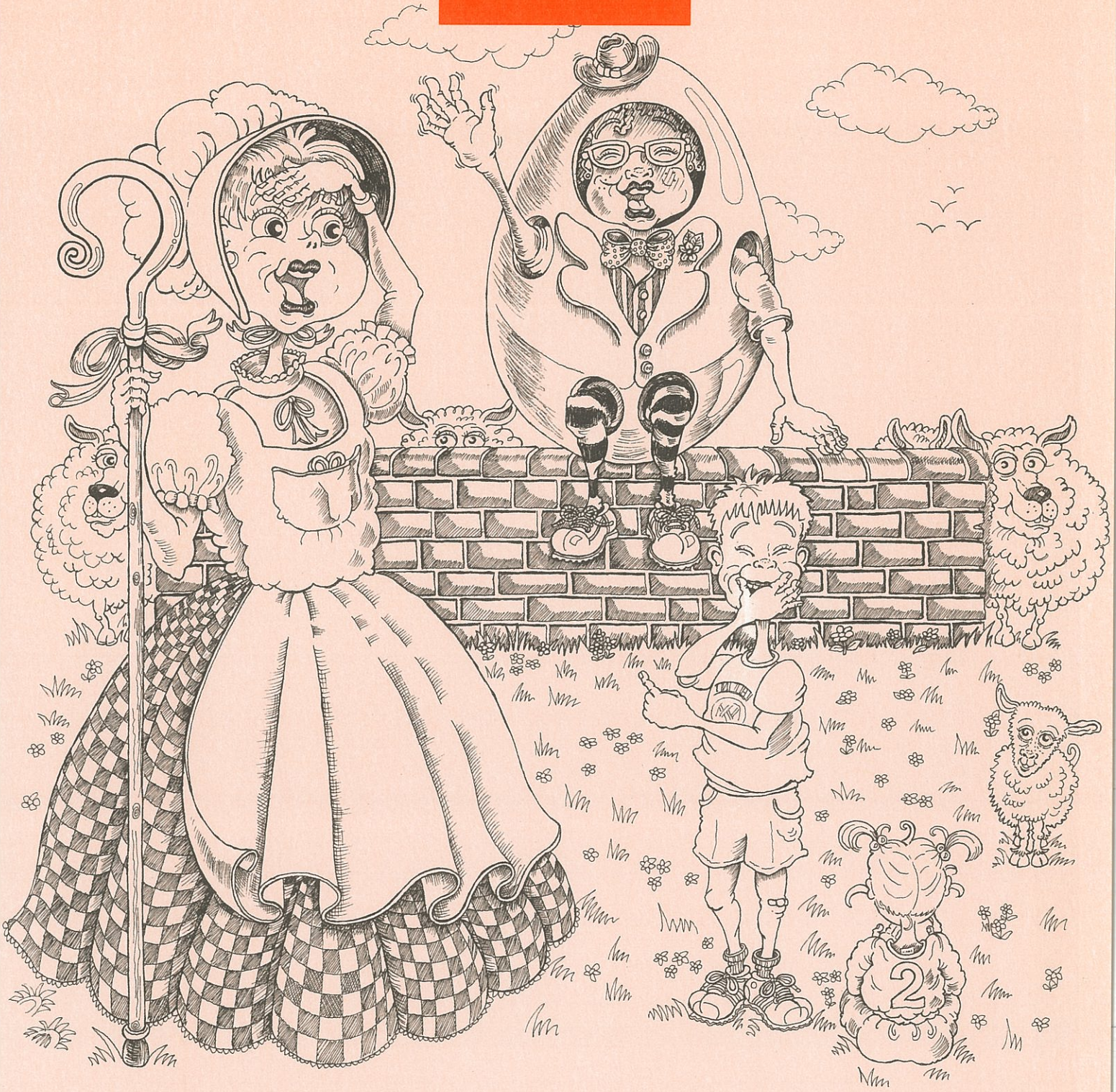
What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?

4





Rhymes, songs
and poems





In this session parents will:

- discuss reasons why teaching children rhymes, songs and poems is important to the development of reading skills;
- explore the connection between sound awareness and the development of reading and writing skills;
- suggest opportunities for increasing their children's experiences of rhymes, songs and poems.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	82
Remember that rhyme	1	20 mins.	83
 Do you remember these rhymes?			84
Sound patterns	2	30 mins.	85-86
 Hearing sound patterns			87
Just for fun - making rhymes	3	10 mins.	88
Action songs and rhymes	4	15 mins.	89-90
 Action songs and rhymes			91
Everyday rhymes	5	30 mins.	92-93
Session Summary		10 mins.	94
Home Activity 4 - Have fun with rhymes			94
 Have fun with rhymes			95
Session Notes			96



Introduction

To prepare:



Display a good selection of children's books with rhyme.

Display a good selection of children's listening tapes with nursery rhymes, songs and poems.

What to do:

Review **Home Activity 3 - Talking and listening to your child.**

Ask for feedback on the **Spotlight on talking and listening.**

Did the **Spotlight on talking and listening** help the parents to observe their children's skills?

Did they notice any skills that were not mentioned in the **Spotlight on talking and listening**?

This session is all about rhymes. Many children enjoy hearing rhymes and repeating them. They also enjoy making up invented words that rhyme. In their daily lives, children are likely to come into contact with many nursery rhymes as well as other forms of rhyming in jingles, songs and slogans. Educators now believe that children's early experience with rhymes helps them to become more aware of sound patterns in words. This is very important for children when they are learning to read.

Invite the parents to look at the books and listen to the tapes on display.

Let them know if the books and tapes are available for borrowing.





Remember that rhyme

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

Refer to **Parents' Pack B, p. 9 - Do you remember these rhymes?** and copy some of the rhymes onto the flipchart.

What to do:

Read the nursery rhymes on the flipchart aloud and ask:

- *Who remembers these rhymes?*
- *Would you know any others?*

Ask the parents to work in pairs to brainstorm more nursery rhymes, and then share their rhymes with another pair. Reassemble the group and list all the rhymes on the flipchart.

Questions for discussion:

- *When did you learn these rhymes?*
- *Why do you think you remember rhymes?*

Sample responses:

- I say them to my children.
- I've said them many times.
- They're very catchy.
- They have a rhythm.
- They get stuck in your head.
- Everyone knows them.

Turn to **Parents' Pack B, p. 9 - Do you remember these rhymes?** Read through the rhymes and discuss.

Questions to ask:

- *Can you spot the words that rhyme?*
- *Where are they?*
- *Do the spellings have to be the same for a word to rhyme?*
- *Are there examples where the words that rhyme are spelled differently?*
- *What is rhyme?*

Write their suggestions on the flipchart or suggest a definition of rhyme yourself:

- A rhyme occurs when a word has the same ending sound as another word.
- A rhyme is a verse or a poem.



Do you remember these rhymes?

Mary had a little lamb.
Its fleece was white as snow,
And everywhere that Mary went,
The lamb was sure to go.

...

Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall.
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king's horses and all the
king's men,
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

...

Little Miss Muffet sat on her tuffet
Eating her curds and whey.
Along came a spider,
And sat down beside her,
And frightened Miss Muffet away.

...

Hickory, dickory, dock
The mouse ran up the clock.
The clock struck one,
The mouse ran down,
Hickory, dickory, dock.

...

Little Jack Horner sat in a corner,
Eating his Christmas pie;
He put in his thumb,
And pulled out a plum,
And said, 'What a good boy am I!'

...

Hey diddle, diddle
The cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon.
The little boy laughed
To see such fun,
And the dish ran away with the
spoon.

Great A, little a
Bouncing B
The Cat's in the cupboard
And can't see me.

...

One for sorrow
Two for joy
Three for a girl
Four for a boy
Five for silver
Six for gold
Seven for a secret
Never to be told.

...

Half a pound of tuppenny rice,
Half a pound of treacle
Mix it up and make it nice
Pop goes the weasel.

...

Star light, star bright,
First star I see tonight,
I wish I may
I wish I might,
Have the wish I wish tonight.

...

Jack be nimble,
Jack be quick,
Jack jump over the candlestick.

...

Little Boy Blue,
Come blow your horn,
The sheep's in the meadow,
The cow's in the corn.

Sound patterns

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

Write out index cards of sample words that have the same beginning or ending sound patterns.

Sample beginning sounds: string, strike, stretch; tree, train, trouble; shoe, ship, shed.

Sample ending sounds: cat, hat, sat; sing, wing, thing; bake, cake, take.

Choose words that have identical sound/spelling patterns.

Make six to eight samples of each.



Refer to **Parents' Pack B, p. 10 - Hearing sound patterns.**

What to do:

Explain that an awareness of rhyme has been shown to have a link with learning to read and with the development of spelling skills. Educators now believe that children who are familiar with similarities in the beginning and ending sounds of words find it easier to recognise and remember the letter patterns that produce these sounds.

Divide the parents into small groups and distribute the index cards with identical ending sounds. Ask them to read each sample and see if they can identify the ending sound patterns. If they are having difficulty, suggest that they read the cards out loud to try and spot the ending sound pattern.

Questions to ask:

- *Do you recognise these sound patterns?*
- *Can you think of other words with this same spelling pattern?*
- *Can you suggest other groups of words that have the same ending sound patterns?*

Write these on the flipchart.

Next, focus the parents' attention on the sample cards with identical beginning sound patterns.

Questions to ask:

- *Do you recognise these sound patterns?*
- *What other words can you think of with this same spelling pattern?*
- *Can you suggest other word groups with the same beginning sound patterns?*

Write these on the flipchart.



Sound patterns

Questions to ask:

- *What strategies did you use to figure out beginning or ending sound patterns?*
- *Did you say the words in your heads and then visualise the spelling?*
- *Did you choose the words you were most familiar with?*

Again, emphasise that children who develop an awareness of these similar sound patterns in word beginnings and endings find it easier to make the connections between the sound patterns and the letter patterns that produce these sounds.

This understanding and awareness of sound patterns, especially at the beginnings and endings of words, has been described by educators as sound pattern awareness, or phonological awareness.

Questions for discussion:

- *How would **sound pattern awareness** be helpful in learning to read?*
- *How would **sound pattern awareness** be helpful for spelling?*
- *Do you think your children have an awareness of sound patterns already?*
- *How do you think they developed that awareness?*

The next activities will look at strategies for encouraging children's awareness of sound patterns.

Turn to **Parents' Pack B, p. 10 - Hearing sound patterns.**





Hearing sound patterns

When children learn to hear the sounds that letters make in words, they develop sound pattern awareness. When they recognise similar sound patterns, particularly beginning and ending sounds, it helps them to make the connection with letter patterns. This is an important skill for learning to read and spell.

Ideas for encouraging your child's sound pattern awareness:

- Help your child to learn and say rhymes.
- Point out beginning and ending sound patterns in words that your child sees and hears every day, for example, television or radio jingles.
- Read or tell nursery rhymes and poems often.
- Sing or listen to songs - 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star', 'Row, Row, Row Your Boat'.
- Encourage your child to rhyme his name and make up rhymes with real words or nonsense words.
- Use rhyming words in storytelling: 'Splish, splosh, splash,' went the duck in the water. 'Mish, mash, mush,' said the little pig in the mud.

Ideas for rhyming games:

- Say a word and ask your child to rhyme another word with it.
- Say or sing a rhyme leaving out a rhyming word and see if your child can fill it in, for example:

'Mary had a little lamb,
Its fleece was white as snow.
And everywhere that Mary went
The lamb was sure to ____.'

- Say the wrong word and see if your child can spot the mistake, for example:

'I'm a little a teapot
Short and stout
Here is my handle
Here is my bellybutton.'
- Play 'I Spy With My Little Eye, something that begins with or rhymes with...'



Just for fun - making rhymes

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

What to do:

This is a short fun activity to try before a break or if you have extra time.

- Begin by suggesting that parents produce a group rhyme.
- Put up some key words on the flipchart.

For example: gnome, poem, shoe, blue might become...

There once was a gnome
Who wrote a funny poem.
He tied it to his shoe
To read when he felt blue.

If the parents are enthusiastic, they can try to rhyme their children's names or family name and write a little poem. This activity can also be presented by giving the parents handouts containing rhymes that are partially written and asking them to fill in the missing rhyming words with words from the flipchart.



Have a puppet-making session to demonstrate strategies for adding drama to nursery rhymes, songs and poetry.



To prepare:



What to do:

Refer back to **Activity 2 - Sound patterns.**

You would expect to hear:

- Remind the parents about the discussion in **Session 2** about the three learning styles:

- Discuss the fact that hearing and using sound patterns is an auditory activity. However, some children do not distinguish sounds easily and may need to be able to use some of their other senses in order to develop sound pattern awareness. Activities that involve all the senses are called **multi-sensory**. They involve all the learning styles and, therefore, are more likely to meet the needs of every type of learner.

Ask the parents to suggest ideas for rhyming activities that combine learning styles.





Action songs and rhymes

Someone may suggest adding gestures to rhymes. If not, suggest it yourself.

Play some tapes which include **action songs**.

Turn to **Parents' Pack B, p. 11 - Action songs and rhymes**.

Read or sing two or three of the songs with the gestures. (You can go through all the songs if the parents are enthusiastic.)

Questions for discussion:

What learning styles are involved in this activity?

Sample answers:

Hearing - Auditory

Hearing the song and rhyme

Seeing - Visual

Watching someone model the gestures to the words

Touching - Movement - Kinesthetic

Using movements with the words

Why do action songs and rhymes meet the needs of every type of learner?



Invite a musician who specialises in songs for children to come to a session.





Action songs and rhymes

The Wheels on the Bus

The wheels on the bus go round and round,
Round and round,
Round and round,
The wheels on the bus go round and round,
All through the town.

The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish,
Swish, swish, swish,
Swish, swish, swish,
The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish,
All through the town.

Continue on with as many verses as you like:

The driver on the bus says, 'Move on back,'
The horn on the bus goes beep, beep, beep,
The baby on the bus goes, 'Wah, wah, wah.'

...

I'm A Little Teapot

I'm a little teapot, short and stout,
Here is my handle,
Here is my spout,
When I start to boil you'll hear me shout,
'Tip me over and pour me out.'

...

Incy Wincy Spider

The incy wincy spider went up the waterspout,
Down came the rain and washed the spider out,
Out came the sun and dried up all the rain,
And the incy wincy spider went up the spout again.

Here Is the Church

Here is the church,
Here is the steeple,
Open the doors,
And see all the people.

...

If You're Happy And You Know It

If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands,
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands,
If you're happy and you know it, And you really want to show it,
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands.

If you're cross and you know it, stamp your feet,
If you're cross and you know it, stamp your feet,
If you're cross and you know it, And you really want to show it,
If you're cross and you know it, stamp your feet.

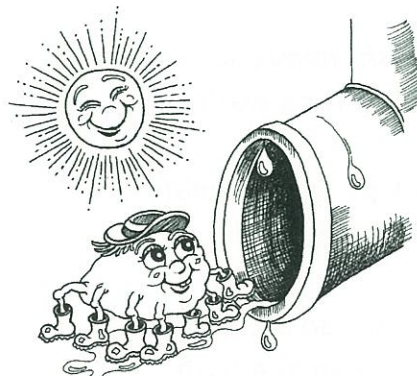
Other verses:

If you're sad and you know it, cry a lot.
If you're silly and you know it, laugh a lot.

...

Pat-A-Cake

Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake
Baker's man
Bake me a cake as fast as you can.
Roll it and prick it
And mark it with (first letter of child's name)
And throw it in the oven for (child's name) and me.





Everyday rhymes

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



You will also need some magazines, scissors, glue and A4 paper.

What to do:

Explain to the parents that this activity is designed to provide another strategy for developing children's sound pattern awareness. In **Session 2** and **Session 3**, the parents discussed how familiar tasks and routines in the home are excellent learning opportunities for children. When children are involved in activities that are based on real life experiences, it is easier for them to make the connections that will help them build and remember new skills.

Using the flipchart, ask the parents to brainstorm a list of everyday activities in the home that involve their children.

Sample answers:

- taking a bath
- getting dressed
- eating
- playing
- going to bed
- going for a walk or drive
- setting a table
- picking up toys
- playing with a pet

Choose one of the activities to demonstrate the rhyming possibilities, for example, taking a bath:

Splish, splash, splosh

Ready for a wash

Splash, splosh, splish

I feel like a fish

Splosh, splish, splash

I'm clean in a flash

Everyday rhymes

The second step of the activity, which helps give children a visual clue for remembering the rhyme, is to add a picture that illustrates the action. Draw the parents' attention to the magazines, glue, paper and scissors. Ask them to break into groups and choose one of the activities on the flipchart to make everyday rhymes for their children.

The purpose of working in a group is to encourage the parents to help each other and to share their ideas. However, each parent will finish the activity with an individual rhyme. Suggest that the parents modify the activity in any way that suits their needs.

For example:

Some parents may want to create the rhyme at home with their children.

Some parents may not want to write down their rhymes.

Some parents may create a whole series of rhymes.

Leave time at the end of the activity for sharing.

Encourage the parents to try the everyday rhymes at home during the week.





Session Summary

Invite the parents to reflect on the key concepts of this session by reviewing the explanations of **rhyme** and **sound pattern awareness** that were discussed earlier.

Questions for discussion:

- *Why do children remember rhymes?*
- *How can sound pattern awareness help your children with reading?*
- *How can sound pattern awareness help your children with writing?*
- *Do you have any ideas about how you might use some of the rhyming activities with your children?*

Refer to **Parents' Pack B, p. 7 - Spotlight on talking and listening**. Encourage the parents to continue with their observations of their children's talking and listening skills.



Home Activity 4 - Have fun with rhymes

Read through **Home Activity 4 - Have fun with rhymes** which asks the parents to try out one of the rhyming activities.

Remind the parents that, although they do not need to write answers to questions in the activity, they will be expected to share their observations at the next session.

Also ask the parents to look for examples of radio or TV jingles, posters, or any type of advertising that incorporates rhymes or beginning sound patterns.



Have fun with rhymes

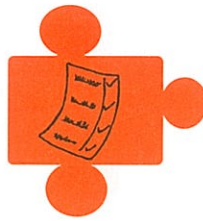
Choose a rhyming activity from the page **Hearing sound patterns**.

Which activity did you choose?

What did your child enjoy about the activity?

What radio or TV jingles is your child familiar with?

Can you name some other examples of rhyme in your home?



Session Notes

What worked well in this session?

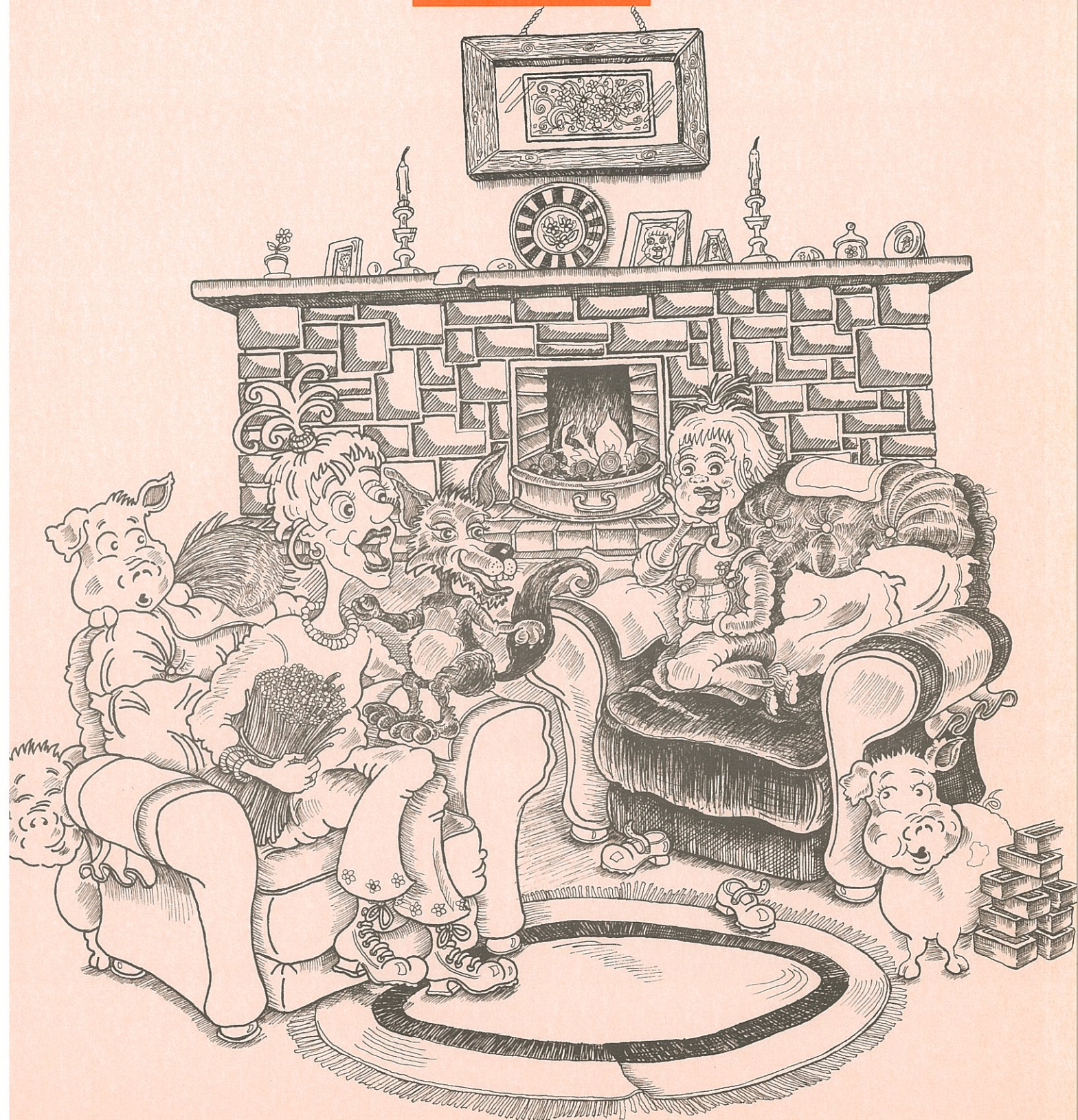
Were there any difficulties?

What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?







Storytelling





In this session parents will:

- look at the underlying patterns in storytelling;
- discuss why stories and storytelling are important for the development of language skills;
- explore opportunities for storytelling in their homes.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	100
Looking at patterns in stories	1	20 mins.	101-102
 Recipe for a story			103-104
Everyone has a story to tell	2	20 mins.	105-106
 Story box			107
Children telling stories	3	20 mins.	108-109
 Helping your child to retell a story			110
Fractured fairy tales	4	60 mins.	111-112
 Fractured fairy tales			113
 Making puppets			114
Session Summary		10 mins.	115
Home Activity 5 - Storytelling			115
 Storytelling			116
Session Notes			117



Introduction

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

What to do:

Review **Home Activity 4 - Have fun with rhymes.**

Today's session will continue work with oral language skills.

The parents will explore how experience with storytelling can make an important contribution to helping children learn to read and write.

Remind the parents about earlier discussions on why the home is a good place for learning. Children know who they are and where they are within the home and this 'sense of place' builds confidence.

Explain that in a similar way, returning to the same story over and over provides a familiar framework in which to explore language, ideas, emotions, life situations and other people's viewpoints.

Questions to ask:

- *Who tells stories in your home?*
- *What are the stories about?*
- *Do your children have favourite stories that they ask to hear over and over again?*
- *Do your children tell stories?*



ACTIVITY 1

5



20 mins.

Looking at patterns in stories

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Have on hand a few storybooks with versions of a favourite fairy tale, e.g. 'The Three Little Pigs'.

Write onto the flipchart three rhymes from **Session 4 - Do you remember these Rhymes?** - 'Humpty Dumpty', 'Little Miss Muffet', 'Mary had a Little Lamb'.



Refer to **Parents' Pack B, pp. 13-14 - Recipe for a story.**

What to do:

The purpose of this activity is to use stories that the parents are familiar with in order to stimulate a discussion on the underlying patterns that help us create, remember and retell stories. (**Please note:** if the suggestions here are not culturally appropriate to the parents, select alternatives, e.g. Bible stories, ballads, legends, myths.)

Show the parents your examples of storybooks about a favourite fairy tale.

Questions to ask:

- *Is anyone familiar with this story?*
- *What happens in this story?*
- *Could you retell this story out of your heads?*
- *What helps us to remember and retell the sequence of events in this story?*

Explain that all stories are built on a framework. Knowing the underlying pattern of storytelling helps us to remember and retell stories we have heard before, and guides us when we want to tell our own stories.

Reading, telling and sharing stories are some of the most important activities parents (and other family members) can do with their children, because the experience helps children to learn a number of key skills which they will later apply when learning to read and write:

- remembering the details of a story;
- relating those details in a particular order;
- using their knowledge of storytelling patterns to make predictions about what will happen in a story;
- following the framework for storytelling in order to tell and later to write their own stories.



Looking at patterns in stories

Point out the three rhymes on the flipchart page.

Ask the parents to look again at these rhymes.

Questions for discussion:

- *Each of these rhymes describes an event that happens. What is the event described in each rhyme?*
- *Does knowing the events that happen in each of these rhymes help us to remember the rhymes?*
- *Do these rhymes tell a story?*
- *How do you know what a story is?*
- *What would we have to add to these rhymes to turn them into stories?*

To give them an example, read **Parents' Pack B, pp. 13-14 - Recipe for a story.**

Questions to ask:

- *How does the writer turn the experience of cooking something into a framework for storytelling?*
- *What did the writer add to the 'Little Miss Muffet' rhyme in order to turn it into a story?*
- *Can the parents apply the recipe framework to another story, e.g. 'The Three Little Pigs'?*

Write the recipe directions on the flipchart and see if the parents can retell the story of **'The Three Little Pigs'** (or an example you have chosen) using the recipe format.





Recipe for a story

There are many recipes for storytelling. Here's one we'd like to share with you...

1. Start by telling your audience what's cooking.

(There are plenty of off the shelf story starters available... Once upon a time... Long, long, ago... There once was a... I remember when...)

Did you hear what happened to Matilda Muffet?

2. Blend together carefully selected amounts of who, what, when and where.

(We're using Miss Muffet doing spring-cleaning on a Saturday in her cottage. But feel free to experiment.)

You remember Miss Muffet, small, fussy woman always complaining about children running through her garden? She lives in that small cottage near Mother Goose's Cross. Well, last Saturday she was doing her spring-cleaning. House proud? There's no one as fussy as Matilda. She spent the whole day washing walls, scraping tiles, cleaning presses, dusting cobwebs, beating rugs, polishing furniture, wiping finger prints off the light switches. Every room in that house was under assault from Matilda's mops and cloths and sprays.

It was evening by the time she finished, and after all that hard work, Matilda decided to reward herself with a treat. Know what that was? Curds and whey. I know, I know. *Curds and whey?* But that was Matilda. She was going to sit down on her tuffet, turn on '**Coronation Street**' and enjoy a nice hot bowl of steaming curds and whey...

3. Cook up a bit of trouble and allow to simmer.

(Nothing goes smoothly in stories, that's what keeps us listening. So while Matilda looks forward to her evening off, we look forward to what's going to happen...)

It was half seven when she finally sat down on her tuffet to sample her favourite treat. She turned on '**Coronation Street**'. Deirdre was still whimpering about how she'd been betrayed by a cunning lover and ended up in prison. 'Tut tut,' Miss Muffet clucked, 'If that woman did half the work I do, it's far from love affairs and knaves of the heart she'd be.'

Just then Matilda became aware of a presence in the room. Something she couldn't put her hand on, but it made her nervous all the same... She sensed that she was being approached. Someone was drawing near...



Recipe for a story

In a minute a dark figure came into view looking menacingly, first at Miss Muffet, then at her curds and whey...

Then a voice said, 'So you think you've a mighty day's work done do you? Did you ever think that your day's work has just destroyed my entire family and left me homeless?'

4. Shake in a solution.

(We know, of course, that the dark stranger is a spider, but what do we want to happen? Do we want Miss Muffet to clout the spider and go back to 'Coronation Street'? Or do we think the spider has a point?)

Miss Muffet stared numbly at the spider, hardly believing what she was seeing, let alone hearing. All of a sudden, she jumped up, toppling her bowl as she did, and bolted out the door.

5. Taste, and if necessary, adjust the solution.

(I think we'll just stick with tradition here...)

She didn't look back. She didn't see the curds and whey ooze out from under the broken bowl onto the just waxed floor.

6. Remove from flame and serve up a happy ending.

(For the spider anyway...)

But the spider did, and taking some degree of satisfaction from this small revenge, settled onto the tuffet to watch the end of 'Coronation Street' in splendid comfort.

(Well, the spider turns this around. But don't be fooled. Miss Muffet's probably gone off to sign up for a karate course at her local adult education centre. She'll be back!)

The End

Everyone has a story to tell

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Refer to **Parents' Pack B, p. 15 - Story box**.

Copy the **Story box** onto a flipchart page.

What to do:

Ask the parents to think of the stories they tell their children.

Where do their ideas come from?

Sample answers:

- TV/radio
- films/news
- childhood memories
- rhymes/verses
- school events/happenings
- hearing others' stories
- pets
- family events
- toys/familiar objects
- own experience

Suggest that stories can be told about anything.

They can be historical (a retelling of real events) or fictional (an imaginative telling of events or experiences).

Sometimes, a story can be made up of a combination of real and fictitious events, for example, the film, **'Titanic'**.

All the storyteller needs to do is fit the characters and events into a basic storytelling structure. **Recipe for a story** in **Activity 1** provided one example of a storytelling framework. The **Story box** is another.

Turn to **Parents' Pack B, p. 15 - Story box**. Again, use the example of a familiar story such as **'The Three Little Pigs'** to illustrate the framework outlined here. Then invite the parents to invent their own stories.

Divide the parents into groups. Copy the **Story box** grid onto the flipchart. Give each group some pencils and paper and ask the parents to use the grid to come up with the basic elements of a story.

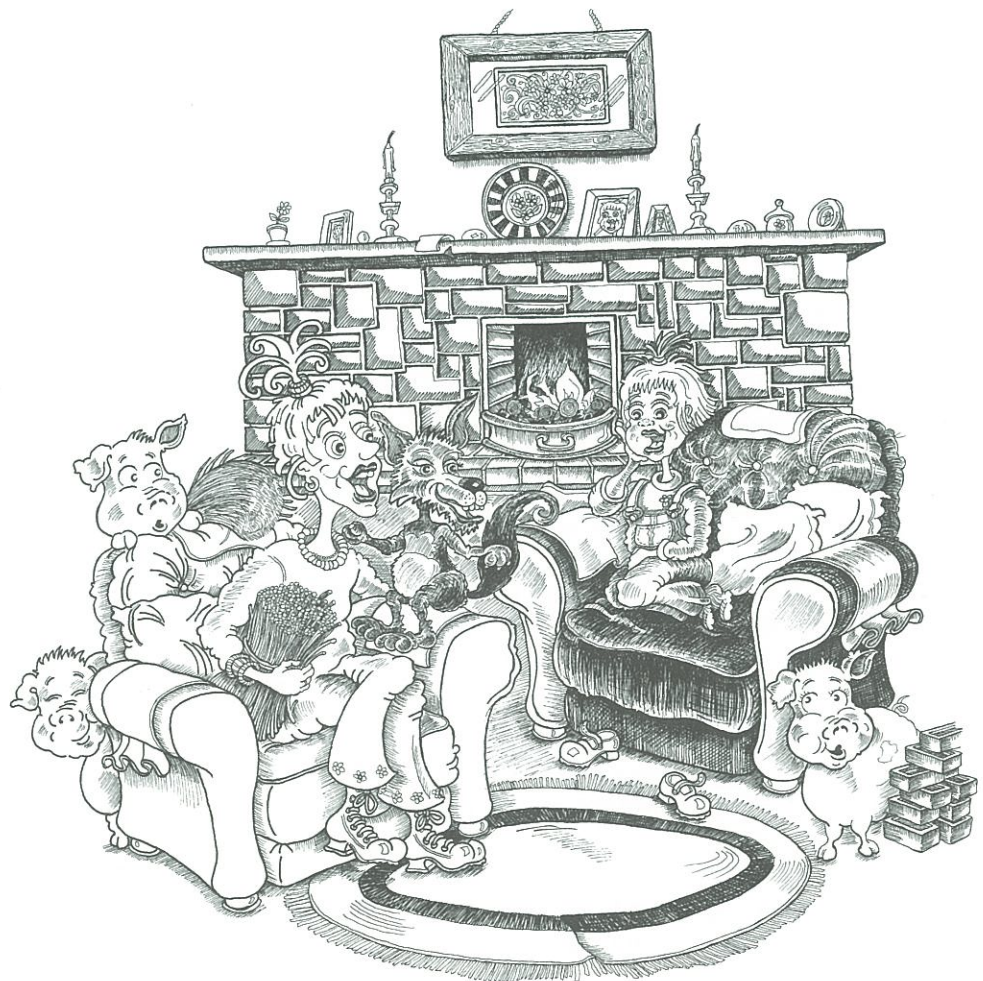


ACTIVITY 2

Everyone has a story to tell

After a few minutes, ask for feedback. However, instead of asking one group to give all their details, ask one group for a *Character*, another for an *Opposing character*, another for *Time* and so on. This exercise usually produces some very funny story lines.

When you have filled in the **Story box** on the flipchart, take it to the next step by adding in storytelling phrases such as 'once upon a time' and 'they lived happily ever after', and turn it into a complete story.





Story box

CHARACTER	Who is the hero or heroine?
OPPOSING CHARACTER	Who else is in the story? Who is the 'bad guy'?
TIME	When does the story take place?
PLACE/SETTING	Where does the story take place?
MAIN ACTION	What is supposed to happen?
PROBLEM	What goes wrong?
RESOLUTION	How is this solved? Happy ending? Sad ending?



Children telling stories

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Refer to **Parents' Pack B, p. 16 - Helping your child to retell a story.**

What to do:

Ask the parents whether they have heard their children telling stories to them, to grandparents, to siblings, to family pets, to favourite toys.

What kind of stories do they tell?

Write their answers on the flipchart.

Explain that telling stories helps children to improve their language skills and to organise their thinking. Children's interest in telling stories is likely to develop naturally from hearing stories told to them. At the same time, there are several ways parents can stimulate their children's interest in storytelling and support their efforts.

One way is to encourage their imagination through play. Props like dolls, teddies, cardboard cut outs, or finger puppets can help to stimulate imagination.

Another way is to 'scaffold' a child through a retelling of a popular story. An example is provided in **Parents' Pack B, p. 16 - Helping your child to retell a story.**

A third way is to play a story game. **The recipe for a story** or the **Story box** could be turned into a game with the children calling out the ingredients of the story or filling in the answers in the **story box**. Another possibility is **The but story**.

Invite the parents to try **The but story**. One person starts a story with a sentence about a character and something he or she did or was trying to do. Each person in turn adds to the story by alternating lucky and unlucky events.

Example:

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| First person: | Once upon a time there was a little girl who wanted to go for a walk in the woods BUT |
| Second person: | She didn't have a very good sense of direction and she got lost and wandered around for hours and hours BUT |
| Third person: | She found a pretty little cottage covered with ivy in the middle of the trees BUT |
| Fourth person: | No one was there, so she couldn't get directions to find her way home BUT |

Children telling stories

Fifth person: Luckily, the owners had left three bowls of porridge, and she was so hungry BUT

Continue the story for as long as you like.

Ask the parents to reflect on how using this story structure can help children to develop storytelling abilities.

Sample responses:

- The children have to pay attention.
- The story is already started, so it helps them to build ideas.
- It directs their attention to particular details.
- Children have a structure that helps them to organise their ideas.
- Parents can give prompts when children become confused.
- Parents can redirect the story when necessary.
- Parents have opportunities to give lots of praise and encouragement.





Helping your child to retell a story

Choose a story you both know well.	'Can you tell me about Goldilocks and the Three Bears?'
Start your child at the beginning.	'Once upon a time there were three bears.'
Direct her attention to particular details.	'What was Goldilocks doing when she came to the three bears' cottage?'
Ask questions to help her remember the story.	'And what happened when she sat on Baby Bear's chair?'
Give prompts when she gets confused.	'The chair broke, didn't it? And then Goldilocks went upstairs to the bedrooms. Whose bed did she lie on first?'
Redirect the story when necessary.	'But the bears didn't come home right away, did they? What happened first?'
Give lots of praise and encouragement.	'That was a great story. Thank you for telling it to me.'

ACTIVITY

4

Fractured fairy tales

To prepare:



Organise your materials:

for puppet making - old socks, cardboard tubes from toilet or kitchen rolls, buttons, coloured paper, wool, scissors, glue, markers.



for costume materials - hats, scarves, old jewellery.

for props - stuffed animals, miscellaneous toys, etc.

Make a sample sock puppet and a sample cardboard tube puppet.



Refer to **Parents' Pack B p. 17 - Fractured fairy tales** and **Parents' Pack B, p. 18 - Making puppets**.

Collect some examples of **fractured fairy tales**. Readily available titles include:

'Has Anyone Seen Jack?', by Tony Bradman (Frances Lincoln)

'Prince Cinders', by Babette Cole (Puffin)

'A Rugrats' Night Before Christmas', by David Lewman (Simon & Schuster)

'Rugrats Once Upon a Reptar', by Kitty Richards (Simon & Schuster)

'The True Story of The 3 Little Pigs', by Jon Scieszka (Puffin)

'The Stinky Cheese Man And Other Fairly Stupid Tales', by Jon Scieszka (Puffin)

'Jim and The Bean Stalk', by Raymond Briggs (Puffin)

'King Change-a-lot', by Babette Cole (Puffin)

'Beware of Boys', by Tony Blundell (Puffin)

'The Paper Bag Princess', by Robert Munsch (Scholastic)

'Little Lumpty', by Miko Imai (Walker)

'Princess Smarty Pants', by Babette Cole (Puffin)

'Nice Work, Little Wolf!', by Hilda Offen (Puffin)

'Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?', by Tony Bradman (Mammoth)

What to do:

The **fractured fairy tale** is a two part activity that builds on the **Story Box** by exploring different possibilities for engaging in constructing and retelling stories with children. It also gives parents strategies for stimulating their children's own imagination and storytelling skills.

Start by reading and discussing **Fractured fairy tales - Parents' Pack B, p. 17**.

Questions to ask:

- How would you use the **Story box** to fracture a fairy tale?
- Why would children enjoy these stories?
- What are some ideas for fracturing other fairy tales?



Fractured fairy tales

Divide the parents into groups, not too small as fairy tales tend to have many characters. Assign each group a fairytale (or let them choose their own). Tell them to use the guidelines for fracturing the fairy tale to create a new story, which they will then present to the whole group.

Before they begin, remind the parents about earlier activities that pointed out how children enjoy dressing up and adding props to support and enhance their storytelling. Display the sample puppets and puppet-making materials. Describe how to make the puppets by referring to **Parents' Pack B, p. 18 - Making puppets**. Also, point out additional props and costume-making materials.

Invite the groups to include puppets, costumes and props to experience the dramatic possibilities of storytelling. They have the option of using some or all of the materials on display. Encourage them to be as imaginative as possible.

Allow about twenty minutes for preparation and twenty minutes for performances.



Discuss possibilities for further storytelling sessions. These could include:

- making story kits,
- inviting a professional storyteller,
- looking at stories for older children.





Fractured fairy tales

Children love the humour and playful quality of this type of storytelling. To 'fracture' a fairy tale, you simply take a familiar fairy tale and change it around to suit your purpose.

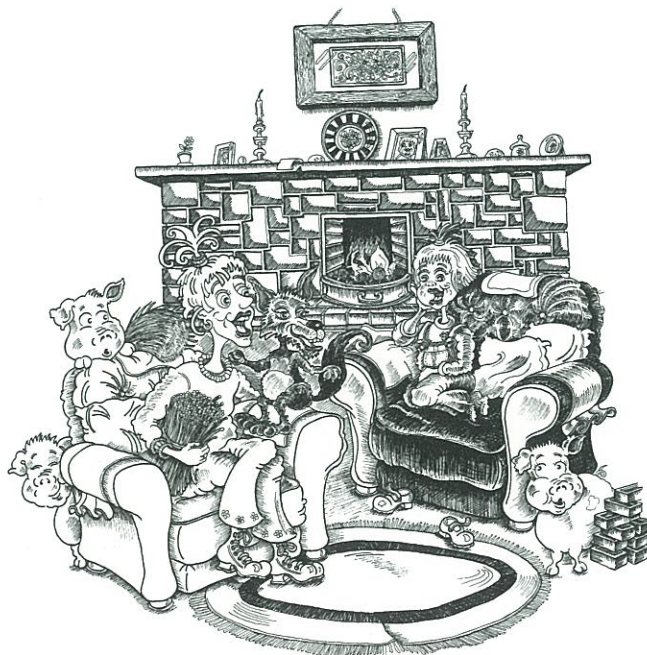
- Characters might become animals, space aliens, or people in your family.
- New characters can be added.
- The plot can be twisted in various directions.
- The setting can be completely altered.
- The story can be told from another perspective.

For example:

'**The Three Little Pigs**' could take place under the sea. The *three little pigs* could be the *three little codfish*, or how about *merpigs*? The *big bad wolf* could be the *awesome awful octopus*. They could try to build houses out of seaweed, shells, or timber from a sunken ship...

'**The Frog Prince**' could become the '*The Spider Prince*' or the '*The Martian Prince*'. Instead of the princess kissing him, and turning him into a prince, turn it around, the frog kisses her and she turns into a frog.

'**Sleeping Beauty**' could be changed to '*Sneezing Beauty*' or '*Snoring Beauty*'.

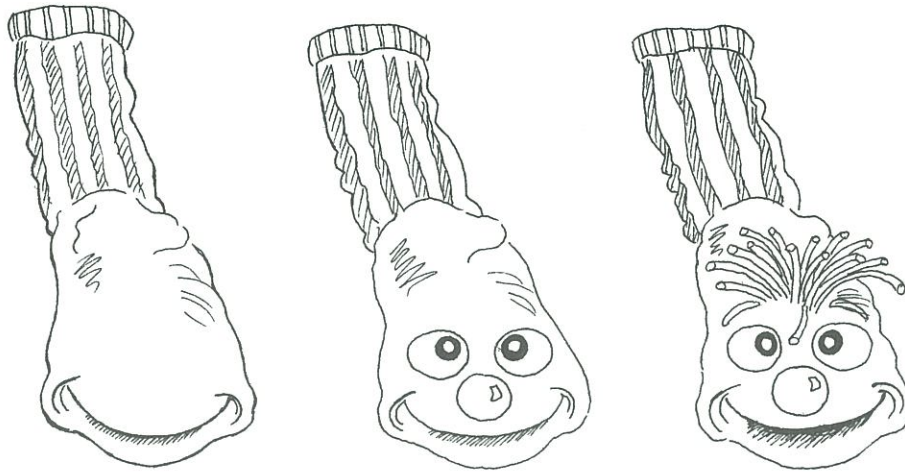




Making puppets

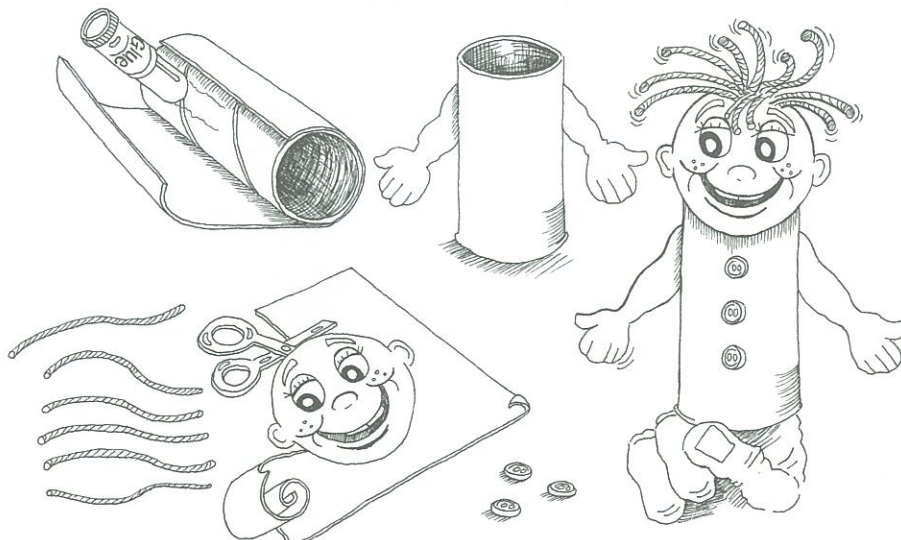
Sock puppet:

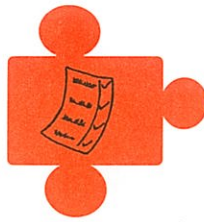
1. For eyes and nose, glue buttons or small circles of coloured paper onto a sock.
2. Cut out a tongue or mouth out of paper.
3. Glue on some wool for hair or fur.



Cardboard tube puppet:

1. Use cello tape or glue to cover the toilet roll with coloured paper for a body.
2. Draw or cut and paste details as desired.
3. Using paper, cut out a large circle for a head and draw on a face.
4. Glue the head onto the tube.
5. Add extras such as wool for hair, glitter...





Session Summary

Review the session by inviting the parents to give feedback about the storytelling activities.

Questions to ask:

- *Which activities were most enjoyable?*
- *How have the activities in this session helped to give you a better understanding of story structure?*
- *How can experiences with storytelling help your children to develop their reading and writing skills?*



Home Activity 5 - Storytelling

Read through **Home Activity 5 - Storytelling**, which gives the parents a choice of storytelling activities to try out at home. Remind them that they will be invited to talk about their experiences when they return next week.

Refer again to the **Spotlight on talking and listening**.



Storytelling

During the week, try to make time to share a storytelling activity with your child. You could experiment with telling a story such as a fractured fairy tale or **The but story**.

What stories do you like telling to your child?

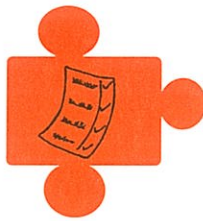
What are your child's favourite stories?

Does your child ever join in with the storytelling?

Is your child able to retell the story?

Who are your child's favourite characters?

Can your child talk about the beginning, middle and end of the story?



Session Notes

What worked well in this session?

Were there any difficulties?

What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

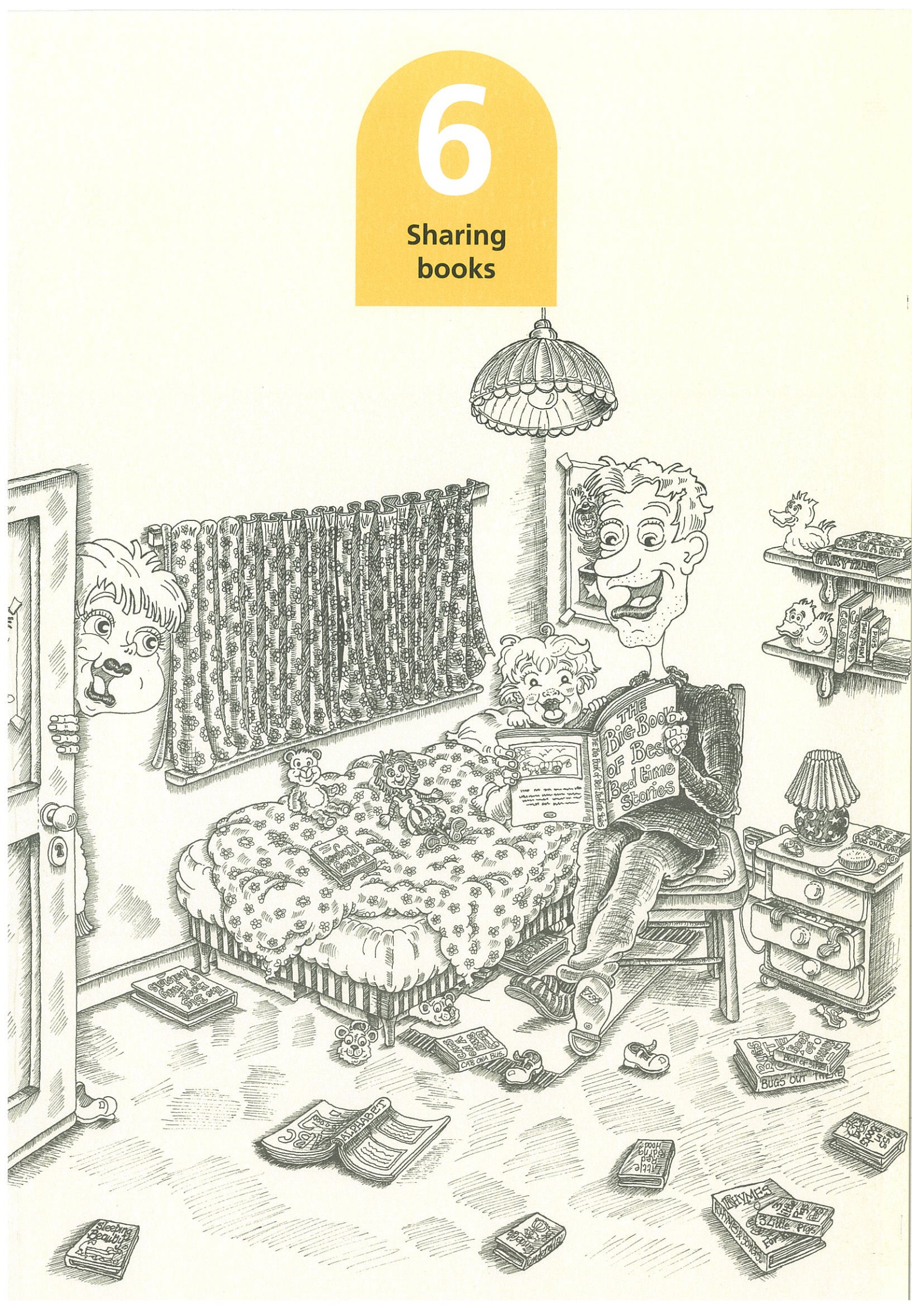
Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?

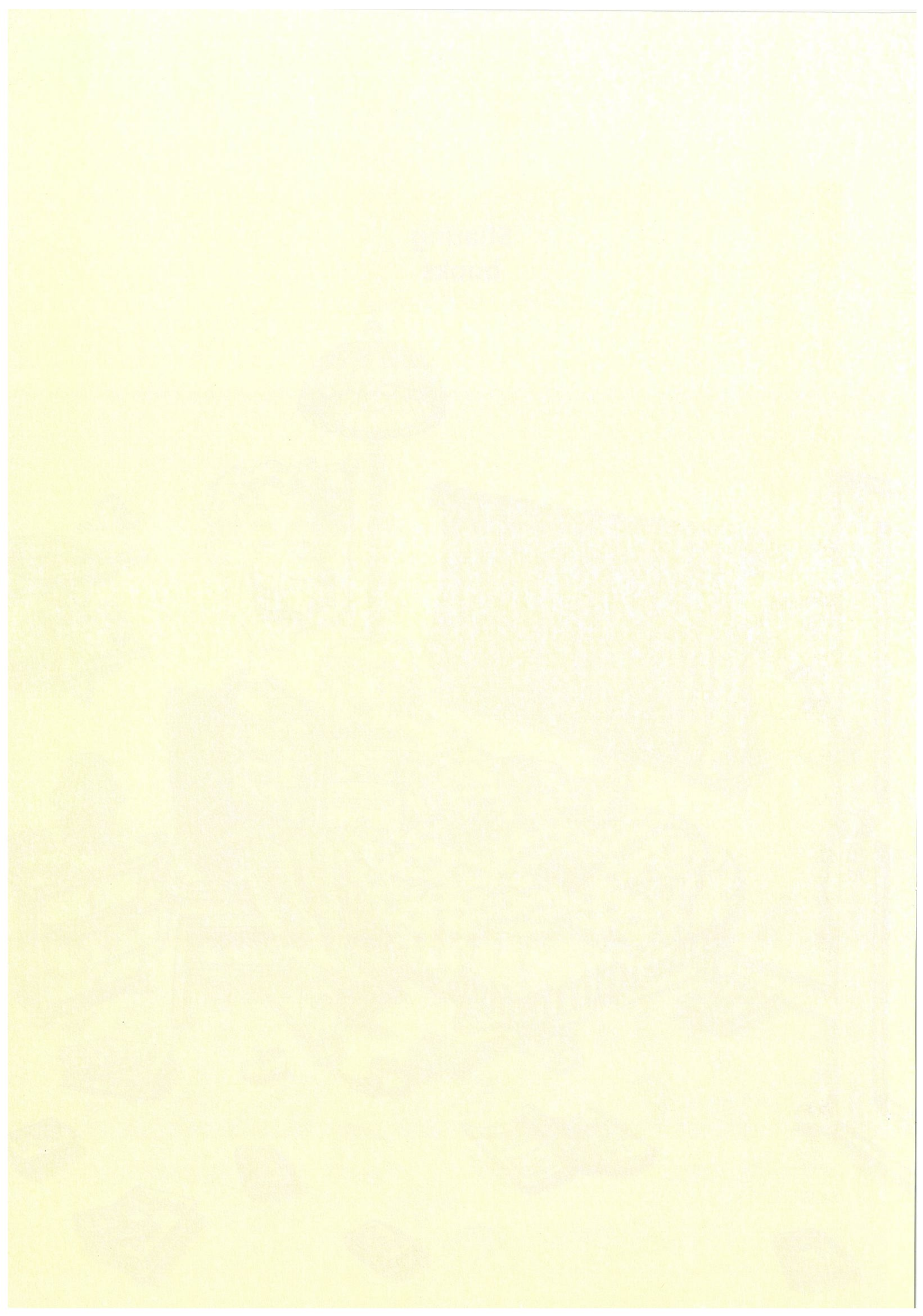


Session Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Sharing books







In this session parents will:

- become familiar with how literacy skills are developed through reading and through talking about books;
- identify the features of a good book for their children;
- discuss ideas for increasing their children's awareness of and interest in books.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	122
What makes a good book?	1	30 mins.	123-124
Early print concepts	2	15 mins.	125
Talking about books	3	20 mins.	126-127
 Words about reading			128
 Talking about books			129
Materials for reading	4	15 mins.	130
 Sharing books			131
Every picture tells a story	5	30 mins.	132
 How to use your story picture			133
Session Summary		10 mins.	134
Home Activity 6 - Sharing books at home			134
 Spotlight on reading			135
 Sharing books at home			136
Session Notes			137



Introduction

This session will build on the discussions in **Session 5 - Storytelling**. It will assume that you have already explored the importance of narrative skills when children begin school.

To prepare:



Gather together a variety of books: picture books, alphabet books, board books, cloth books, 'lift the flap' books, home-made books, fairy tales, nursery rhymes, books in Irish, Irish stories and legends, books about popular TV characters, books about animals, books with story tapes attached, first school readers, Letterland books, and information books such as Usborne books.

Your local library may lend you books to display if you don't have the resources to buy a selection of books.

Display the books for the parents to view.

What to do:

Review **Home Activity 5 - Storytelling**.

This session will concentrate on books. The parents will explore the importance of reading books, looking at books, talking about books, and encouraging their children to enjoy and value good books. The parents will also learn more about how home experiences of books are important to children's later success in school.

Questions to ask:

- *Why do you think your children enjoy being read to?*
- *What are your children's favourite books?*
- *Do your children choose books for themselves?*
- *What books might your children see you reading?*





ACTIVITY

1

What makes a good book?

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

Use the book display prepared for the introduction.

What to do:

Ask the parents to brainstorm ideas about what makes a 'good' book for children. Write their ideas on the flipchart.

Sample responses:

- There are colourful illustrations.
- It holds their interest.
- The writing is simple, not too many words.
- The writing is predictable, or rhymes, so the children are encouraged to join in.
- The book is humorous; children love a funny book.
- The characters are lively and fun with 'goodies' and 'baddies'.
- The book is about animals doing human things.
- The story appeals to the imagination.
- Children learn something from the story.

What are the parents own likes/dislikes in children's books?

Questions for discussion:

- *Were you read to as a child?*
- *Did you have a favourite book?*
- *What kinds of books do you like reading to your children?*
- *What are good times and places for sharing books?*

Invite the parents to examine the selection of books spread out on the table. Ask them to use their ideas on what makes a good book to help them select some books they think their children would like. They should each choose one or two books to examine in more detail. Allow about ten or fifteen minutes for browsing and choosing.

When the parents have all chosen one or two books, ask them to work in pairs or small groups and talk about why they chose these particular books for their children.

After ten minutes, reassemble the group and refer back to the list of ideas about



What makes a good book?

After ten minutes, reassemble the group and refer back to the list of ideas about what makes a good book. Note any further comments on the flipchart, then sum up the main points about what makes a good book.

Finish this activity with a short discussion about how books are read to children. Remind the parents that reading a book together does not have to be a word for word activity. There are many ways to share books with children. For example, if some parents already read regularly with their children, ask them:

- *How do your children like to hear stories read?*
- *Do they like you to read straight through, or do they interrupt you to ask questions and add comments?*
- *Do they jump ahead of the story and try to guess what might happen next?*
- *Do they try to guess the story from the pictures?*
- *Do they ask you to re-read the same story over and over? Why?*
- *If they are already familiar with the story, do they 'tell the story' with you as you read?*
- *Have you ever tried to shorten a story only to be told (perhaps impatiently) that you have skipped bits?*



You may want to include books on tape. There are many books on tape available for adults and children. Your local library might have a selection.



If you have time, you might want to read a book to the parents to model reading aloud to children.



Early print concepts

To prepare:

Prepare one large picture book with the title and text covered over with paper, leaving only the pictures to view.

What to do:

This activity will focus attention on some of the things children learn about books before they start school.

- Turn a book upside down and backwards and hand it to a parent.
Ask that parent to point out the title of the book.
- Hand the book to another parent.
Ask that parent to turn to the first page of the story.
- Ask another parent to run a finger along the first three lines of print.
- Ask another parent to turn the page.
- Ask another parent to find the last page.

Explain that this part of the exercise demonstrates how the physical act of handling books teaches children many things about reading before they actually read and write.

Children become familiar with:

- holding books,
- opening at the beginning,
- turning the pages,
- starting at the top of the page,
- following text from left to right.

Next, take the large book that you prepared by covering up the print. Invite the parents to look at the pictures and to make up a story. Then uncover the print and compare. This may cause some amusement!

Talk about how children can enjoy looking at books and making up the story either from the memory of hearing the book read or simply from the pictures.



Talking about books

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Refer to **Parents' Pack C**, p. 2 - Words about reading and p. 3 - Talking about books.

What to do:

For this exercise, ask the parents to turn to **Parents' Pack C**, p. 2 - Words about reading.

Divide the parents into pairs. Give each pair a book and ask them to find all the parts of the book listed in **Words about reading**.

Reassemble the group after five or ten minutes.

Ask the parents why it is important for children to be able to understand the language that teachers use when talking about books.

Refer to **Parents' Pack C**, p. 3 - Talking about books.

Explain that when children start to read in school, they will be expected to do more than just read words on a page for the teacher. They will need to demonstrate that they understand what they read. **Talking about books** outlines some of the skills important to reading comprehension. Even in Junior Infants, teachers will be asking the children questions about what they read and what has been read to them.

Using the flipchart, ask the parents to brainstorm questions that would encourage their children to develop '**book-talk**'. Referring to one particular book helps to focus the discussion.

Sample questions for 'The Three Little Pigs':

Predicting the story

'Look at the picture. What do you think this story is going to be about?'

'When the wolf blew down the little pig's house, he must have been very cross. What do you think he will do next?'

Sequencing the story

'What kind of house was built first? Second? Third?'

Summarising the story

'Now, what was that story about?'



Talking about books

Giving an opinion of the story

'Did you like that story? Why or why not?'
 'What was your favourite part?'
 'What did you think about the *big bad wolf*?'

Recalling events in the story

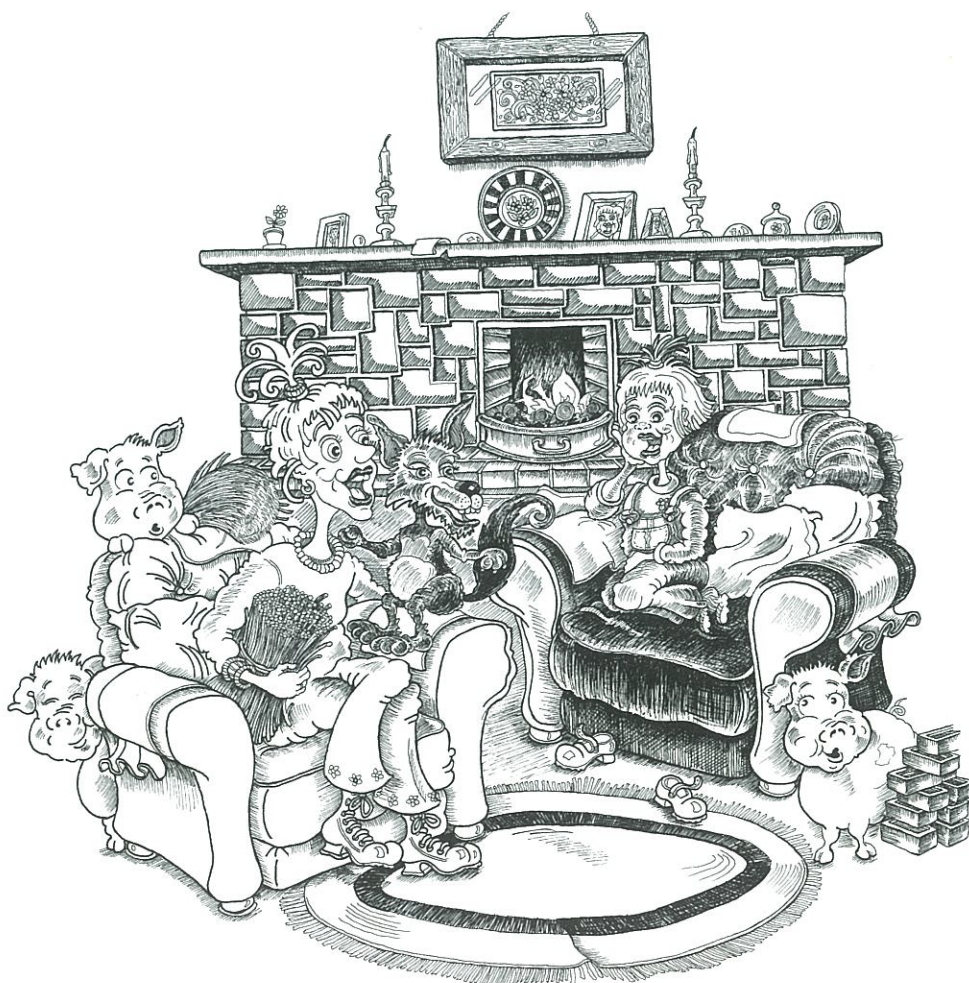
'Remember when we read that story about the *three little pigs*? What did the little pigs use to build their houses?'
 'Remember when we read that story about the *three little pigs*? What did the little pigs use to build their houses?'

Explaining cause and effect

'Why did the third little pig build his house out of bricks?'

Relating the ideas or events to real life experiences

'The *big bad wolf* really got cross with those pigs, didn't he? Did you ever get really cross with anyone?'





Words about reading

Does your child know these words about books?

title

author

page

print

beginning

ending

lines

page numbers

top

bottom

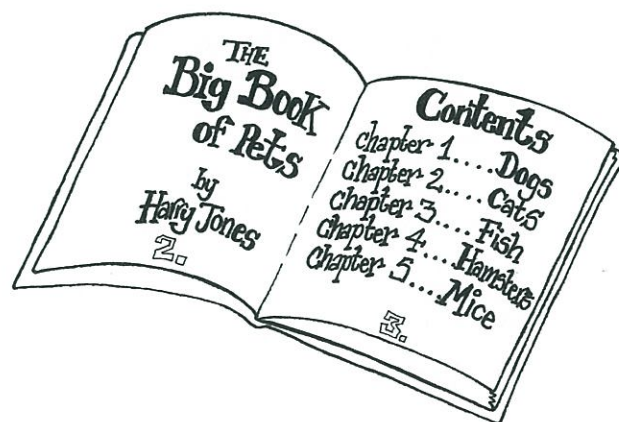
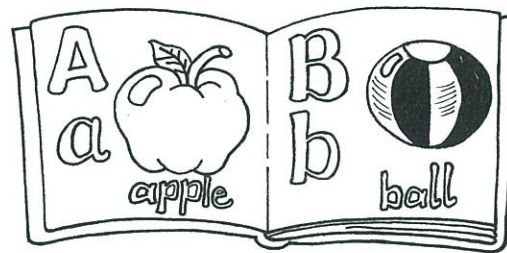
illustrator

picture

left

right

chapter





Talking about books

When your child is in school, in addition to reading, he is also expected to do the following things:

Predict the story from either a picture or a sentence.

Sequence or put things in order - what happened first, next, last, etc.

Summarise the story - tell a shorter version of the whole story.

Evaluate or give an opinion of the story.

Recall details about the story at a later stage.

Explain the cause and effect of events that occur in the story.

Relate the ideas or events in the story to real life experiences.





Materials for reading

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Refer to **Parents' Pack C, p. 4 - Sharing books.**

What to do:

Ask the parents to think about the reading materials that they might have in their homes. Remind them that a story book is one kind of reading material, but there are other materials as well.

If the parents have trouble thinking of other kinds of reading materials, you might suggest some of the following:

newspapers

school books

prayer books

magazines

recipe books

instruction manuals

catalogues

dictionaries

telephone/address books

List their ideas on the flipchart.

Questions for discussion:

- *Do your children see other people reading in your homes?*
- *What materials are read?*
- *How can you include your children in a variety of reading activities?*

This is also a good time to talk about the library.

- *Does anyone use the library?*
- *Do you have library cards?*
- *Do you know how to find the books that you want?*
- *Would anyone like to find out more about the library?*

Read and discuss **Sharing books - Parents' Pack C, p. 4.**



Most libraries will welcome the opportunity to explain how to use the library facilities. If the group is interested, contact your local librarian and organise a visit.



This can also be an excellent opportunity for talking about a wide variety of books, such as 'books for older children' and 'books in Irish'.



Sharing books

Children know a lot about reading and making sense of books well before they begin school. The things that they learn about books every day help them to understand what reading is all about when they eventually start to read.

What can you do to help?

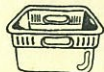
- Let your child see you read.
- Have books and magazines to look at around the house.
- Find time to share books together.
- Let your child choose his own books and handle the books himself.
- Talk about the pictures.
- Point out familiar letters or words.
- Let him turn the pages.
- Read the book version of popular videos - 'The Jungle Book', 'Cinderella', 'Matilda', 'Postman Pat', 'Thomas the Tank Engine'.
- Go to the library together.
- Buy books as gifts.
- Swap books with friends.





Every picture tells a story

To prepare:



You will need old magazines, postcards, posters, newspapers, stencils, Clipart drawings, coloured paper, textural materials (such as cotton wool, ribbons, fabric), Post-it notes for making flaps, markers, biros, scissors and glue.

You will also need one A3 size poster page for each parent.



Refer to **Parents' Pack C, p. 5 - How to use your story picture.**

What to do:

This activity is especially designed to include parents who (perhaps because of their own literacy difficulties) are not comfortable reading books to their children. The story picture provides an alternative way to develop children's language skills around talk about stories.

Invite the parents to make story pictures to bring home to their children. They don't need to have a story in mind. The parents should simply look through all the materials and create a lively, colourful picture that they think would appeal to their children.

Some suggestions:

- Include several characters (people, animals, cartoon drawings).
- Put characters in unusual places (a zebra on a farm, a monkey in a clothes shop).
- Create 'lift-the-flaps' using Post-it notes.
- Use famous people their children would recognise.
- Include pictures of food, toys, tools, etc. that their children would know.
- Add their children's own drawings or pictures of family members.
- Use family photographs.
- Add texture to the picture.

Encourage the parents to work in small groups, so they can share ideas and materials.

Refer to **Parents' Pack C, p. 5 - How to use your story picture** for discussion.



How to use your story picture

Use your **story picture** as a prop to develop your child's imagination and language skills.

Ask your child to tell the story of the picture:

How does the story begin?

Who is in the picture?

What's happening?

What will happen next?

Why will this happen?

How does the story end?

Ask your child to name and describe things in the picture:

What do you see in the picture?

Can you spot the _____?

How many _____ do you see?

What will we call this picture?

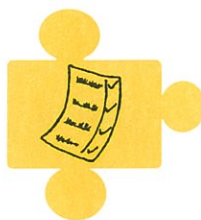
Ask your child to retell the story of the picture:

Can you tell Granny about your story picture?

Relate the picture to his own life experiences:

Where else would you see a _____?

Will we add something more to the picture?



Session Summary

Spend about five minutes reviewing the key points of today's session by asking:

- *How does reading books and talking about books with your children help them to learn to read?*
- *What are some examples of questions that can encourage your children to talk about books?*
- *What makes a good book for children?*

Turn to **Parents' Pack C, p. 6 - Spotlight on reading.**

Remind the parents that the **Spotlight on reading** identifies some of the skills their children demonstrate as they develop reading abilities. When the parents share books with their children, they should take note of the skills their children demonstrate and then shade in the appropriate 'apples' in the **Spotlight on reading**.



Home Activity 6 - Sharing books at home

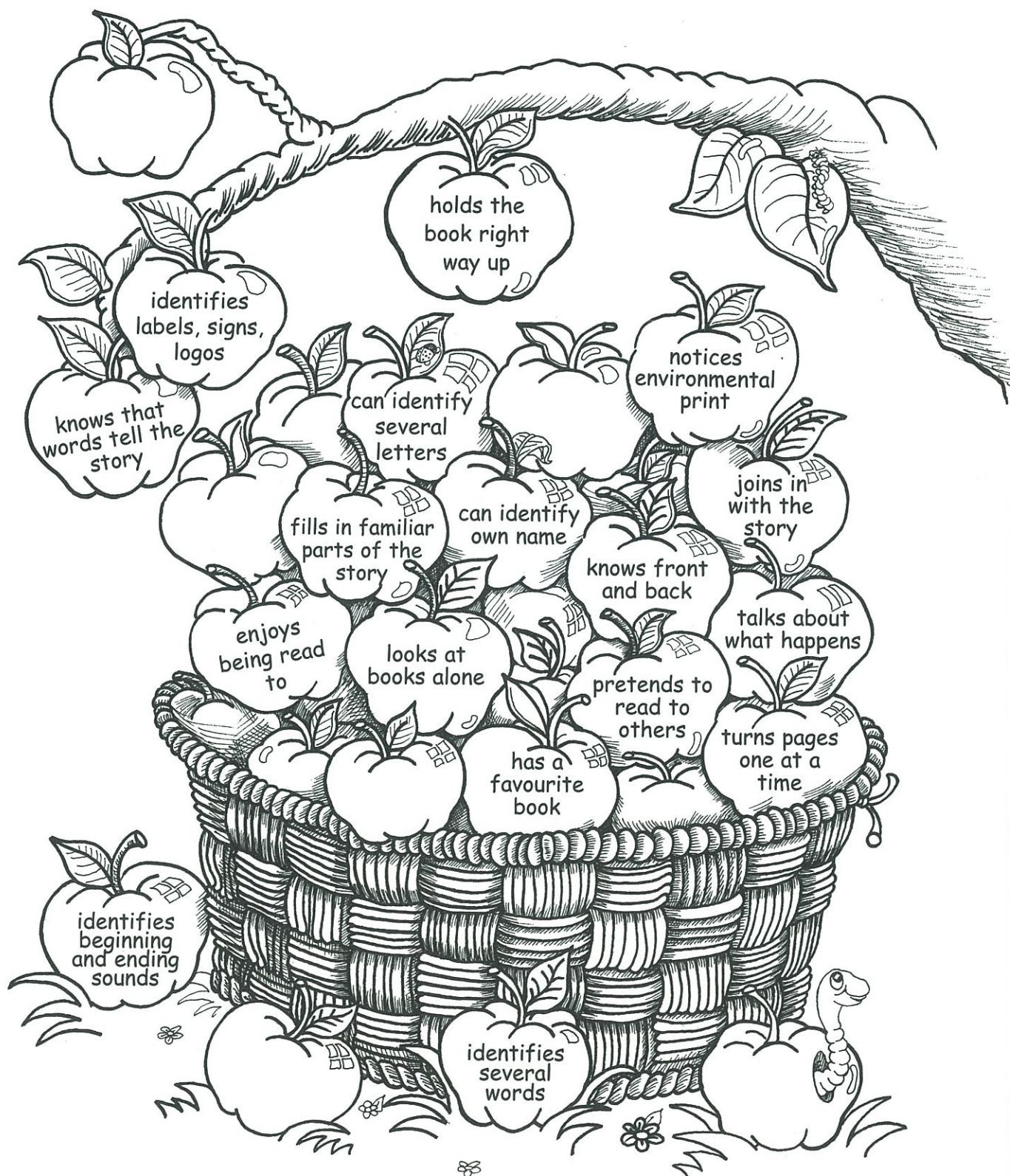
Read through **Home Activity 6 - Sharing books at home.**

In this activity, the parents are expected to spend time at home sharing books, or exploring the **story picture** with their children. If possible, let them bring home the books they chose at the beginning of the session.

Remind the parents that they will be invited to talk about their observations next week.



Spotlight on reading



Name _____

Age _____

Photocopy for each child as needed.



Sharing books at home

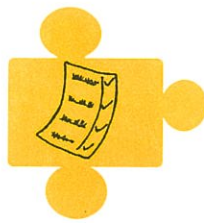
Take time this week to share books with your child, once a day if possible.

What books did you and your child read this week?

What did your child like about the books?

Did you use the **story picture**? What did you do?

Remember to spend some time observing your child's skills for reading using the **Spotlight on reading**.



Session Notes

What worked well in this session?

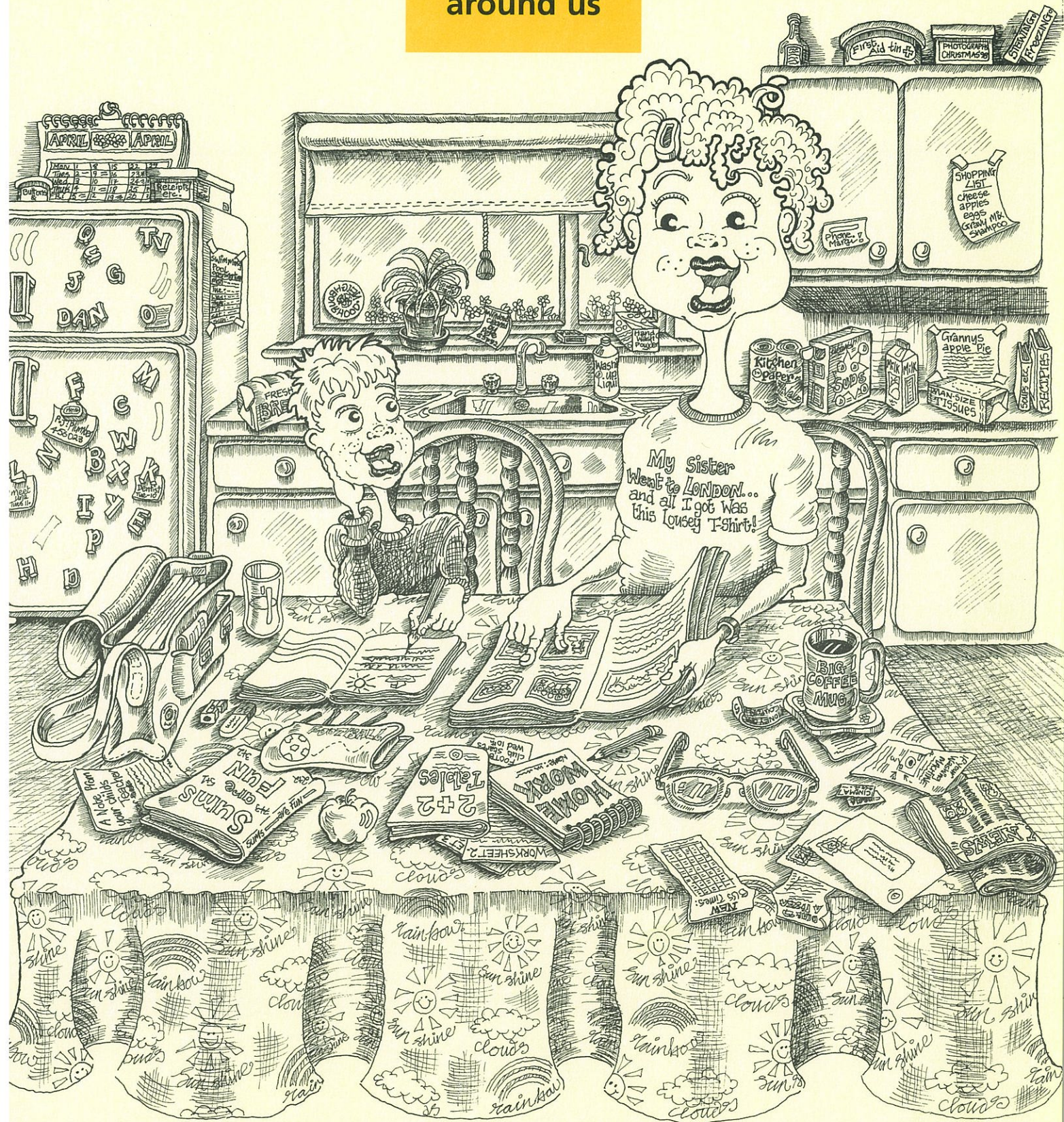
Were there any difficulties?

What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?

**Print is all
around us**





In this session parents will:

- explore how interacting with print in the environment encourages the development of reading and writing skills;
- identify their children's everyday purposes for using reading and writing;
- list a variety of opportunities for interacting with environmental print;
- discuss strategies for building visual discrimination skills through everyday activities in the home.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	142
What's in the post?	1	20 mins.	143-144
Environmental print	2	35 mins.	145-146
 Words about environmental print			147
 Seeing print every day			148-149
Looking at letters	3	25 mins.	150-151
 Learning about letters			152
Looking at print games	4	30 mins.	153
 Kitchen cupboard bingo			154
 Name game			155
Session Summary		10 mins.	156
Home Activity 7 - Playing print games			156
 Playing print games			157
Session Notes			158



10 mins.

Introduction

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

What to do:

Review **Home Activity 6 - Sharing books at home.**

This session is all about environmental print.

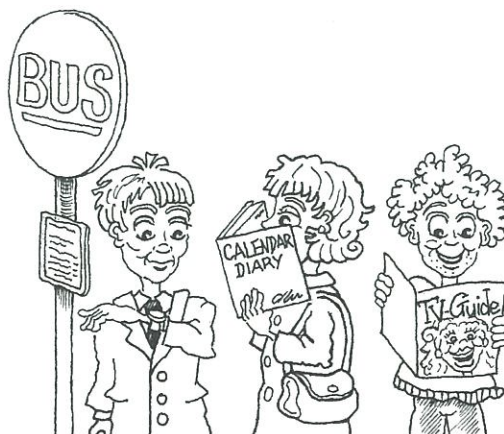
'Environmental print' is a term used to describe the many different kinds of print people come into contact with in their homes and around the community - signs, posters, labels, newspapers, magazines, letters, advertisements, directions, packaging, forms, etc.

Sometimes even very young children surprise their parents by 'reading' labels off the shelves in the supermarkets, or by 'recognising' signs on the shop fronts.

This session will give the parents opportunities to examine what their children know about environmental print and to explore how their frequent contacts with environmental print can support reading development.

Write on the flipchart:

- *What do children notice about environmental print?*
- *What do children learn about reading from environmental print?*
- *What can parents do to help raise their children's awareness of environmental print?*



ACTIVITY 1

7



20 mins.

What's in the post?

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Organise sample post: an ESB bill, a colourful advertising flier, a hand-written personal letter.

What to do:

Tell the parents to picture themselves on a busy morning or afternoon. They are just about to go out the door when the postman delivers three letters. Display the sample post so that all the parents can see the three letters, but don't identify the post for them.

Ask the parents to take a minute to picture themselves looking at these letters. Then ask:

If you received these letters in the post what would you do with them?

The parents will likely identify the three pieces of post and give different answers as to how they would 'read' each letter. For example:

'I'd glance at the ESB bill, throw the flier in the bin, and save the letter for a good read later on.'

or

'I'd open the letter and read it straight away, put the ESB bill up on the shelf with the other bills, and dump the flier.'

Questions to ask:

Since you couldn't actually read the post from where you were sitting, what did you see that told you the post was an ESB bill, a flier, and a personal letter?

Sample answers:

- logo or picture on envelope
- size, shape or design of envelope
- window in envelope
- use of colour
- type of stamp used
- handwritten or typed address



What's in the post?

What did this information tell you?

Sample answers:

- a brown envelope with a window = a bill
- the logo and design = ESB
- familiar handwriting on the envelope = personal letter
- size, shape and colour = advertising flier

How do you know?

Sample answers:

- received letters like these before
- know what kinds of letters to expect in the post
- easy to identify different kinds of envelopes
- can guess the content from the envelope

Write their answers on the flipchart.

This simulation exercise highlights how **visual clues** (features of a text such as layout, pictures, logos, print styles), **background knowledge** and **familiarity with different kinds of texts** help readers to:

- identify what sort of text they are reading;
- determine the context in which the text is presented;
- be selective about what and how they read;
- take meaning from the text.

Explain that in **Session Six - Sharing books**, the parents discussed how the visual features of illustrated texts and story pictures help children to tell the story of the text. In looking at environmental print in this session, you will be paying particular attention to the visual features of environmental print. You will be focusing on how children use these visual clues, together with their knowledge of the different contexts in which the print is used, to get meaning from print.



Environmental print

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart, markers and Blu-Tack.



Select a number of Photopak cards where different kinds of environmental print are visible in the scenes.



Gather a variety of printed materials that children are likely to see in their homes and communities: e.g. signs, posters, labels, advertisements, packaging, forms, catalogues, brochures, leaflets, magazines, newspapers, cards, letters, menus, items of clothing.



Refer to **Parents' Pack C, p. 8 - Words about environmental print** and **pp. 9 - 10 - Seeing print every day**.

What to do:

Environmental print is everywhere but, because it is so familiar, it often goes unnoticed. This exercise is intended to heighten the parents' awareness of just how much environmental print their children come into contact with every day.

Divide the parents into two groups. Give each group a flipchart page and a selection of Photopak cards and print materials. Ask one group to brainstorm examples of print in the home that their children are likely to see and list these on their flipchart page. Ask the second group to brainstorm examples of print in the community and list these on their flipchart page. The Photopak cards and print samples should help stimulate their ideas.

After ten or fifteen minutes, bring the two groups back together and let them give each other feedback. Stick the two flipchart pages onto the wall so everyone can see them.

Questions to ask:

Have you ever noticed that your toddlers were able to:

- *choose their favourite sweets from a store counter?*
- *find a particular cereal in the shop or in the press at home?*
- *select the correct video to watch?*
- *call out the name of a shop as you passed?*
- *pick out the RTÉ Guide or the local paper at the newsagents?*
- *recognise a logo on a shopping bag?*



Environmental print

- *Have you ever tried to buy cheaper products for your toddlers (e.g. cola instead of Coke, a no name 'Barbie' doll, a cheaper version of Lego) only to find out that they couldn't be fooled?*
- *How do children know these things?*

Write the parents' comments on the flipchart.

Point out that children learn to use **visual clues** (as well as other sensory clues) to help them to discriminate between the known and the unknown, likes and dislikes, theirs and others. Even as babies, children quickly learn the necessary clues to help them to identify what's important to them.

Children also use **context clues** (their background knowledge of the situation and content of the print in question) to help them to recognise words and understand the meaning of print they see around them. These are two strategies that skilled readers use. For example, the parents used **visual clues** and **context clues** to help them in the previous exercise.

Ask the parents to name some examples of visual features in environmental print that might give children clues as to what a text says.

Sample answers:

- pictures
- familiar logos
- familiar faces
- fixed location
- shape
- colours
- size
- same context
- recognising some letters or numbers

Invite the parents to consider their daily routines with their children and to identify familiar situations that involve regular use of print (e.g. breakfast - choosing cereals, bread, jam, milk, orange juice).

Talk about the language of environmental print. Refer to **Parents' Pack C, p. 8 - Words about environmental print** for ideas.

Finish by turning to **Parents' Pack C, pp. 9 - 10 - Seeing print every day** to discuss what parents can do to promote their children's awareness of environmental print.



Words about environmental print

sign

newspaper

menu

poster

label

calendar

tag

brochure

guide

leaflet

logo

letter

newsletter

advertising

bulletin

catalogue

package

card

magazine

headlines

journal

recipe

symbol

directory

autograph



Seeing print every day

What do children learn from environmental print?

They learn that:

- print carries a message;
- print has many uses;
- print can be displayed many different ways;
- print is valued by all kinds of people;
- print plays a role in everyday activities and in special events.

Many children first become interested in learning to read through their awareness of environmental print.

You can encourage your child to become more aware of the print that is all around her. Here are some suggestions:

Point out signs, posters, names of shops.

What does that sign say?

Can you find the name of the shop?

Talk about the information given on labels.

Let's check the date to see if it's fresh.

Let's look at the labels to see if they have your size.

Talk about instructions on packages.

How long should we cook this pizza for?

Let's look at the directions for this game.

Include your child in activities involving everyday print.

Which one of these videos would you like?

Can you look in the press and get me the bag of sugar?

Explain what you are doing when using environmental print.

I'm looking in the *Golden Pages* for the phone number of the hospital.

I'll just check the calendar to see what day of the week the twelfth is.



Seeing print every day

Encourage your child to point out familiar objects.

Can you find those sweets you like?

Can you spot the button for weighing the bananas?

Praise your child when she demonstrates that she recognises any print materials.

Yes, that's the RTÉ Guide. Well done. Now let's see what time that programme is on.

That's the cereal your brother likes. Thank you for finding it on the shelf.

Use pretend play (shop, post office, restaurant) or play print games involving familiar names of food, toys, TV shows, etc.

Make a print scrapbook of signs, names and labels that your child recognises.

Your ideas:



Looking at letters

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart, markers and Blu-Tack.



Gather a variety of printed materials: magazines, newspapers, brochures, posters, different varieties of handwriting, newsletters, cards, advertisements, packaging, labels.



Have enough A3 pages, scissors, markers and glue for the parents to work in pairs.

Refer to **Parents' Pack C, p. 11 - Learning about letters.**

What to do:

Ask the parents to work in pairs. Give each pair a selection of print materials, an A3 page with a different letter of the alphabet written on each page, scissors, glue and markers. Their task is to look through the selection of printed materials, cut out samples of print containing their assigned letter, and then glue their sample words onto the page. Suggest that they try to include as many different print sizes and styles as they can find.

After ten or fifteen minutes, ask the parents to look over all the words they have glued onto the page. Tell them to draw a circle around any words that they think their children would recognise.

Reassemble the group and ask each pair to share their samples. Stick the pages onto the wall so everyone can view them.

Questions to ask:

What are some of the different ways letters and words are represented in the samples?

Sample answers:

- different styles of print
- handwritten or printed
- different sizes of print
- capital and small letters
- numbers mixed with letters
- reading in different directions
- letters written on pictures
- letters included in logos

Looking at letters

Look at the words circled on each sample. Why would this print be familiar to children?

*Consider the **context** of these samples. What information would children use to help them identify this print?*

Sample answers:

- location of print
- type of text
- accompanying pictures or logos
- knowledge of vocabulary

*Consider the **visual clues** given by the letters/words themselves. What special features would help children to recognise this print?*

Sample answers:

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| • size | • thickness of print |
| • spacing between letters | • big or small letters |
| • direction to be read | • use of colour |
| • handwriting styles | • letters incorporated into a logo |
| • shape of letters | • letter patterns |

Explain that when children demonstrate that they can 'read' sweet wrappers, video covers, cereal boxes, birthday cards, etc., they are generally making use of their knowledge of the **familiar context** of the print and their ability to recognise **visual clues** that suggest what a particular word says. When these clues are removed, a child finds it much harder to recognise the word. For example, a child might recognise the word 'milk' on a milk carton but not be able to pick out the word 'milk' on the printed page. Learning to recognise letters in a variety of contexts and in many different styles is a gradual process.

Finish this activity by discussing the suggestions in **Parents' Pack C, p. 11 - Learning about letters.**



Learning about letters

Children know a lot about reading and making sense of printed things well before they reach school. The things that they learn about print every day help them to understand what reading is all about. Recognising letters is an important early reading skill.

Here are some ways to help your child learn about letters:

- Start with your child's own name.
- Make a name and picture book.
- Provide opportunities for tracing or copying the letters in her name.
- Point out letters from her own name in signs, posters, magazines, etc.
- Show her the name of your road and town on road signs.
- Talk about what the letters look like, e.g. 'S' looks like a snake.
- When you are out for a walk or a drive, see if your child can find some of the letters in the alphabet on signs and other environmental print.
- Make an alphabet picture book.
- Make an alphabet jigsaw puzzle.
- Encourage your child to play games that involve recognising letters and numbers.

Your ideas:



Looking at print games

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Gather together a selection of alphabet games available locally, e.g. cards, Letterland, fish, concentration, lotto, books, oral games, puzzles, magnetic letters.

Collect the materials needed to make **Kitchen cupboard bingo** and the **Name game**.

Prepare samples of each game.



Refer to **Parents' Pack C, p. 12 - Kitchen cupboard bingo** and **p. 13 - Name game**.

What to do:

Invite the group to look at samples of alphabet games.

Have a selection of games that are available commercially as well as samples of **Kitchen cupboard bingo** and the **Name game** that have been home-made.

Explain the game play as needed.

Ask the parents to break up into small groups and discuss the merits of one or two games.

What are the learning opportunities in the games? Encourage them to go beyond the simple game-playing activity to consider things like conversation skills, turn-taking, etc.

Focus their attention on the two home-made games. Display the materials for making these two games and invite the parents to make one of the games or, if time allows, they can make both games.

Refer to **Parents' Pack C, p. 12** and **p. 13**. Explain how to make **Kitchen cupboard bingo** and the **Name game**.

When the games are made, allow time for playing the games and for discussion.

Questions to ask:

- *What would be a good opportunity for playing these games at home?*
- *Who could play these games?*
- *Could an older brother or sister play these games?*
- *Would other people in the family benefit from playing these games? How?*
- *What skills would these games help to develop?*



Kitchen cupboard bingo

You will need:

- cereal boxes, biscuit wrappers/boxes, wrappers from tins, sweet wrappers, pizza boxes, crisp bags, bread wrappers, washing powder boxes - at least 2 of each
- cardboard (cereal boxes) or bingo boards and 'deck'
- glue
- scissors

Making the game:

- 1 Cut out pairs of words/logos from the selection of cereal boxes, wrappers, etc.
- 2 Glue one set of the words/logos onto a sheet of cardboard to make a bingo board.
- 3 Put the matching set of words/logos aside to be used in the 'deck'.
- 4 Rule the cardboard and cut into cards of equal size.
- 5 Glue the words/logos onto cards to make the 'deck'.

How to play:

This is a matching game.

- Each player gets a bingo board.
- Each player has a go by turning over one card from the deck and trying to get a match. If the card matches, the player puts it on top of the matching word on the bingo board.
- The winner is the first person to cover all the words on the board.

Other ideas for playing kitchen cupboard bingo:

- One person could be the 'bingo caller'.
- Players would have to read the word to get a match.
- A very young child could spread out the deck and try to find the matches.

Your ideas:



Name game

Special thanks to the parents of Norfolk's 'Learning Together' programme for this suggestion.

You will need:

- several sheets of cardboard for placemats and playing cards
- scissors, ruler, and markers

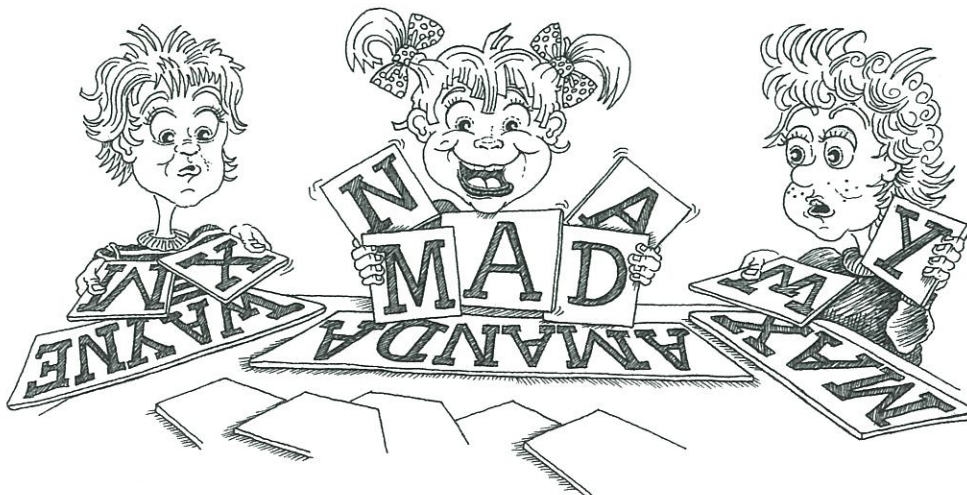
Making the game:

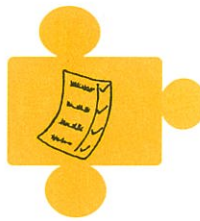
- 1 Make a game board for each player. This is simply a sheet of cardboard with the player's name written on it.
- 2 Rule several more sheets of cardboard into rectangles of equal size to make a deck of letter cards. These will be used to match the letters in the players' names.
- 3 Cut out the cards and write individual letters on each card to make the deck.

How to play:

This game helps young children with letter recognition by asking them to match the letters in their own names.

- Players sit with their game boards in front of them.
- Place the deck of letter cards in the middle of the table.
- Players begin by drawing the number of cards from the deck equal to the number of letters in their names.
- Players put down cards on their game boards, which match letters in their names. They discard non-matching cards and pick an equal number of new cards from the deck.
- The first player to match all the letters in his or her name is the winner.





Session Summary

Summarise this session by revisiting the **Spotlight on reading - Parents' Pack C**, p. 6.

Questions to ask:

- *What are some of the reading skills that children develop from being exposed to everyday print in the environment?*
- *Which of these skills are mentioned in the **Spotlight**?*
- *What other skills relating to reading environmental print can be added to the **Spotlight**?*
- *What are some of the possibilities for encouraging reading skills in the home and in the community?*



Home Activity 7 - Playing print games

Read through **Home Activity 7 - Playing print games**, which asks the parents to play **Kitchen cupboard bingo** or the **Name game** with their families during the week and to make observations.

Remind the parents that they should be prepared to share their experiences at the next session.



Playing print games

Plan a time to play **Kitchen cupboard bingo** or the **Name game** with your child this week.

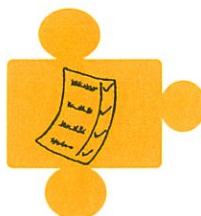
Which game did you play?

What did your child like about this game?

Did other family members join in?

Can you suggest ideas for adding to the game, or varying it, to keep it interesting?

Can you name other opportunities for talking with your child about the print in your home?



Session Notes

What worked well in this session?

Were there any difficulties?

What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?

8








Ready
to write





In this session parents will:

- discuss feelings and attitudes towards writing;
- become familiar with the development of children's handwriting from colouring and drawing to early scribbles and letter formation;
- identify everyday tasks that will support the development of hand muscles, eye-hand co-ordination and visual discrimination skills;
- talk about the language of writing.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	162
What is writing?	1	15 mins.	163
How do we write?	2	20 mins.	164-165
 Early writing activities			166
The progression of early writing	3	30 mins.	167-168
 Early writing samples			169-175
Pencil power	4	25 mins.	176
 Pencil power			177
 Making a dot-to-dot			178
Words about writing	5	20 mins.	179
 Words about writing			180
Session Summary		10 mins.	181
Home Activity 8 - Using the 'Spotlight on writing'			181
 Spotlight on writing			182
 Using the 'Spotlight on writing'			183
Session Notes			184



Introduction

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

What to do:

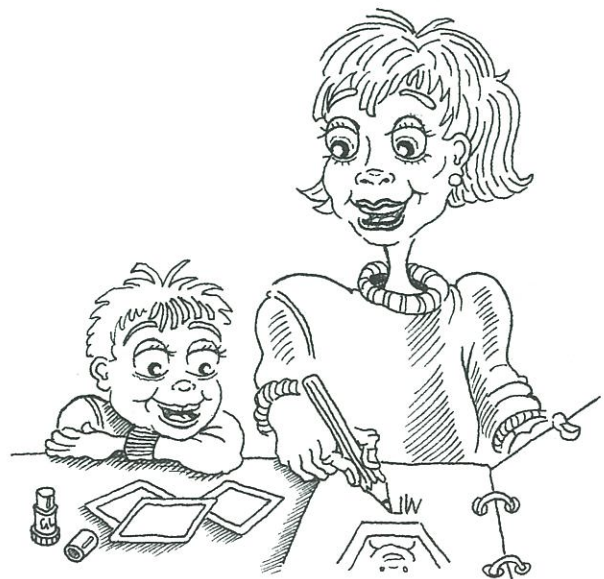
Review **Home Activity 7 - Playing print games**.

In **Session 7 - Print is all around us**, a number of activities were suggested to encourage parent and child interaction with environmental print. Some of these activities involved copying, tracing and forming letters.

The next two sessions will focus on early letter formation and on some of the everyday activities that help develop writing skills. Parents will learn about the skills involved in learning to write, discuss the efforts children make to write before they start school, and examine ways that parents can further support their children's attempts to write.

Write on the flipchart:

- *What is writing?*
- *How do children get ready to write?*
- *What can parents do to help children develop writing skills?*





What is writing?

To prepare:

On two separate A4 pages, write the words 'YES' and 'NO' in large letters. Tape these to walls on opposite ends of the room.

Make a line down the middle of the room using masking tape or string. Move the chairs aside and ask the parents to stand in the middle of the room.

What to do:

Explain that you are going to read out some questions about writing. Point out the 'YES' and 'NO' signs and ask the parents to indicate their answers by moving to either the 'YES' or 'NO' side of the room. If they are not certain, they can move part of the way over to one side, or stand in the middle.

Below are some suggested questions, but you might like to add your own. After you read each question, encourage some discussion about how the parents respond, especially if there is disagreement.

Questions to ask:

- *Is writing something you have to learn in school?*
- *Do you need to spell in order to write?*
- *Is joined writing better than printing?*
- *Is good handwriting a sign of intelligence?*
- *Is drawing writing?*
- *Is typing writing?*
- *Are logos writing?*
- *Should children have opportunities to write on things other than paper?*
- *Have attitudes towards writing changed since you were in school?*

At the end of this exercise explain that people have 'official' views on what constitutes writing. Some of these views have been influenced by their own experiences in learning to write, and by the attitudes of their parents and teachers. But times change and styles of writing, attitudes to writing and purposes for writing change also.

The parents may find that policies and attitudes towards writing have changed from when they were in school. Most significant have been changes in school attitudes towards children's early attempts at writing. Educators now recognise that learning to write begins at home and that parents play a key role in encouraging their children to take part in writing activities and in helping them to develop the specific skills they need in order to write.



How do we write?

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart, markers, chubby crayons, ballpoint pens, coloured pencils, fountain pens and bank deposit slips.



Refer to **Parents' Pack D, p. 2 - Early writing activities.**

What to do:

Give a handwriting implement and a bank deposit form to each of the parents. Ask them to fill in the deposit slips using the opposite hand to their usual writing hand. About every 30 seconds, ask them to swap writing implements among themselves and then continue to write.

After a few minutes, stop and ask the parents to reflect on the experience.

Explain that the purpose of this exercise is to help parents to remember what it feels like when learning to control a writing implement and learning to form letters.

Questions to ask:

- *Was it difficult to write with your opposite hand? What made it difficult?*
- *Was there anything that made the task easier?*
- *Can you identify some of the skills you used as you were writing?*

Sample answers:

- eye-hand co-ordination
- holding writing instrument
- leaning on paper
- up and down movement
- writing in lines
- punctuation
- fine motor skills
- writing posture
- left to right movement
- uniform size and spacing of letters
- shaping letters
- spelling

Ask the parents to reflect further on how they felt when they were trying to fill in the bank deposit form. Can they use their experience to identify some of the problems children may have in learning to write?

How do we write?

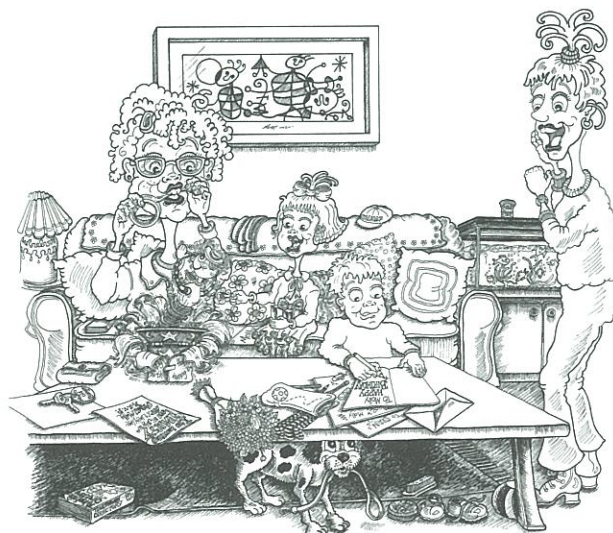
Sample answers:

- being nervous - palms sweaty, hands tense
- leaning too heavily on the table
- feeling under pressure because someone is watching
- poor co-ordination
- hand getting sore or tired
- experiencing learning difficulties/dyslexia
- being left-handed
- not understanding directional actions
- not remembering how to reproduce letters
- writing letters backwards
- having difficulty sequencing letters to spell correctly

Point out to the parents that long before children start school, indeed before they even make their first attempts at forming actual letters, it is important for children to participate in activities that help them to develop the hand muscles and eye-hand co-ordination skills necessary for writing. Children also need visual discrimination skills in order to recognise, copy and reproduce letters.

Do the parents remember the discussion on visual discrimination skills that took place in **Session 7 - Print is all around us**?

Refer to **Parents' Pack D, p. 2 - Early writing activities** for suggestions of activities that support the development of hand muscles and eye-hand co-ordination. Ask the parents to add a few more ideas themselves.





Early writing activities

Children develop an interest in writing by watching adults use writing every day. They learn that writing has many different purposes. Even as they make their first scribbles, children are aware that writing is a way of sharing ideas with others.

Your child needs to develop hand muscles and eye-hand co-ordination skills to control a pencil for drawing and writing. You can help him to develop these skills gradually by encouraging him to participate in everyday activities.

You can help your child to develop hand muscles and eye-hand co-ordination by letting him help you in the kitchen. He can:

- sift flour,
- stir batter with a big spoon,
- beat eggs,
- spread jam on bread.

You can also provide your child with sheets of paper and 'writing tools'. Chubby crayons, thick chalk, or thick paintbrushes are easier for a small child to grasp. Let him draw and scribble, trace and colour.

Dot-to-dot pictures, simple jigsaw puzzles and colouring books are other useful materials. Choose these carefully. Most puzzle books, jigsaws and similar activities indicate the appropriate age level on the box or cover.

Remember to praise your child's efforts, display his pictures, and talk about his drawings!

Here are a few more ideas:

- buttoning, unbuttoning clothes
- tying shoelaces
- playing games of catch
- playing with sand
- moulding and building with playdough
- using children's scissors
- playing with Lego and blocks
- playing with cards
- finger painting
- playing clapping games

The progression of early writing

To prepare:



Refer to **Parents' Pack D, pp. 3-9 - Early writing samples.**

Photocopy several copies of each of the writing samples, leaving out the descriptions and explanations at the bottom of the pages.

Encourage the parents to bring samples of their children's writing and drawing from home.

What to do:

Explain that children learn to write at different times and in different ways. There are many variations in the writing that is produced by young children. However, close observation of children's writing at different ages and stages has helped to reveal certain elements which are common to the development of writing skills. Learning how to recognise those elements can help parents notice and encourage their own children's writing development.

Divide the parents into small groups and hand out a selection of writing samples to each group.

Ask the parents to rank the samples as follows:

- Which sample do you think was produced by the youngest child?
- Which was produced by the oldest?
- Can you match the child's age with the writing sample?

Discuss the signs of letter formation apparent in the samples.

- Can you identify lines, circles, semi-circles?
- Do you think the children are attempting to reproduce shapes they have seen, even if they don't know what they are?
- Where might they have seen these shapes?

Discuss the reasons for these writings.

- Do you think the children are merely imitating something they have seen, or is there a purpose in what they are doing?
- Can you guess what that purpose might be?

Get feedback from each group.



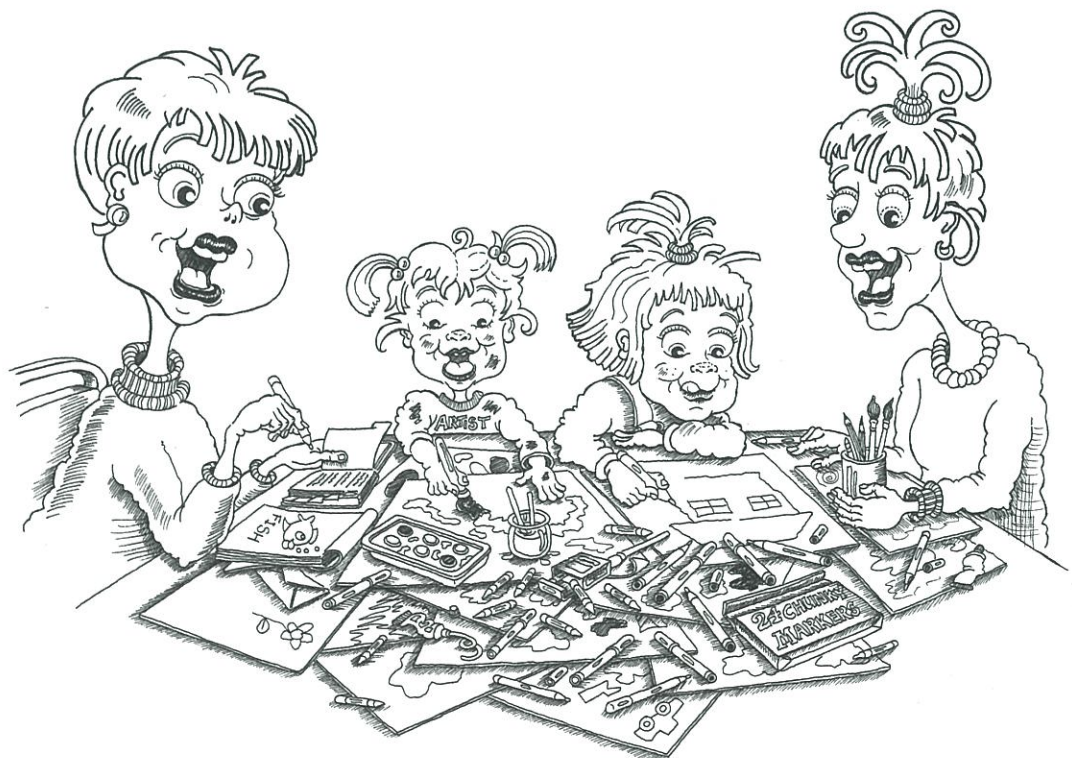
30 mins.

The progression of early writing

After the parents have given their impressions, look at the samples again. This time, read out the explanations given at the bottom of each writing section.

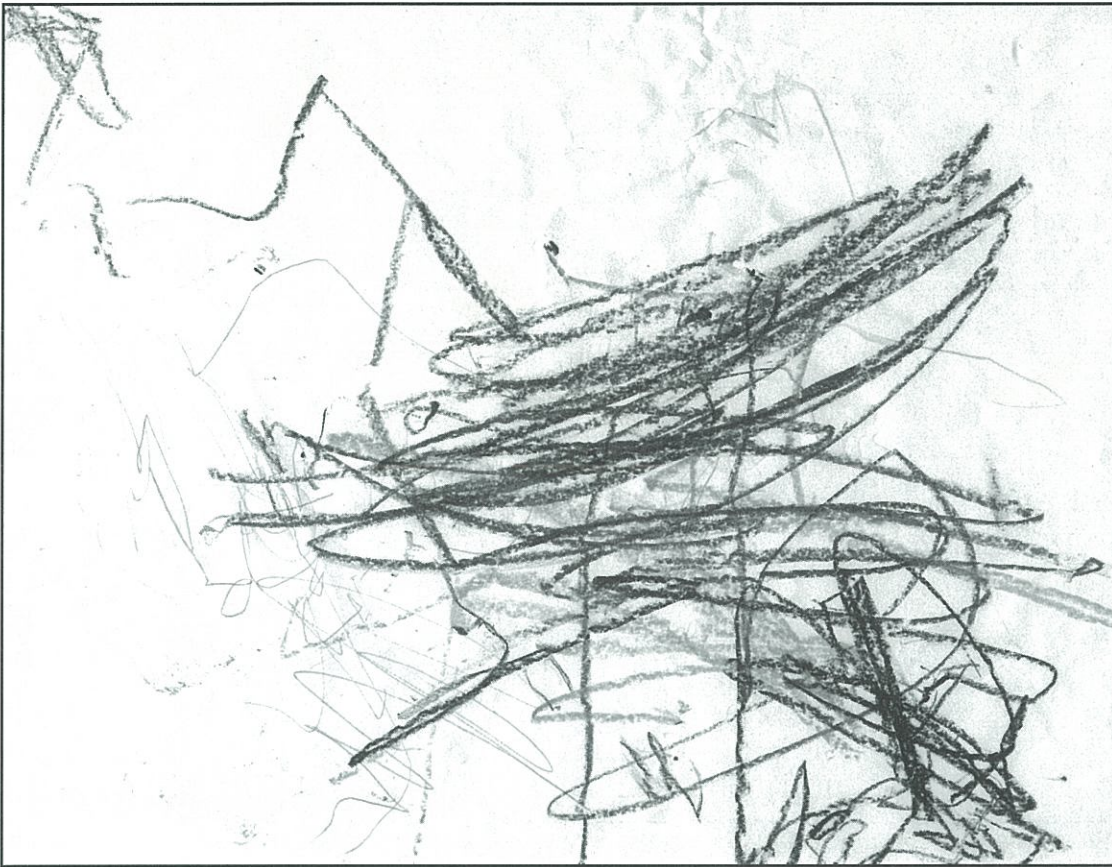
Point out that **the progression of early writing** is a way of looking at the recognisable patterns in children's writings and drawings. These patterns give us clues about how writing emerges. Children display a wide variation of writing skills at any given age. For example, one three year old may be drawing circles on the page, while another three year old is interested in copying the letters of his name.

Remind the parents that the samples are also reproduced in **Parents' Pack D**, pp. 3-9, for them to explore further in their own time.





Early writing samples

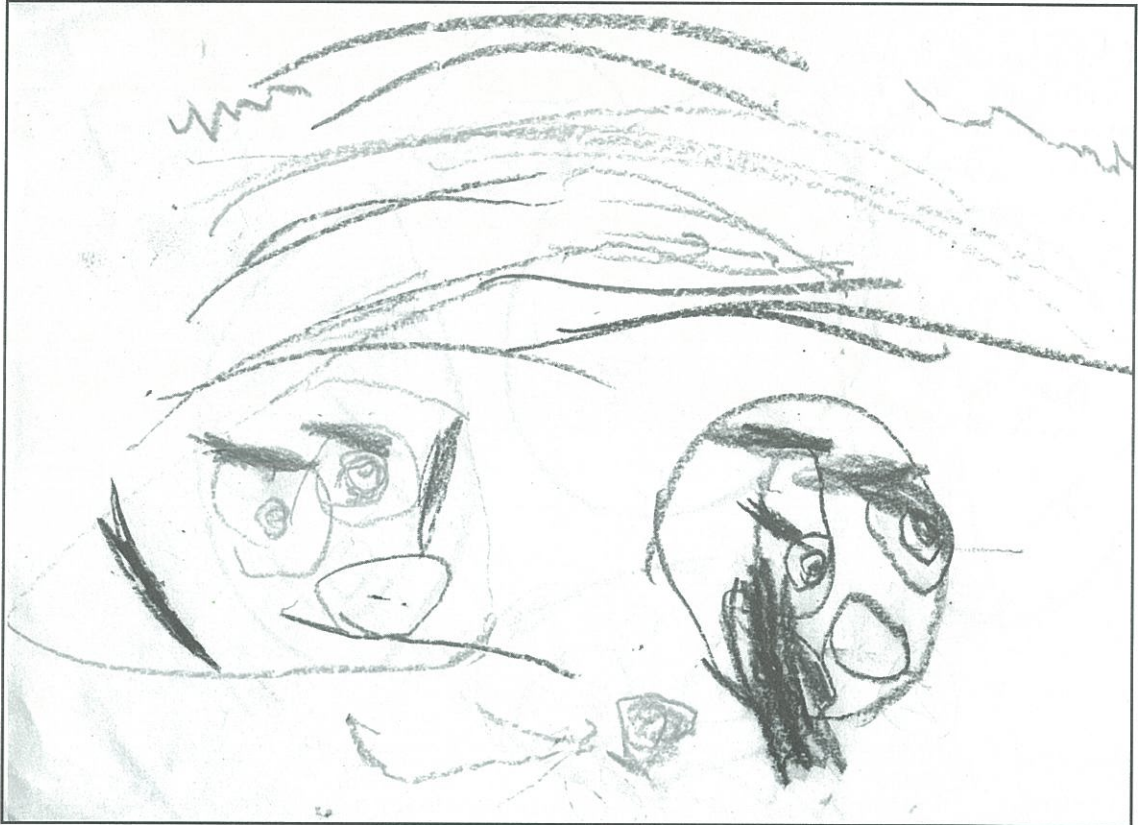


1. Children begin to develop writing skills by showing an interest in writing and drawing. They start by making marks on the page, lines and shapes, and learning how to hold a crayon or pencil.

Jenny, 1 yr. 8 mos., demonstrates her enthusiasm for early writing by eagerly picking up a crayon, which she handles with a practiced grasp while making determined lines on the paper.



Early writing samples

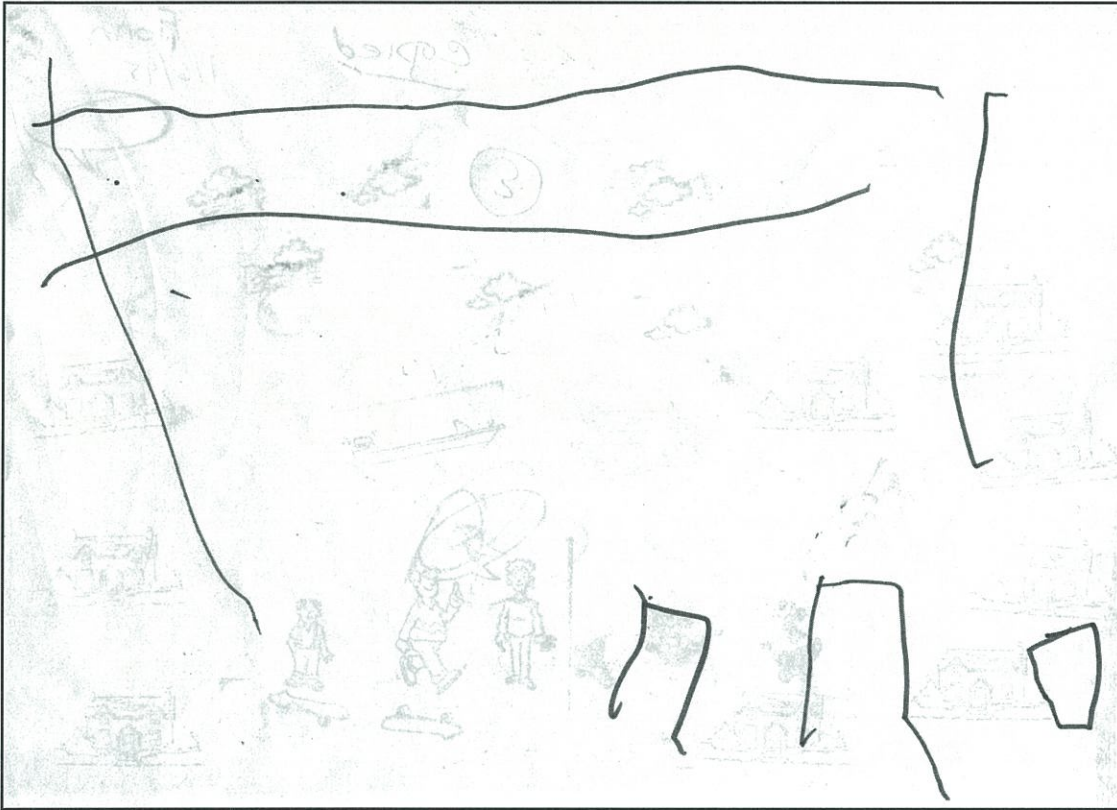


- Children show that they understand the difference between drawing and writing by making different types of marks for drawing and for letters/words. This may start as lines of scribbling, but gradually recognisable patterns, such as circles, begin to emerge.

Lucy, 2 yrs. 9 mos., shows evidence of emerging patterns and purpose in her early writing. She draws a picture of her mother and father to which she adds many details, such as eyebrows, beard, nostrils. Above each figure, she writes 'Mammy' and 'Daddy' with a special scribble which follows a repetitive pattern.



Early writing samples

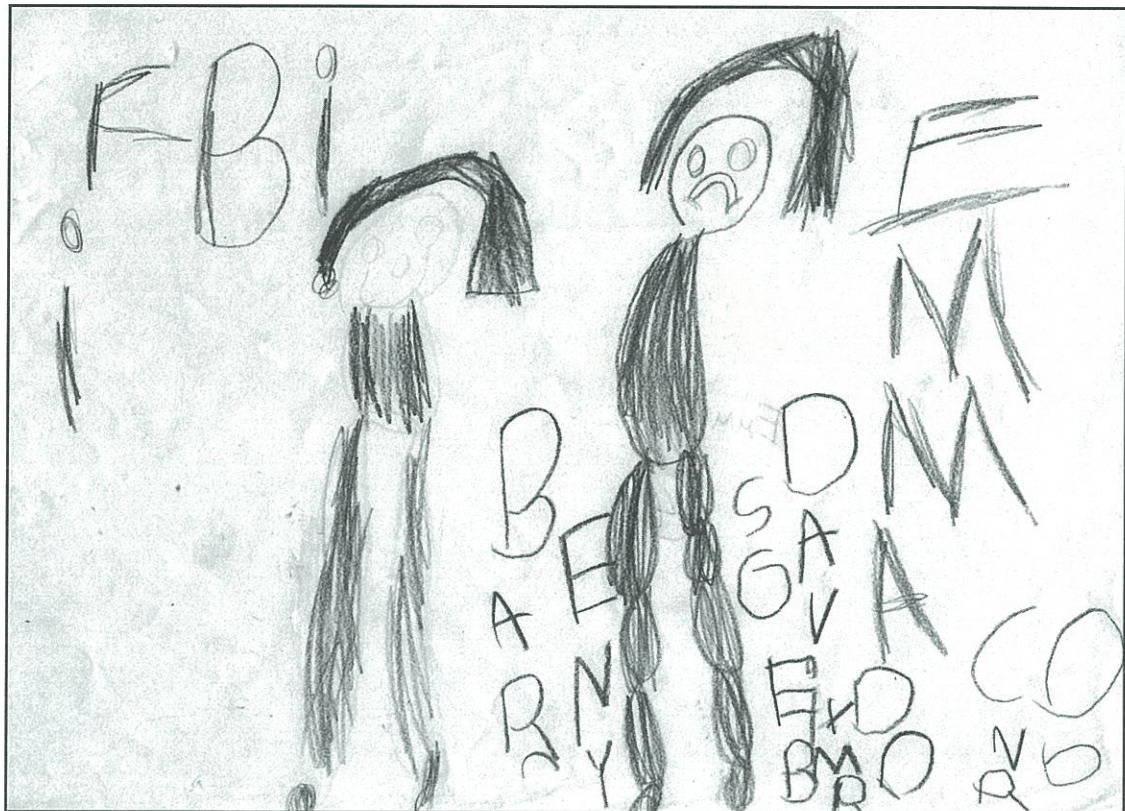


3. Children at this stage are able to form letters by copying or tracing dots. They may be interested in exploring different types of writing. For example, they may copy bits of signs and posters.

***Fionn, 4 yrs. 4 mos.,** focuses his interest on letter formation. He is interested in writing his name. He asks his teacher to write it out so he can copy the letters.*



Early writing samples



4. Children are able to manage some letter formation by themselves, such as their names or strings of letters. Children are still doing lots of exploring at this stage, and decoration may be an important feature of their work.

Emma, 3 yrs. 6 mos., is interested in demonstrating her ability to write words. Her picture is not as important to her as her message. She began with the words that she can write on her own. She starts with her name and then 'FBI', and progresses to copy the names of her family and her favourite television programme, 'Barney'.



Early writing samples

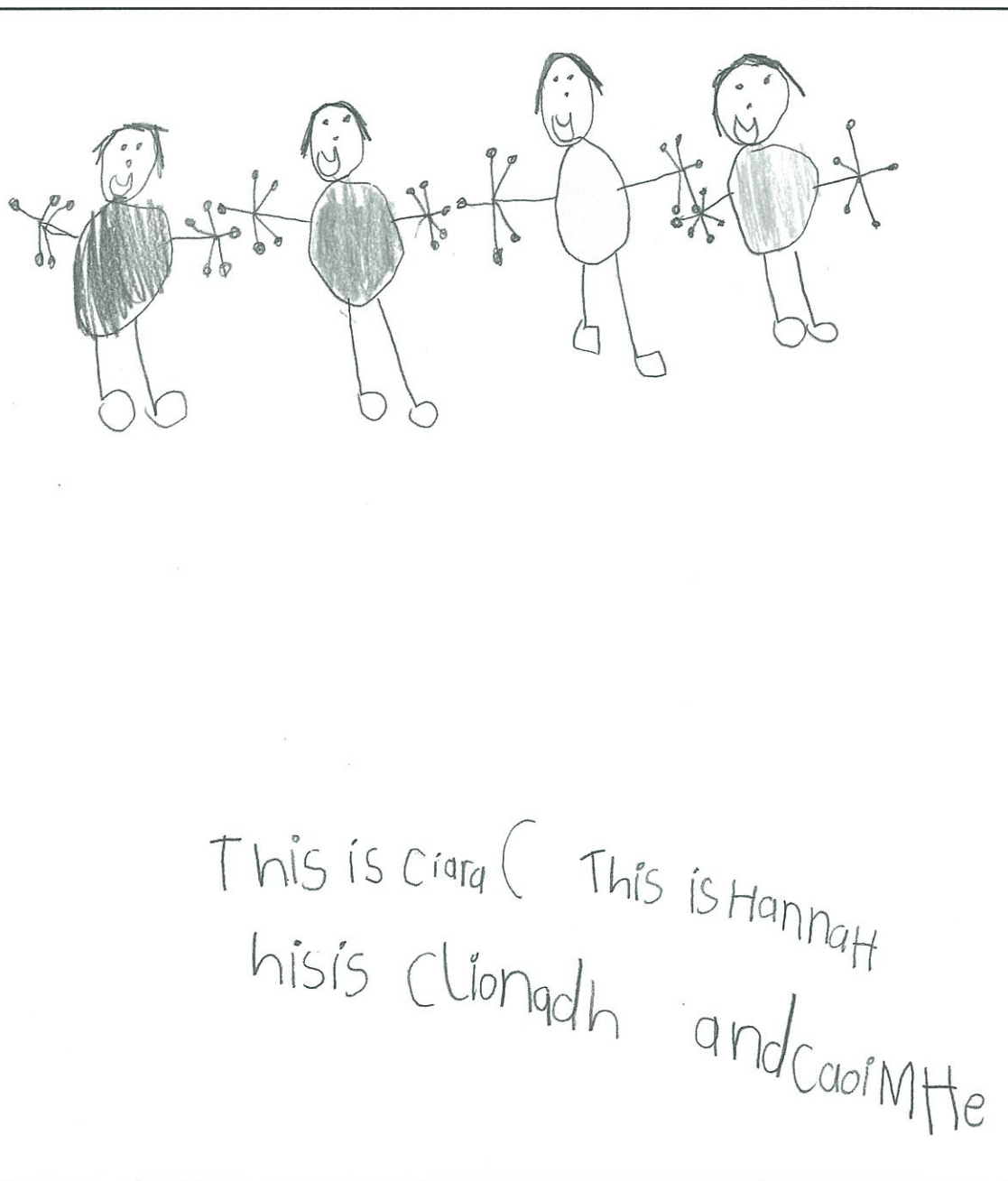


5. Children understand that they must write words to communicate the meaning of their messages. Children at this stage will often ask adults to read their writing. They have very few spelling skills, but they know what they want to say.

Catherine, 5 yrs. 6 mos., conveys a clear message describing her picture, 'I have a tent and I grow flowers.' She is at a beginning spelling stage, demonstrating knowledge of some consonant and vowel sounds. She also demonstrates that she has learned that writing goes from left to right with a return sweep for the next line.



Early writing samples

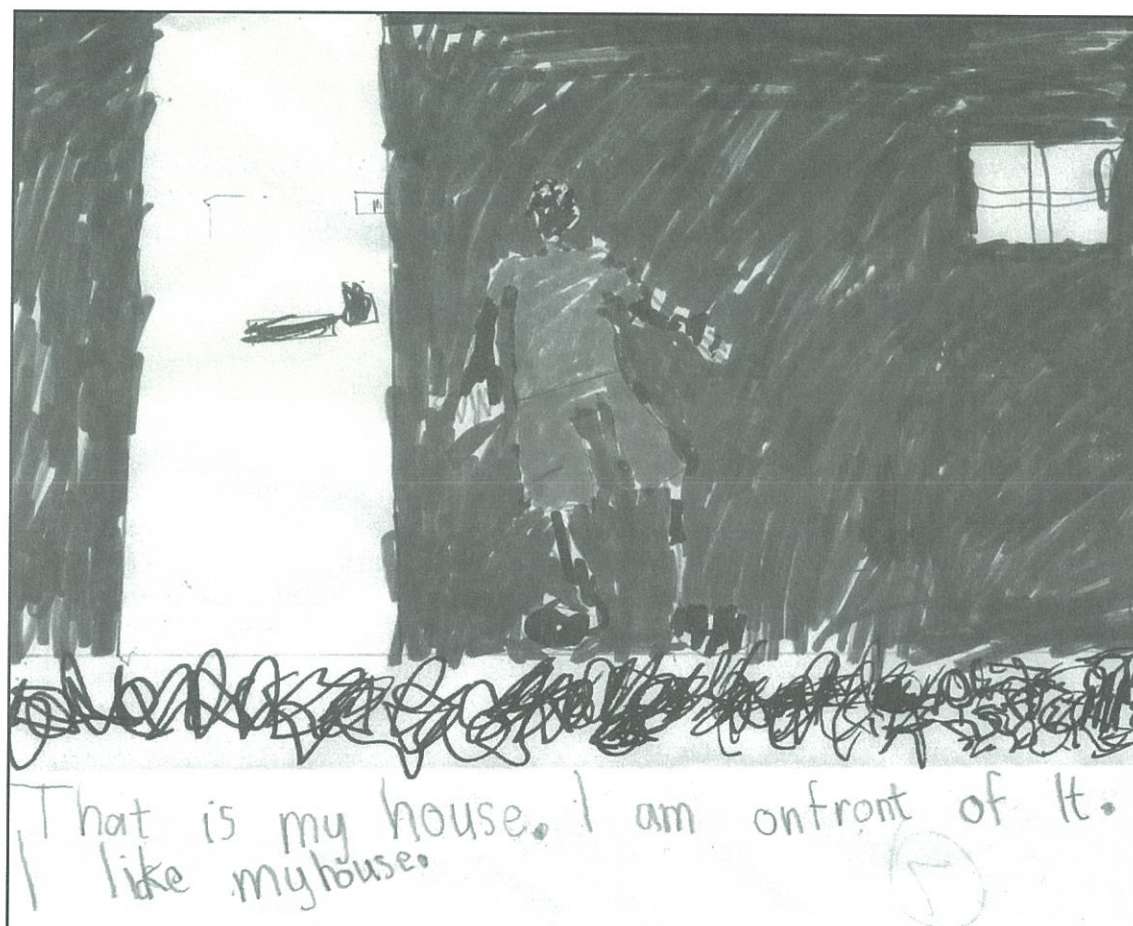


6. Children begin to write so that it can be more easily understood. They will spell with beginning and ending sounds, but probably not with vowels. They may have some simple spellings correct such as 'cat', 'l', 'the' to write in sentences. They may begin to leave spaces between words.

Caoimhe, 6 yrs. 6 mos., shows good evidence that she has quite a bit of knowledge about spelling, grammar, and punctuation. However, she confines her writing to the simple words that she is confident about spelling. She has written a clear string of sentences with capital letters at the beginning of each one.



Early writing samples



7. Children at this stage are able to write 'text'. They are beginning to sequence a set of ideas that makes sense. They are beginning to use full stops or linking words such as 'and' and 'but' to help make their writing more structured. Although spelling is still not a major concern at this age, there is evidence that children are beginning to use spelling rules by sounding out words.

Killian, 6 yrs. 7 mos., is able to write 'text'. His writing contains complete sentences with full stops and capitals. His sentences are sequenced and make good sense. He demonstrates a good grasp of spelling skills.



Pencil power

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Make simple dot-to-dot stencil cards using very basic pictures traced from a colouring book, enlarged Clipart drawings, or children's stencils. Have a supply of paper and markers ready for the parents.



Refer to **Parents' Pack D, p. 10 - Pencil power** and **p. 11 - Making a dot-to-dot**.

What to do:

This activity will look at some ways that parents can support their children's early writing activities. Explain that early handwriting activities are designed to give children practice at learning to control a pencil. Pattern drawing is an example of an early writing activity. Making patterns helps children learn to sequence. Children first learn to reproduce designs in the correct order. This will help them later on, when they need to reproduce letters in the correct order for spelling.

Turn to **Parents' Pack D, p. 10 - Pencil power** and discuss.

Invite the parents to make some simple dot-to-dot patterns to bring home. Give each parent a few sheets of paper and some markers. Share around your stencil cards. Refer the parents to **Parents' Pack D, p. 11 - Making a dot-to-dot** to demonstrate that there are several ways to make a dot-to-dot picture.



Some parents will be anxious about spelling. Stress that young children do not need to worry about spelling - they have enough to learn. However, parents might like some additional sessions on improving spelling for older children or for themselves.



Pencil power

You can help your child get ready to write letters by starting to copy and draw patterns. Making patterns helps to develop the eye-hand co-ordination skills needed to form letters. Joining lines from left to right will help him get used to the idea of reading and writing from left to right.

Draw patterns for your child to copy and let him draw patterns for you to copy in return. Don't expect your child to be able to copy your pattern accurately. He may just scribble at first. This is what beginning writers do.

Here are some other ideas for making patterns:

- Make a pattern frame around a picture.
- Play 'joining up' games. Draw two objects, for example, a cat and a mouse and ask your child to join them up.
- Draw a picture with a line or a circle left out. Ask your child to fill in the missing line. For example, draw a cup without a handle.
- Make simple mazes and dot-to-dots.
- Play 'take a line for a walk'.
- String beads.
- Make coloured paper chains.
- Draw patterns in the sand.
- Encourage all kinds of drawing and colouring.



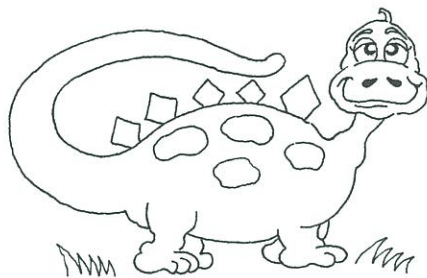
Making a dot-to-dot

You will need:

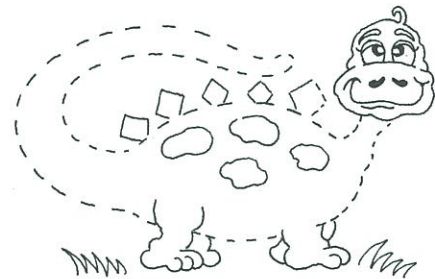
- a colouring book, cardboard (cereal box), scissors, markers and paper.

Copy or trace a simple drawing from a colouring book onto cardboard. Cut it out to make your stencil.

Place your stencil in the middle of a page. First fill in small details and background details to give your child a hint of the picture. Then create your dot-to-dot in one of three ways:

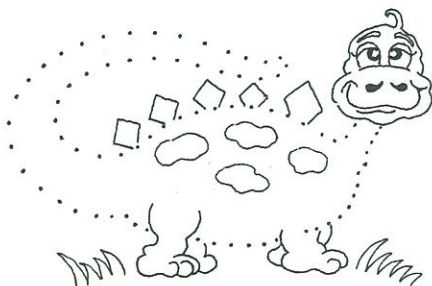


Trace the picture in broken lines for your child to connect.



1

Trace the picture in dots for your child to connect.



2

Trace a few lines to give an idea of the picture. Then, working left to right, make and number dots for your child to connect.



3

Words about writing

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Refer to **Parents' Pack D, p. 12 - Words about writing.**

What to do:

Refer back to previous discussions about the language used to talk about activities and skills. For example, in **Session 6 - Sharing books** you discussed words used to talk about books and in **Session 7 - Environmental print** you looked at words that you use when talking about environmental print.

Brainstorm words around writing. Ask the parents to think of some of the words used to talk about the tools of writing, materials for writing, the formation of letters, words and sentences, and reasons for writing. Write all their words on a flipchart.

Turn to **Parents' Pack D, p. 12 - Words about writing.** Compare the parents' list to these words. Encourage the parents to write in additional words in the spaces provided.

As in previous discussions, talk about the importance of familiarising children with the common words used to talk about writing. When children start school, they will be expected to use these words to describe the structure and process of writing. Even though they may already possess some writing skills, this new vocabulary may be unfamiliar to them.





Words about writing

Does your child know some of these words?

alphabet

copy

keep between
the lines

big letters

pencil

write in the
squares

lines

left to right

rubber

capitals

print

small letters

skip a space

full stop

question
mark

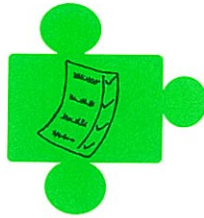
skip a line

ruler

space

go on to the
next line

margins



Session Summary

Summarise the session by revisiting the questions that you wrote on the flipchart in the introduction:

- *What is writing?*
- *How do children get ready to write?*
- *What can you do to help your children develop writing skills?*

Ask the parents to brainstorm answers by reflecting on the activities in this session.



Home Activity 8 - Using the 'Spotlight on writing'

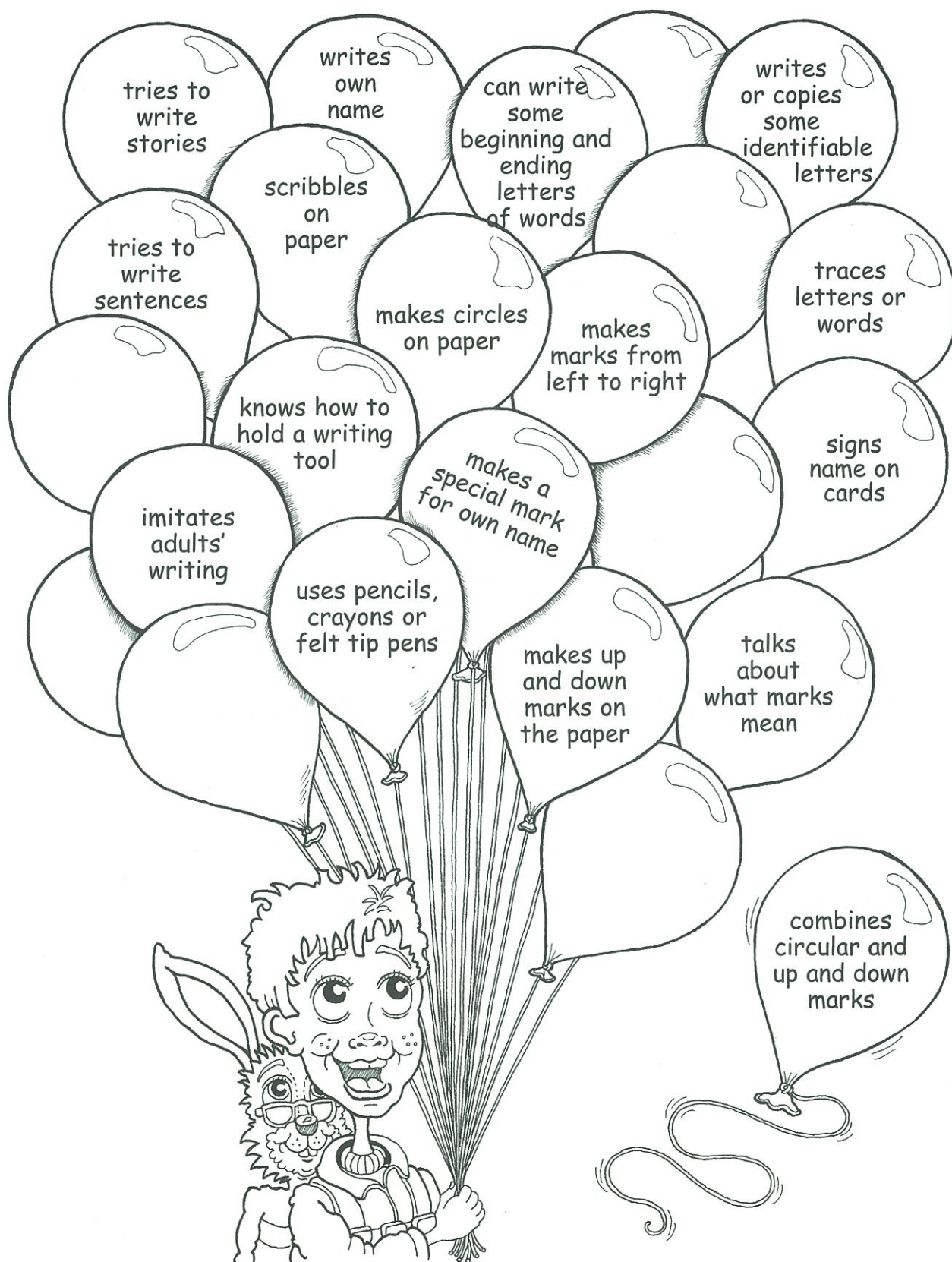
The parents can bring home their dot-to-dots for their children.

Also, introduce the **Spotlight on writing - Parents' Pack D, p.13**. Ask the parents to complete this in the same way they have been filling in the **Spotlight on reading** and the **Spotlight on talking and listening**. Suggest that they pay attention to their children's writing activities between now and the next session.

Ask the parents to try to notice what their children write, where they write, when they write, and why they write. Ask them to answer the questions in **Home Activity 8 - Using the 'Spotlight on writing'**.



Spotlight on writing



Name _____

Age _____

Photocopy for each child as needed.



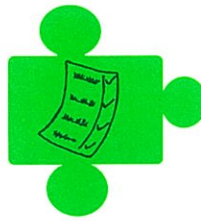
Using the 'Spotlight on writing'

Can you list some of the writing skills mentioned in the **Spotlight on writing** that your child has demonstrated?

Can you name some of the times and places you have observed your child engaged in writing activities?

Can you give some of the reasons your child was writing?

What else could you do to encourage your child to develop the skills needed to write?



Session Notes

What worked well in this session?

Were there any difficulties?

What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?

9

Everyday writing





In this session parents will:

- explore purposes for writing in everyday life;
- talk about reasons why children are motivated to write;
- discuss the importance of modelling writing for their children;
- identify opportunities for their children to participate in writing activities.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	188
Writing for a purpose	1	25 mins.	189-190
Everyday writing	2	25 mins.	191
 Everyday writing activities			192
Writing and play	3	15 mins.	193
 Writing and play			194
 More writing activities			195
Making a writer's toolkit	4	45 mins.	196-197
Session Summary		10 mins.	198
Home Activity 9 - Fun with writing			198
 Fun with writing			199
Session Notes			200



Introduction

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

What to do:

Review **Home Activity 8 - Using the 'Spotlight on writing'**. Ask the parents to share some of their observations regarding their children's writing activities. In particular, focus on the questions that ask where, when and for what reason do children write.

Remind the parents that much of last week's discussion focused on the skills involved in learning to write, and how a wide variety of activities can help children get ready to write. Today's session will focus on what motivates children to learn to write, and how parents provide many opportunities which encourage their children to become writers.

Write on the flipchart:

- *When and where do you write?*
- *What are some of the reasons why you write?*
- *What motivates children to write?*



Writing for a purpose

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Select a number of **Photopak** cards showing children either engaged in writing or in watching someone writing.



You will also be referring to the **Early writing samples** in **Parents' Pack D**, pp. 3-9.

What to do:

Divide the parents into groups. Hand out the selected Photopak cards. Ask the parents to examine the writing activities taking place in these photographs.

Write on the flipchart:

- *What types of writing activities are happening in the photographs?*
- *Which photographs involve children observing writing activities?*
- *Which photographs involve children participating in writing activities?*

Give the groups five or ten minutes to brainstorm, then ask for feedback.

Refer back to the **Early writing samples** in **Parents' Pack D**, pp. 3-9.

Remind the parents that although learning to write is hard work, many children eagerly and industriously make attempts to write from a very young age.

Questions to ask:

- *What reasons for writing are evident in these samples?*
- *Have you ever noticed where and when your children have been engaged in writing activities?*
- *What do you think motivates children to write?*

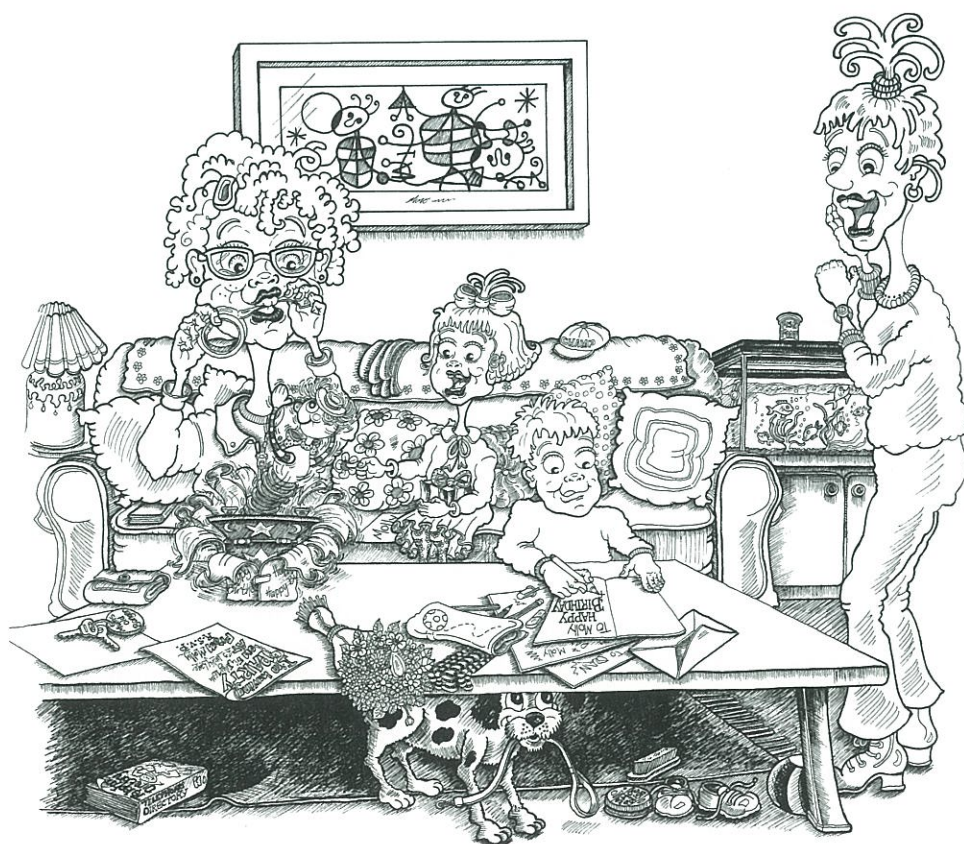
Sample responses:

- Children like to write their own names.
- They see others writing.
- They want to write letters or cards.
- They want to write to Santa.
- They want words to go with their pictures.
- They like to make lists.
- They like to label things.
- They want to copy things.
- They like to 'make believe'.

Writing for a purpose

Explain that, just as children are 'socially motivated' to learn to talk, children are 'socially motivated' to learn to read and write. Parents (and other family members) play an important role in encouraging this motivation by acting as models for writing. Parents give their children lots of opportunities to observe writing activities in the home and encourage their children to 'join in' where appropriate.

Children's interest in writing grows from their social participation in writing activities. This is just as important to their writing development as any of the skill building exercises already discussed.



Everyday writing

To prepare:



Prepare information and instructions needed for the sample writing activities.

Sample writing activities:

- Choose items from a catalogue and fill in an order form.
- Sign a birthday card.
- Write a message to Mary telling her that John phoned and he'll be two hours late.
- Make out a shopping list for a child's birthday party.
- Write a note to a child's teacher.
- Copy an address and phone number from an ad in the newspaper.
- Copy a recipe a friend has shared.



Refer to **Parents' Pack D, p. 15 - Everyday writing activities.**

What to do:

Ask the parents to work in pairs. Give each pair a sample writing activity to complete. While they are working, write these questions on the flipchart:

- *Do you need to talk to anyone in order to complete this activity?*
- *Do you need to read information in order to complete this activity?*
- *Do you need to use numbers in order to complete this activity?*
- *Would you prefer to be doing this activity with others or on your own?*

After ten minutes, bring everyone back together and invite feedback. Point out that writing is sometimes thought of as a solitary activity performed by the 'writer', but actually most everyday writing activities involve other people and are part of a communication process involving talking, listening, reading and using numbers, as well as writing.

Everyday writing activities provide opportunities for children to:

- see their parents and other family members writing;
- participate in an 'adult' activity;
- talk about writing;
- experience writing as part of a communication process that also includes talking, reading and using numbers.

Ask the parents to discuss ways that young children could be included in some of the writing activities demonstrated.

Finish this activity by referring to **Parents' Pack D, p. 15 - Everyday writing activities.**



Make lists	shopping list, 'to do' list, Christmas wish list, who to invite to my party list, things to take on a trip list, things to do when Granny visits.
Take messages	telephone messages, messages from people stopping by, cooking instructions.
Sign cards	Christmas cards, birthday cards, Valentine's Day cards, thank you cards.
Write letters	to family members, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends.
Design labels	for personal belongings such as books, toys, sports gear, and on doors and shelves.
Make out a menu	for a birthday or holiday meal.
Write on pictures	add a title, write some dialogue, sign the picture.

Writing and play

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Refer to **Parents' Pack D**, p. 16 - **Writing and play** and to p. 17 - **More writing activities**.

What to do:

Brainstorm ideas about play activities that provide writing opportunities.

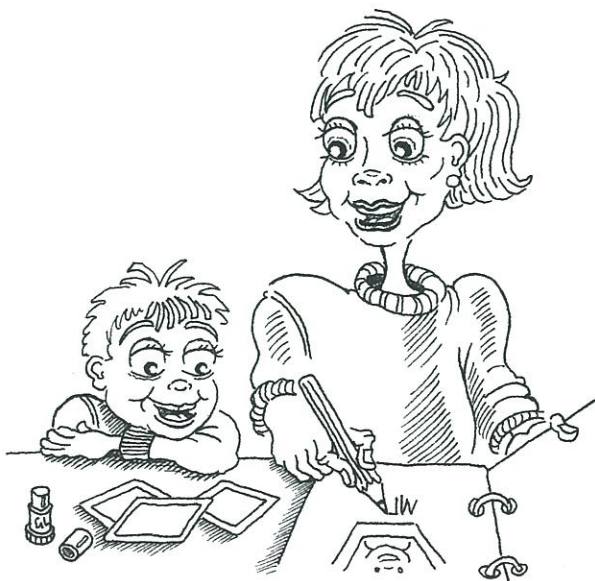
Questions for discussion:

- *Do your children engage in pretend play?*
- *What do they like to pretend?*
- *Do older children get involved?*
- *Can writing be added to, or developed around these play activities?*
- *What things could you ask your children to write as part of a pretend game?*
- *When and where could you let your children do pretend writing while you are engaged in a real writing activity?*

Write their answers on the flipchart.

Explain that pretend writing activities are another way to help children learn about the different purposes for writing.

Read and discuss **Parents' Pack D**, p. 16 - **Writing and play** and p. 17 - **More writing activities**.





Writing and play

Shop:

- Start by collecting empty food cartons such as cereal boxes, biscuit wrappers, egg cartons, or washing up bottles.
- Help your child to write price labels on the items.
- Use play money or make your own.
- Provide pencil and paper for writing a shopping list.
- Use a shoebox for a 'till'.
- Make a sign for the shop.

Restaurant:

- Allow your child to set the table.
- Do up a simple menu card with menu items and pictures to match.
- Have a note pad for taking orders.
- Use play money or make your own.
- Use a shoebox for a 'till'.

School:

- Provide a blackboard or a big piece of paper that can be tacked or taped to a wall.
- Collect some chalk, pencils, little notebooks or copies, and storybooks.
- Use large empty cardboard boxes for desks.
- Encourage your child to decorate her classroom with letters of the alphabet, numbers and pictures.

House:

- Help your child to make a tent with a blanket or sheet draped over several chairs for a playhouse.
- The playhouse could be for herself, her dolls or her stuffed animals.
- Provide her with paper, crayons and markers to make a colourful sign for the house.

Your ideas:



More writing activities

Start a scrapbook of your child's pictures, writing, cards.

Ask your child to draw pictures for a story and paste these into a scrapbook or other notebook. Then together you could write the text.

Give your child chalk to draw on the pavement. Teach her how to make a hopscotch board. It will wash away easily when it rains.

Providing your child with a wide variety of writing activities:

- helps to build her confidence around writing;
- prepares her for writing tasks in school;
- helps her to develop a sense of purpose about writing;
- helps her to feel included in the family and in the wider community.

Your ideas:



Making a writer's toolkit

With thanks to the Norfolk 'Learning Together' team for this suggestion.

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Assemble materials for the writer's toolkit - paper (A4 pages, craft paper, ordinary lined and unlined paper, card, 'Post it' notes), markers, crayons, pencils, chalk, leftover Christmas cards, wrapping paper, old magazines, ribbons, cotton wool, scissors, paste or glue, plastic boxes or tool boxes. If you are on a limited budget, your local supermarket might be willing to give you a number of plastic tomato or mushroom boxes for the toolkits.

Prepare a sample toolkit. Include some home-made cards, labels, menus, notepaper, dot-to-dots, colouring pages, etc.

What to do:

Ask the parents to brainstorm how they can encourage their children's efforts by creating opportunities for writing and by making resources available.

Discuss what parents can provide in terms of:

- reasons for writing;
- materials to write with;
- a place to write;
- time and space to write.

Suggest non-conventional writing activities such as writing in the sand, making letters from string, writing on your back, writing on the pavement with chalk.

Display the sample writer's toolkit and its contents. Give each parent a toolkit filled with a few writing tools (as your budget allows).

Suggest that the parents 'customise' their children's toolkits by decorating the outside, putting their children's names on the toolkits, and filling the toolkits with writing materials that their children would enjoy.

For example, the parents could make:

- home-made cards using pictures from old cards or magazines, coloured pencils, cotton wool or other decorative additions;
- menus and shopping lists with pictures of their children's favourite foods;
- dot-to-dots;
- Clipart drawings enlarged and photocopied for colouring;

Making a writer's toolkit

- notelets with messages printed: 'thank you from Thomas', 'please come to Ciara's party';
- pictures of sports stars with spaces to write the stars' names.

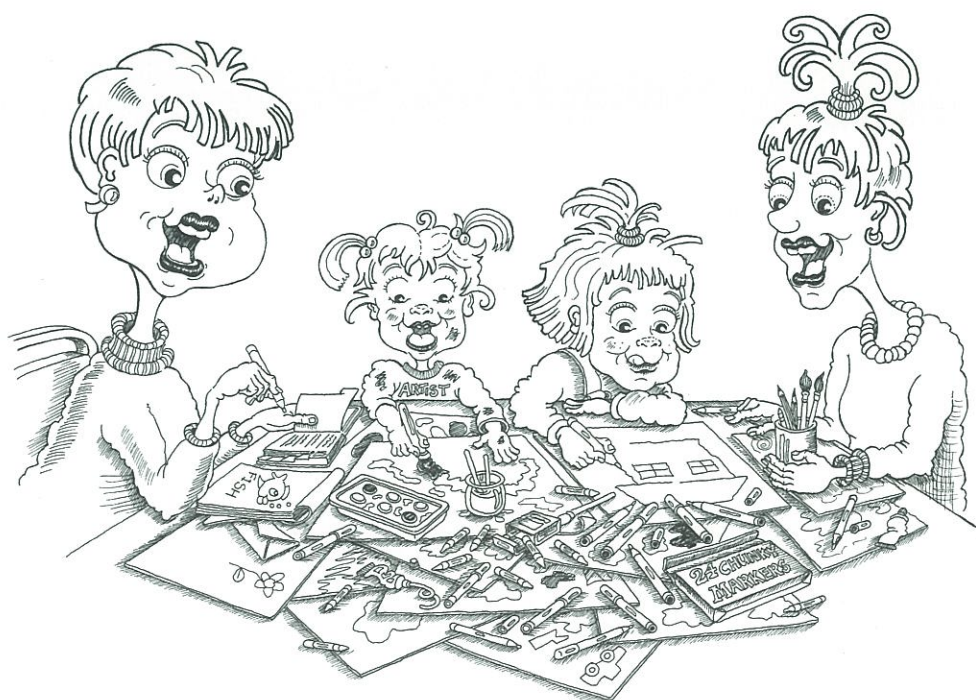
Encourage the parents to share ideas, skills and information during this activity.

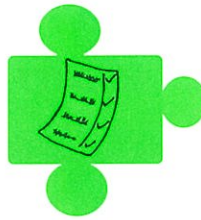


Parents could explore the local shops for best buys and report back to the group.



This is also a good activity to combine with some computer classes.





Session Summary

Invite the parents to review the session by reflecting on how they can encourage their children's writing skills in the home.

- *What are children's reasons for writing?*
- *How do children use writing?*
- *What can you do to model writing skills for your children?*

Refer to **Parent's Pack D, p. 13 – Spotlight on writing**. Remind the parents to continue their observations of their children's writing skills.



Home Activity 9 - Fun with writing

Read through the **Home Activity - Fun with writing**, which asks the parents to choose at least one of the activities from this session to try with their children at home.



Fun with writing

Choose one or more of the writing activities to try at home:

- Make something using the writer's toolkit.
- Include your child in an everyday writing activity.
- Play shop/school/restaurant/house.

Which activity did you choose?

Did this activity include talking and listening, reading or using numbers?

What did your child like about this activity?

Were other family members or friends part of the activity? What did they do?

What do you think your child learned from this activity?



Session Notes

What worked well in this session?

Were there any difficulties?

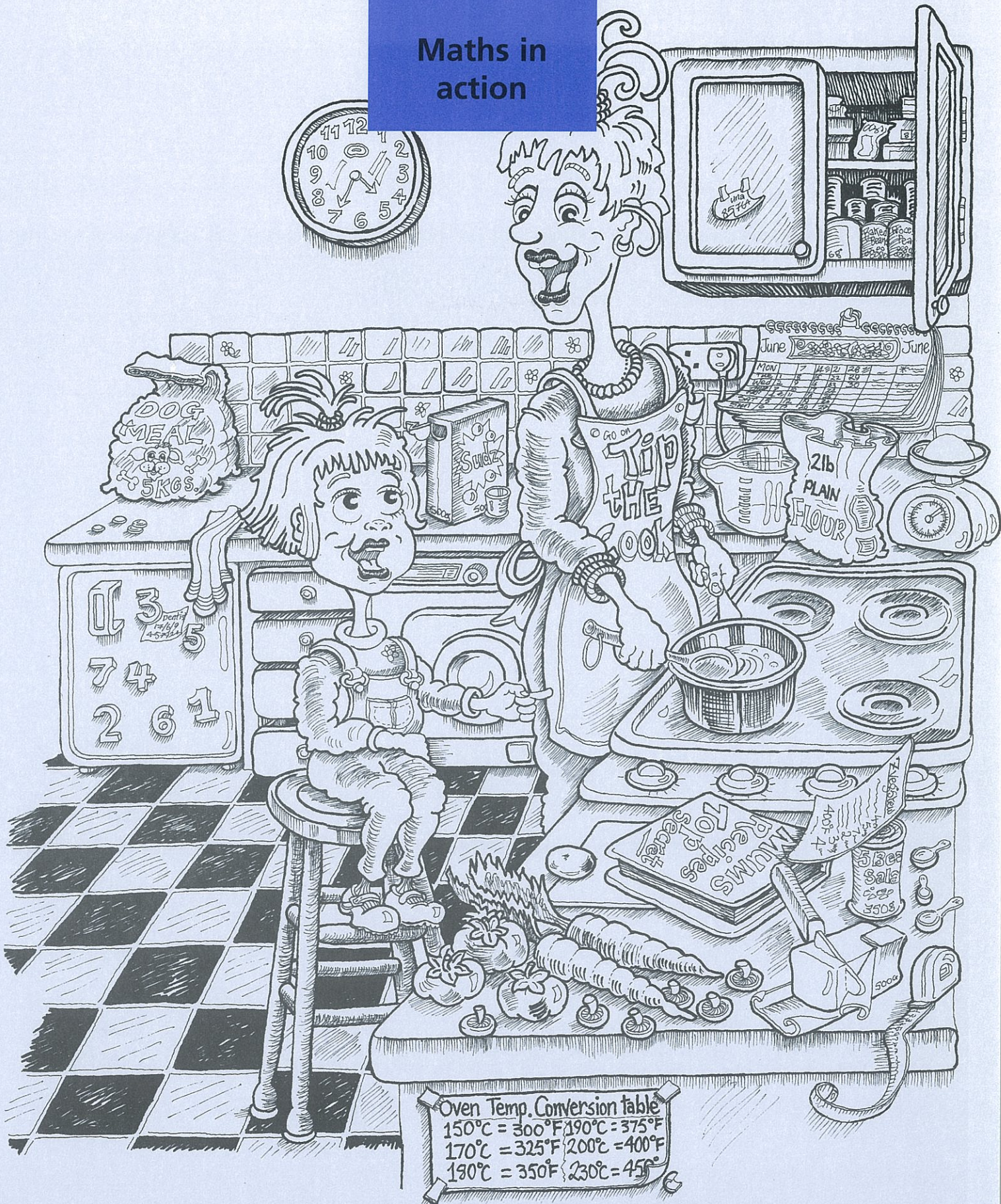
What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?

10

Maths in action





In this session parents will:

- examine the maths that they use in a wide variety of situations;
- recognise the value of their own maths experiences;
- explore the language of maths;
- discuss ways to develop their children's understanding of maths through everyday activities.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	204
Numbers are all around us	1	15 mins.	205-206
Maths tools	2	20 mins.	207
Words about maths	3	45 mins.	208-209
 Talk about maths			210
Maths in action	4	30 mins.	211
 Maths every day			212
 Help your child with maths			213-214
Session Summary		10 mins.	215
Home Activity 10 - Maths at home			215
 Spotlight on maths			216
 Maths at home			217
Session Notes			218



Introduction

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

What to do:

Review **Home Activity 9 - Fun with writing.**

Many people regard mathematics as a purely academic subject with limited applications to the real world. They may fail to recognise the extent to which maths are actually used in a family situation. As a consequence, parents may underestimate the contributions that they can make towards developing their children's mathematical understanding.

Begin today's session with a short discussion on parents' own feelings about mathematics. Guide this discussion so that it progresses from general comments about maths experiences, including parents' own school experiences, to how the parents see themselves using maths in their everyday lives.

Questions to ask:

- *What do you remember about maths when you were at school?*
- *What did you like about maths?*
- *What did you dislike about maths?*
- *How do adults use maths in daily activities?*





Numbers are all around us

To prepare:



Read over the monologue entitled, **Wake up call**.

What to do:

Tell the parents that you are going to read a short story about a mother talking to her three boys as they get up and get ready for school. The boys are Matt, age twelve, Paul, age seven, and Jason, age three. As we join the family, the mother has just woken up and realised that the alarm clock never went off. Ask the parents to imagine themselves as Jason, the sleepy-eyed little toddler, listening to all his mother has to say as the children get ready for school. Tell them to pay special attention to times when the mother mentions numbers in her conversation.

Read **Wake up call** in the character of an over-stressed mother fussing over her children being late for school.

After you have finished, allow a short time for the parents to make general comments and then ask:

- *How many times do you think numbers were mentioned?*
- *What were the numbers referring to?*
- *Do you think Jason understood what some of the numbers referred to?*
- *Which ones?*
- *Do you think that similar talk takes place in your home?*

Explain that just as children learn a lot about reading and writing before they go to school, they also learn about numbers:

- They see adults using numbers in many ways.
- They hear adults talking about numbers.
- They have opportunities to experience numbers in their daily routines.
- They quickly learn that numbers have meaning and purpose.

In this example, Jason is hearing talk about numbers; he is also seeing activities relating to talk about numbers; he even undertakes to try some of the activities himself!



Numbers are all around us

Wake up call

Matt, Paul, Jason, wake up! It's almost nine o'clock. The alarm never went off. Dad must have forgotten to reset it when he got up at six. Quick! Throw on your clothes, you'll be late for school. Paul, you help Jason get dressed. Here's his warm jumper and jeans. It's cold outside. Matt, when you're dressed, start making the sandwiches. I'll stick the kettle on and get the breakfast. There's a few slices of corned beef in the fridge. Use them. And there are bars in the cupboard, but just take one each. I want that pack to last the week.

Lads, what took you so long? We're really running behind this morning, and I told Niamh I'd collect Marie at the babysitter's and give her a lift to school. What's the babysitter's address again? Matt, you know the Kennedys on St. Martin's Terrace. Is it number fifteen? Do you know their phone number? Do us a favour and find it in the book. 43557? Write it down for me. I'll ring in a minute and tell them we'll be along shortly. Have you those sandwiches made yet?

Jason, why are you walking so funny? Paul, Jason's shoes are on the wrong feet! Didn't I ask you to help him get dressed? What? He insisted on dressing himself? I can see that now. His jumper is on inside out. Never mind. Eat your breakfast and I'll fix him up then. There's your cornflakes. Get three spoons out of the drawer. I'm making the toast. Will someone get the milk out of the fridge? Check the dates and take the oldest one. Don't just grab the first one you see. Has the kettle boiled? I'd love a cup of tea.

What do you mean, where's your jersey? You have a match today? No, Paul, you did not tell me you had a match on Tuesday. Look in the hot press. If your jersey's not there, it's still in the laundry basket. Matt, stop teasing your brother. The goalie's position is very important. Doesn't the goalie always wear number one? No, they will not lose by ten goals to no score. Don't mind him Paul. Matt, will you **please** stop teasing your brother. I don't care if he's always saying you're a useless forward. If I've told you once, I've told you a hundred times, two wrongs don't make a right. Oh, for heaven's sake, don't let Jason pour his own milk. I'm not buying litres of milk for them to end up on the floor.

What's that smell? Is it the toast burning? Blast it! Why is the toaster turned up to six? What? The bread was probably frozen so your father turned it up to six to defrost it?

Quarter past nine and I've no cup of tea drunk yet. Come here, Jason, till I fix your jumper and wash your face. You two bigger ones, have you done your jobs? Have you packed your lunches? Hurry on out to the car. Here, take your bags. They weigh a ton! All right, let's go. Oh no, where did I put the car keys?

Maths tools

To prepare:



Display a good selection of tools and utensils that are used in the home for activities involving maths: measuring cups and spoons, mixing bowls, biscuit cutters, jugs, saucepans, weighing scales, clocks, calendars, thermometers, rulers, measuring tape, level, buckets, phone, phone book, remote control, calculator, map, compass, pencil, paper, noticeboards, catalogues, RTÉ Guide, laundry basket, silverware separator, egg carton.

Make a collage of additional real life maths samples, such as ads from the paper; pictures of license plates and road signs; pictures of appliance timers and dials on washing machines, microwaves, cookers; different samples of phone numbers; weather charts; sports scores; products displaying best before dates; price tags; size tags; labels showing weight and volume.



Display the Photopak cards which show parents and children using numbers in everyday situations.

What to do:

The purpose of this exercise is to provide the parents with visible evidence of just how often maths concepts are used in the home. Invite the parents to examine the display of tools and other prompts. After a few minutes, divide them into pairs or small groups and give each group a few items to examine in more detail.

Questions for discussion:

- *Do you ever use any of these tools? Which ones? Are there items in the selection that surprise you?*
- *What tools do you use every day, several times a week, only once in a while?*
- *Can you name the maths activities these tools are used for?*
- *Would your children see you using tools?*
- *Do you ever talk about what you're doing?*
- *Would your children know how to use some of these tools?*

Ask each group to comment on the tools they are examining.



Some of the parents might like to learn more about the use of calculators or computers.



Words about maths

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

Select items from your display of maths tools in **Activity 2** to stimulate talk about the language of maths.



Display the Photopak cards which show parents and children using numbers in everyday situations.

Display your collage of additional real life maths samples prepared for **Activity 2**.

Prepare topic cards by writing words such as 'time', 'weight', 'size', 'direction', 'distance', 'amount', 'order', on index cards.



Refer to **Parents' Pack E, p. 2 - Talk about maths**.

What to do:

Divide the parents into pairs or small groups. Give each group a topic card, flipchart page and marker. Tell them to brainstorm all the words and phrases they can think of that refer to the topic they were given. To help them in this exercise, suggest that they circulate around the room looking at the pictures on the wall, at the collage and at the maths tools.

You might find it helpful to give examples which include both precise and general terms, and some colloquial phrases.

Example: TIME

clock	watch	calendar
appointment	minute	hour
second	alarm	week
month	late	early
on time	yesterday	sell by date
year	last week	next week
millennium	century	running behind
two thirty	ahead of schedule	time stood still
how much time	anniversary	in a minute

Words about maths

After about fifteen minutes, reassemble the group and let the parents present their lists of words. When everyone has contributed there should be quite an extensive vocabulary! Point out to the parents that children will hear many of these words first spoken in the home.

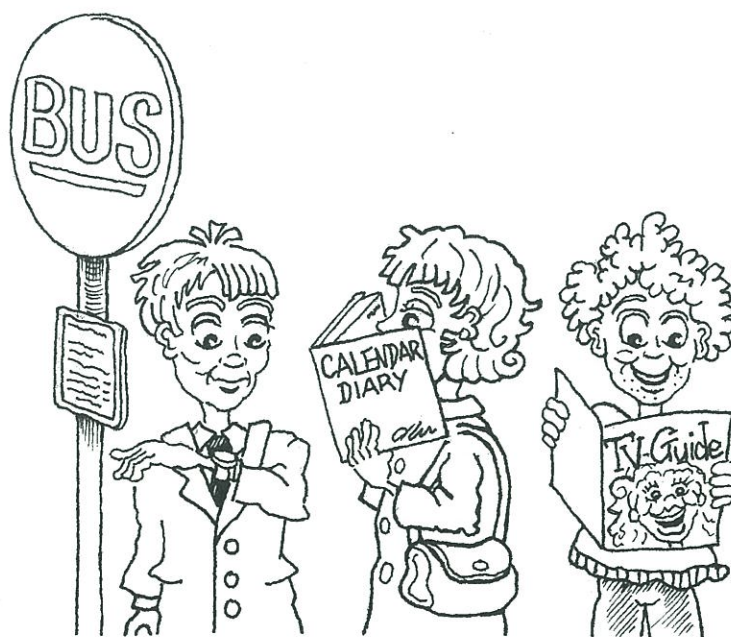
Now reread the story **Wake up call** from **Activity 1**. This time, ask the parents to listen for words that refer to the maths topics you have just discussed.

When you have finished, ask them to recall some examples.

Finish by discussing **Parents' Pack E, p. 2 - Talk about maths**.

All this 'talk about maths' might encourage some parents to think about their own maths needs. One popular topic is money management. Invite your local Money Advice and Budgeting Service for a session.

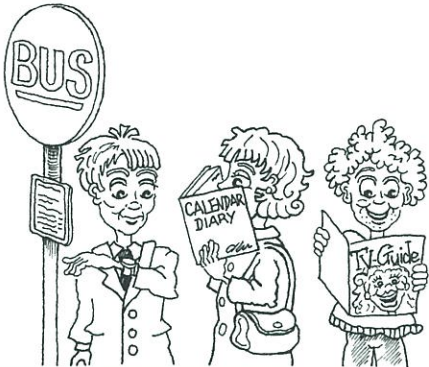
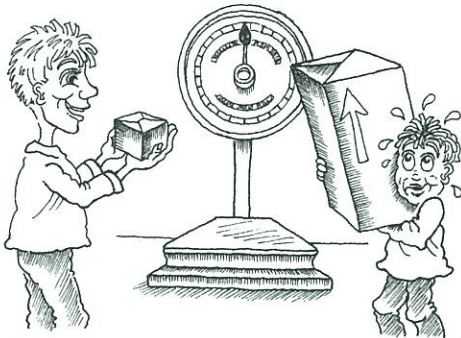
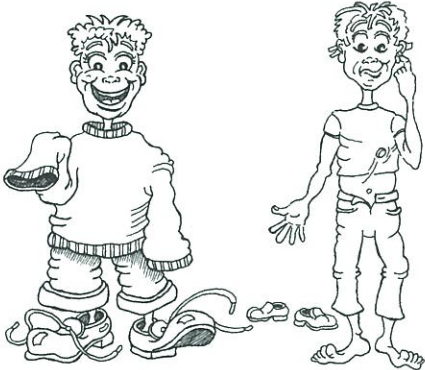


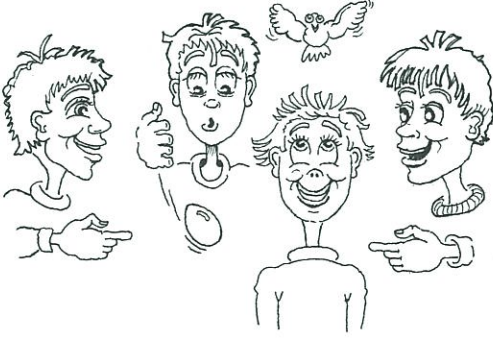
If you would like to extend the session further, you could invite the parents to work in groups to write their own maths stories about daily routines.





Talk about maths

You can teach your child many words about maths. Talk about:

<p>Time</p> 	<p>Weight</p> 
<p>Size</p> 	<p>Amount</p> 
<p>Order</p> 	<p>Direction</p> 

- Encourage your child to make contrasts and comparisons.
- Talk about maths words in stories.
- Point out maths words on signs and labels.
- Help your child to learn the maths words he will need to use in school.

Maths in action

To prepare:



Prepare a number of real life maths problems for the parents to solve. Some suggestions are:

- Put a bag of flour, a bag of sugar, a bag of bread soda into three tins of different sizes.
- There are two dolls and two sets of clothes mixed up. Dress the dolls.
- Wrap three presents with one sheet of wrapping paper.
- Share a bowl of sweets.
- Tie a shoe.
- Match these socks.
- Organise each suit in this deck of cards from highest to lowest.
- Write a birthday card and address the envelope.
- Describe how to get from this room to the toilets.
- Measure the length of the room.



Refer to **Parents' Pack E, p. 3 - Maths every day.**

Refer to **Parents' Pack E, pp. 4-5 - Help your child with maths.**

What to do:

Ask the parents to work in pairs. Give each pair a different real life maths problem to solve.

Ask them to first solve the problem and then reflect on how they did it.

Refer to **Parents' Pack E, p. 3 - Maths every day** for prompts.

After ten to fifteen minutes, bring the group back together and invite feedback.

Questions to ask:

- *How did you solve this problem?*
- *What maths skills did you use?*
- *How would you involve your children in this activity?*

Finish by referring to **Parents' Pack E, pp. 4-5 - Help your child with maths.**

You may want to take time to fit in a discussion about how the skill of 'estimating' features in solving maths problems.





Maths every day

We use maths in all kinds of activities.

Think of some of the things you and your child do every day.

Which activities use maths?

Think about play activities.

What maths skills do you use in play?

Think about rhymes, songs and stories.

How do these activities use maths?

Think about a walk about town.

What examples of maths might you see?

Do you:

- use numbers?
- put things in order?
- sort items?
- put things in different categories?
- check weights?
- use direction?
- count things?
- compare objects?
- match things?
- use measurement?
- figure time?
- consider shapes?

These are all maths activities.



Help your child with maths

Just as children learn a lot about reading and writing before they go to school, they also learn a lot about maths. By seeing their parents use numbers, and by hearing them talk about numbers, children quickly learn that numbers have meaning and purpose.

Here are some suggestions for helping your child with maths:

Use numbers

He will need lots of practise with counting before he really develops a sense of numbers.

- Point out the numbers that are all around him: clocks, calendars, signs, etc.
- Count, count and count again: 'How many legos do you have?' 'How many sweets did you get?' 'Can you get me three apples?'
- Do simple adding: 'Let's see, I put one biscuit in your lunchbox and now I'm **giving** you another one. How many do you have now?'
- Do simple subtraction: 'There are three sausages in the fridge, but I'm going to **take** one for your tea. How many will be left?'

Look at patterns, matching, sorting

- Point out **patterns** to your child: 'The stripes on your shirt make a nice pattern - red, blue, green, red, blue, green'. Ask your child to continue the pattern.
- Put away the washing together. Let your child **match** the socks.
- Help him to **sort** the food shopping by putting it into the right press.

Explore space

- Give him big and small containers to play with in the bath.
- Provide simple jigsaw puzzles.
- Talk about left and right.



Help your child with maths

Talk about maths

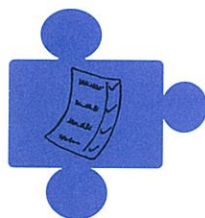
- Use words to compare things: 'Which tomato is bigger?' 'Which box of cereal is taller?'
- Sing songs that have numbers in them: 'Baa, Baa Black Sheep', 'This Old Man'.
- Say number rhymes: 'Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed', 'One, Two, Buckle My Shoe'.
- Read books that talk about numbers: 'The Three Little Pigs', 'The Hungry Caterpillar'.

Talk about time

- Put up a calendar in a place where your child can easily see it. Use it to talk about days of the week. Mark time by crossing off days until birthdays and special days.
- Introduce your child to time by pointing out the numbers and time on the clock.
- Use the television guide to look up favourite programmes.

Use money

- Let your child see the prices of things when you shop.
- Talk about how much things cost. Make comparisons: 'The apples cost 25p a piece and the oranges are 15p. I think we should buy oranges.'
- Set up a play shop with your child. Collect some empty packets and tins and carrier bags. Make play money or use real money.



Session Summary

Review the main points of today's discussion by asking the parents:

- *Where and when do your children see and hear you using maths?*
- *What are some of the practical experiences of maths that you can share with your children?*
- *How can you help your children to become familiar with the language used to talk about maths?*



Home Activity 10 - Maths at home

Ask the parents to try at least one of the ideas suggested in **Help your child with maths**.

In addition, ask the parents to look at **Parents' Pack E, p. 6 - Spotlight on maths**.

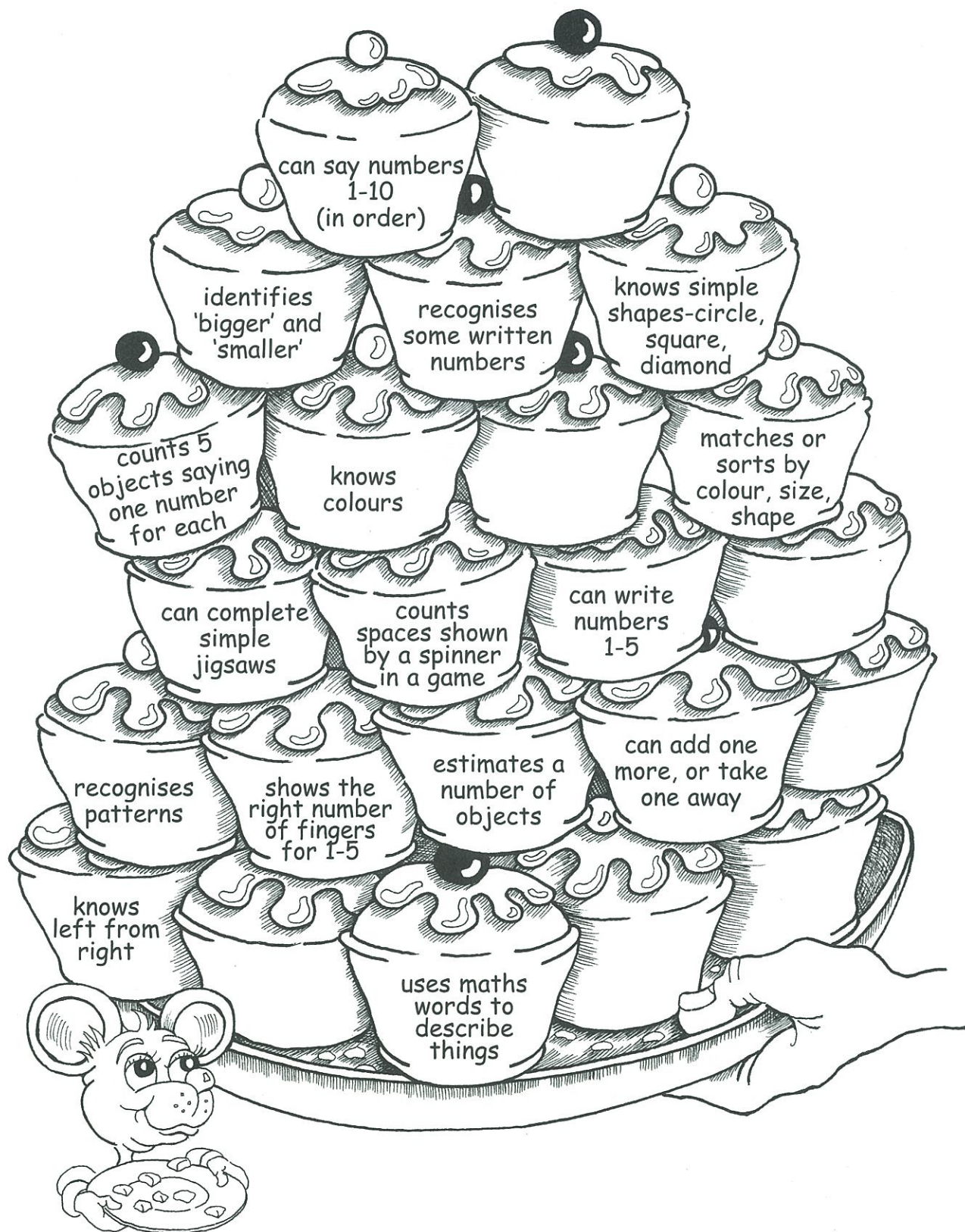
Between now and the next session the parents should try to observe how their children use maths.

For example, do they notice their children:

- building with blocks?
- playing video games?
- counting pocket money?
- setting the table?
- looking at the RTÉ Guide to see when their favourite programmes are on?



Spotlight on maths



Name _____

Age _____

Photocopy for each child as needed.



Maths at home

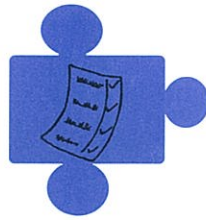
What maths activity did you try this week?

How did you and your child enjoy this time?

What other activities would you like to try?

What did you observe about your child's maths skills from using the **Spotlight on maths?**

Are there any skills that you would like to add to the **Spotlight on maths?**



Session Notes

What worked well in this session?

Were there any difficulties?

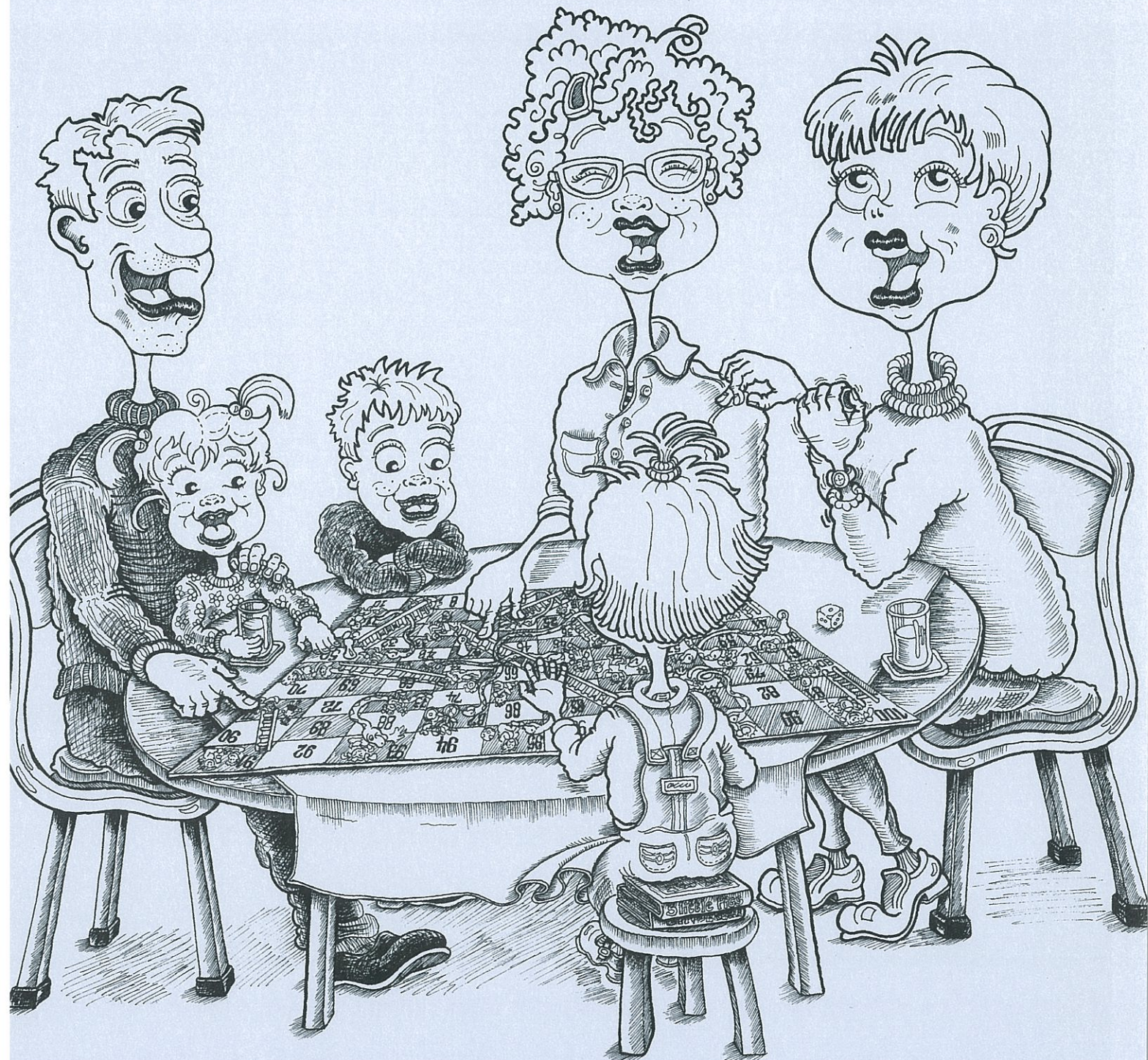
What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?

11

Having fun
with maths





In this session parents will:

- experience maths through a number of games and play activities;
- explore the use of maths concepts through rhymes, songs and storytelling;
- discuss ways to heighten children's experience of maths through stories and play;
- make a game for home use.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	222
Playing with maths	1	45 mins.	223-224
 More play activities using maths			225
Stories and numbers	2	30 mins.	226
Making a game	3	30 mins.	227-228
 Learning from games			229
 Card games			230
 Board games			231-233
 Jigsaw puzzles			234
Session Summary		10 mins.	235
Home Activity 11 - Playing games			235
 Playing games			236
Session Notes			237



Introduction

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

What to do:

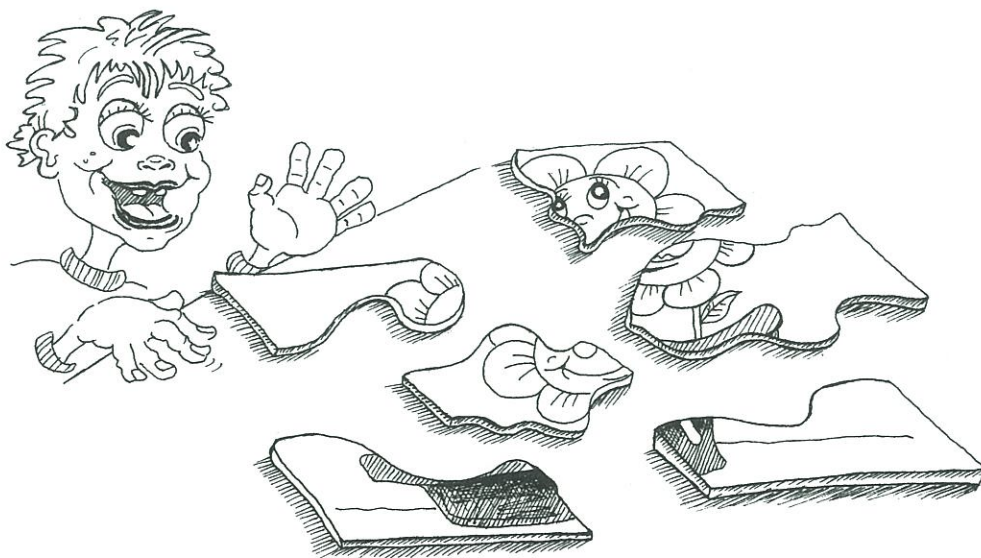
Ask the parents for feedback on **Home Activity 10 - Maths at home**.

Write their comments on the flipchart.

Questions to ask:

- *What maths activities did you try?*
- *Which maths skills from the **Spotlight on maths** did you notice your children using?*
- *Are there other maths skills that you would add to the **Spotlight on maths**?*

This week's session is designed to explore further the ideas that were introduced in **Session 10**. In this session, the parents will be looking at how common play activities, games, rhymes and stories provide an ideal format for encouraging maths skills in children.



ACTIVITY 1

11



45 mins.

Playing with maths

To prepare:



Organise a variety of games and play activities for the parents to sample. These activities should be spread around the room so the parents can circulate and try out a number of them. Where necessary, include simple instructions on how to play the game or activity.

Suggestions for play activities:

- Snakes and Ladders
- simple jigsaw puzzle
- card game
- game involving catching and throwing a ball
- bingo
- game with cars or trucks involving imaginary travel
- Lego or some other kind of building blocks
- Playdoh or another form of modelling clay
- paper and markers or crayons

It is not necessary to use all nine activities, but not less than five is recommended.



Refer to **Parents' Pack E, p. 3 - Maths every day.**

You will also be referring to **Parents' Pack E, p. 8. - More play activities using maths.**

What to do:

Refer back to **Session 10, Activity 4 - Maths in action** where the parents looked at daily routines and identified opportunities for children to explore maths concepts.

Remind the parents about some of the activities and concepts discussed, for example, that folding and putting away laundry involves sorting and matching.

Explain that, in this session, you will be looking at how games and other familiar play activities also provide many opportunities for children to learn about maths.

Direct the parents' attention to the prepared activities. Ask them to work in small groups or pairs and sample a number of activities over the next 30 minutes. Suggest that they spend about five minutes exploring each activity and then reflect on what they did.



Playing with maths

Can they identify the maths skills involved in these activities? Refer to **Parents' Pack E, p. 3 - Maths every day.**

Can they identify other skills involved in these play activities? Ask each pair to write down their comments on the pages provided.

Allow about 30 minutes for work at the centres. Then reassemble the group and look briefly at each activity. Invite the parents to report their observations.

Discuss more ideas in **Parents' Pack E, p. 8 - More play activities using maths.**





More play activities using maths

- Counting fingers and toes
- Playing with string and thread spools
- Playing shop
- Dressing teddies or dolls
- Playing hide and seek
- Making a playhouse or tent
- Playing with sand or water
- Playing hopscotch
- Sorting toys
- Keeping scrapbooks
- Making cards
- Playing guessing games

Your ideas:



Stories and numbers

To prepare:



Choose a selection of favourite children's stories, for example:

'The Three Little Pigs'

'The Enormous Turnip'

'Billy Goat's Gruff'

'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'

'Jack and the Beanstalk'

'Little Red Riding Hood'

'The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids' 'The Little Red Hen'

Also, have on hand examples of books that teach number skills: books about time, shape, counting, etc.

Organise samples of songs and rhymes that involve numbers:

'This Old Man'; 'One, Two, Buckle My Shoe'; 'Ten in the bed'.

What to do:

Refer back to discussions in **Sessions 4, 5 and 6** about rhymes, songs, stories and sharing books. Explain that you will look again at these activities and explore the maths that children experience through them.

Take a sample storybook. Tell the parents that, as you read, you want them to listen for references to numbers, counting, time, space, weight, size, direction, amount, value, order, patterns, sequencing. Have these listed on the flipchart for easy reference. Begin reading the story. Stop periodically and ask the parents for their comments or, if necessary, prompt them. When you feel they have the idea, invite the parents to explore the other books in pairs or small groups. Give each group one book to read together. After ten to fifteen minutes, ask each group to report their observations.

The parents will discover a wide use of maths concepts in stories. To further the discussion, ask why they think this is so. They might tell you that, just like in real life, storytellers find that maths is a useful way to name and describe things, to communicate ideas and information, and to solve problems.

Explain that just as daily routines provide a safe and familiar format for exploring and learning, so do stories.

Finish this activity by including references to songs and rhymes that use numbers.

Finally, discuss a number of books that focus on number skills more explicitly.

Making a game

To prepare:



Prepare a display of sample games similar to those that the parents will have the option of making: board games, jigsaw puzzles, and card games.

Include both store-bought games and home-made games.

Gather together a number of game-making materials: cardboard (cereal boxes); paper; game templates for board, spinners and bingo; magazines; counters (pasta, beans, beads, etc.); scissors; glue; markers; stencils; Clipart pictures.



Refer to **Parents' Pack E**, p. 9 - Learning from games and **Parents' Pack E**, p. 10 - Card games, p. 11 - Board games, p. 14 - Jigsaw puzzles.

What to do:

Remind the parents that in this and other sessions, games have been recommended as a way of learning.

- Games are enjoyable.
- Games involve interaction with adults and other children.
- Games are multi-sensory: they involve seeing, hearing and doing.
- Games provide a familiar context in which to explore and practise new skills.
- Games provide a framework for putting different skills together.

Questions for discussion:

- *What games do your children play?*
- *Who plays with them?*
- *What are their favourites?*
- *What do you think children learn from playing games?*

Refer to **Parents' Pack E**, p. 9 - Learning from games.

Explain that, over the next 30 minutes, you would like them to choose and make a game for their children. All of the samples presented involve maths skills, but they also involve social skills and literacy skills.



Making a game

Introduce the three prepared models of games. Explain that many games are built on these models. There are many, many different kinds of jigsaw puzzles, hundreds of different board games, countless card games. From these three models, the parents can devise many different games for their children to enjoy.

Ask the parents to take a few minutes to view the sample games, and then to think about what sort of game they would like to make for their children.

Parents should think about their children's ages, abilities and interests when deciding which game model they will make.

Once they have decided to go for a puzzle, card game or board game, they must next plan the topic.

- For a puzzle, this means choosing a picture.
- For the card game, it means deciding what to draw or trace onto the cards.
- For the board game, it means choosing a storyline or theme for the game.

Instructions and examples for all the games are provided in **Parents' Pack E**, pp. 10-14.

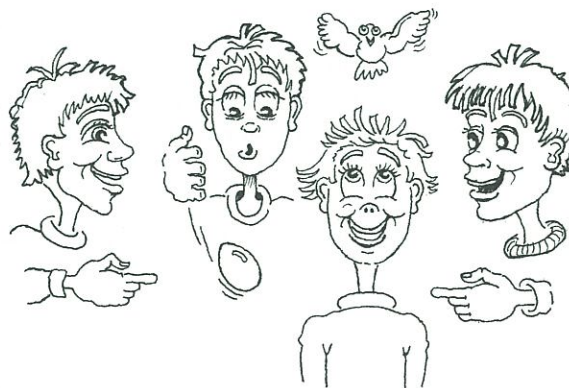




Learning from games

What do children learn from games?

Social skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • following instructions • taking turns • patience • team work • talking and listening • being a good winner and a good loser • taking responsibility 	Thinking skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • observation • concentration • memory skills • planning • developing a strategy • decision making • revising
Reading and writing skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognising letters and words • recognising shapes and symbols • hearing sounds and rhyming • putting things in order • using alphabetical order • making predictions 	Maths skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognising numbers • recognising colours • counting • sorting and matching • using numerical order • estimating skills





Card games

Materials

You will need cardboard (cereal boxes), ruler, scissors, stencils or other pictures, markers.

Directions

Measure and then cut your cardboard into a number of cards of equal size.

Draw or trace or print one object on each card to make both pairs of items and sets of three.

Examples

Apples, oranges, bananas; carrots, potatoes, peas; shoes, wellies, runners; knives, forks, spoons; tractor, car, lorry.

How to play

At least three different games can be played from these cards:

Go fish

Each player gets three cards. The rest of the cards are scattered to form a pond. The object of the game is to be the one to make three matches. In turn, each player selects a card from the pond, which can then be matched in a pair, thrown back into the pond, or kept and another card discarded. Pairs are placed face up on the table so everyone can see the match. The first player to make three pairs wins.

1,2,3 Out

This game is similar to **Go Fish** but in this game the object is to fish a set (apple, orange, banana) from the pond. The first player to make a set wins.

Matchers

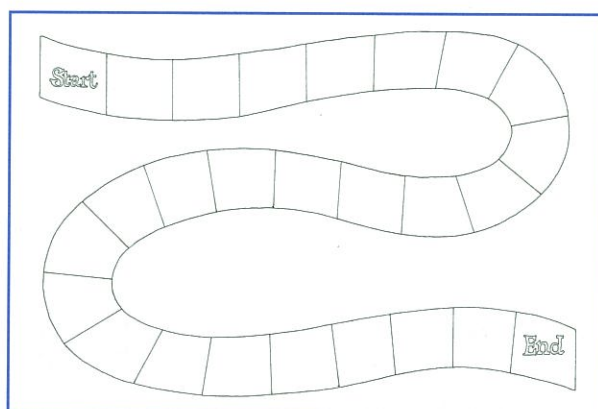
Cards are laid out face down in a rectangular pattern (e.g. eight across and three down). In turn, each player turns over two cards. If they match, they keep them. If they don't, they turn them face down again. This continues until all the cards are matched. The one with the most matches wins.

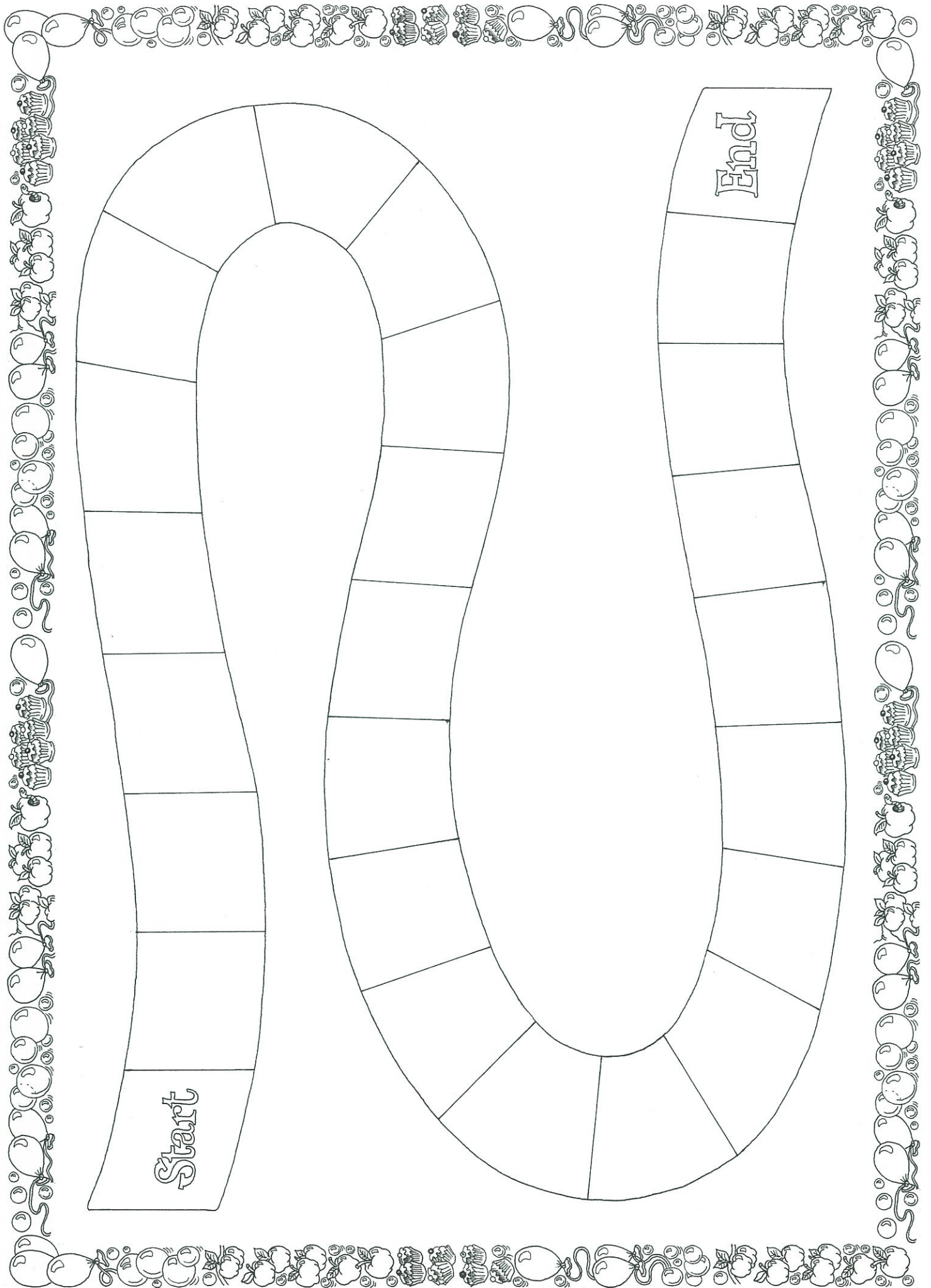
Older children will enjoy learning card games using a real deck of cards.



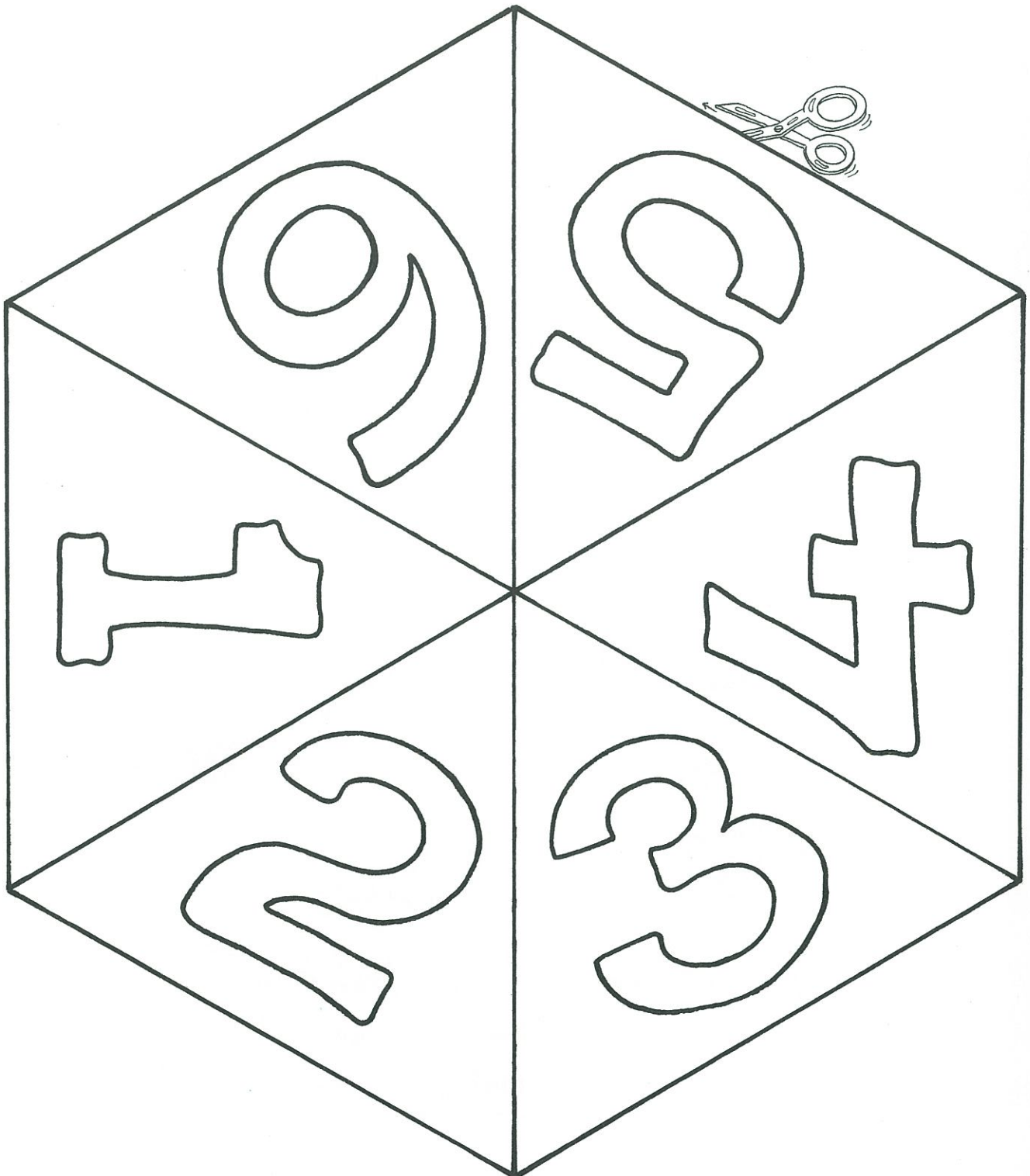
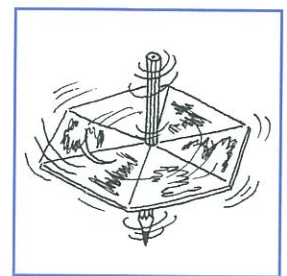
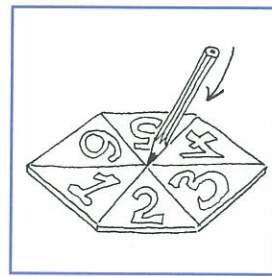
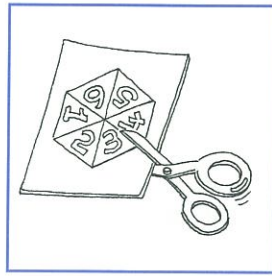
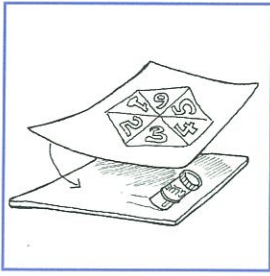
Board games

Materials	Board game and spinner templates, cardboard (cereal boxes), counters.
Directions	Choose a theme for your game, then design your gameboard around this theme.
Examples	<p>For a shopping game, fill in the empty picture spaces with pictures of different types of foods or pictures of shops and logos.</p> <p>For a zoo game, fill in the empty picture spaces with pictures of commonly known zoo animals, such as elephants, monkeys, tigers, etc.</p> <p>For a game about the town, fill in the picture spaces with pictures of places that would be found in the town, such as school, church, post office, etc.</p>
How to play	The game is played by spinning the spinner, and then moving the counter the correct number of spaces. When a player lands on a picture space, she must answer a question about the picture.
For example	<p>Zoo game - the player lands on the picture of an elephant; the parent asks, 'What colour is an elephant?'</p> <p>If the player gives a correct answer, she takes an extra turn.</p> <p>The first player to move to the end of the game is the winner.</p>





Please photocopy as needed





Jigsaw puzzles

Materials

You will need cardboard (cereal boxes), pictures (enlarged and photocopied family photos, pictures from magazines, drawings, Clipart pictures), glue, scissors.

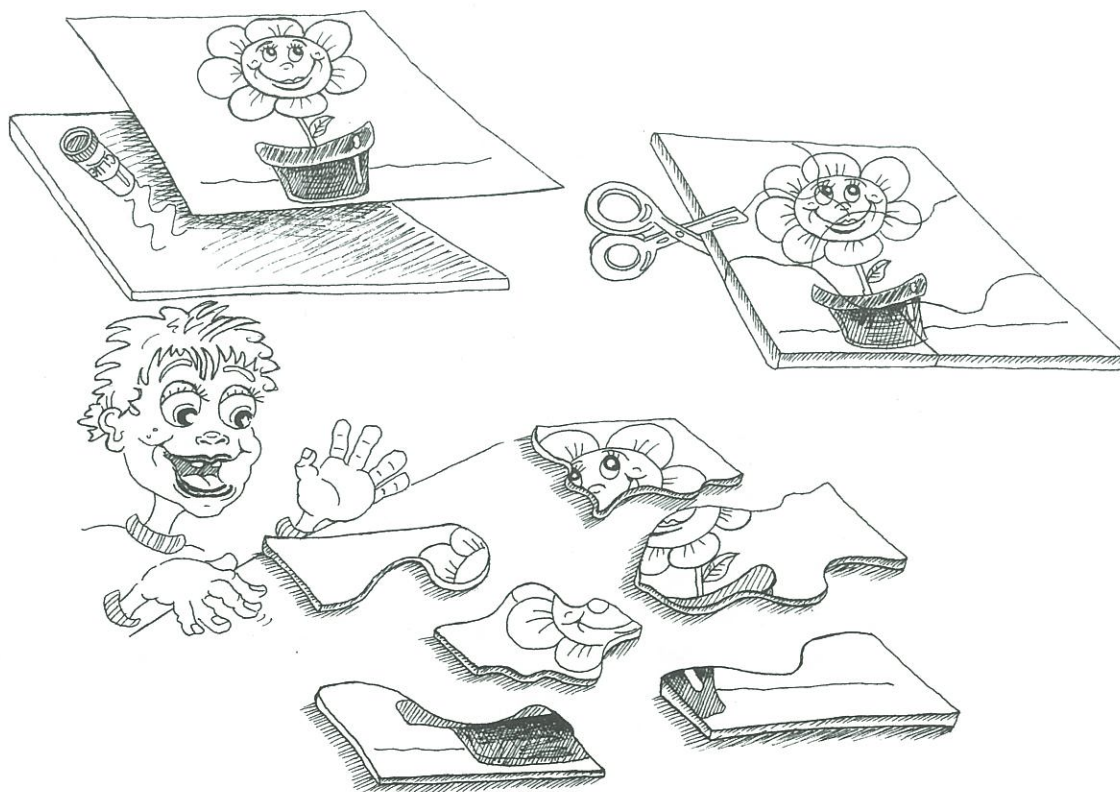
To make your puzzle

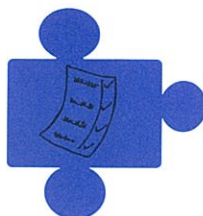
Select a picture, cut it out and then glue it onto the card. Give it a few minutes to dry. Trim the cardboard to fit the exact size of the picture. Cut it into different shapes of puzzle pieces.

How to play

Children try to put the puzzle together by matching the shapes and the pictures.

When this is no longer a challenge you can make the pieces smaller, or mix two sets of puzzle pieces together and ask your child to make both puzzles.





Session Summary

Ask the parents to reflect on the main points of today's session.

- *What are some of the play activities discussed in this session?*
- *How do these play activities provide opportunities for children to learn about maths?*
- *What can children learn about maths from stories, rhymes and songs?*

Refer to **Parents' Pack E, p. 6 - Spotlight on maths**. Which of these skills might children develop through play experiences? Are there other maths skills the parents would like to add?



Home Activity 11 - Playing games

Ask the parents to have fun with their children this week by playing the game that they made in today's session, or by playing one that they already have at home.

Remind the parents to observe their children as they play the game.

Refer to the questions in **Home Activity 11 - Playing games**.

The parents will be asked to comment on their observations in the next session.



Playing games

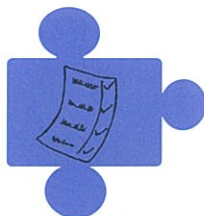
Which game did you play with your child?

Did other family members join in the game?

What maths skills did your child use during this game?

Were there parts of the game that your child needed help with? What did you do?

Does your child use maths in other games or play activities? Please give some examples.



Session Notes

What worked well in this session?

Were there any difficulties?

What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?



Session Notes

12

Making a
book



15

**In this session parents will:**

- explore ideas for making books for their children;
- make a book to be shared at home;
- identify opportunities for interaction around a home-made book activity;
- discuss the intermingling of different learning strands in book making.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	242
Looking at making books with children	1	30 mins.	243-244
 What about home-made books?			245
 Making books			246
 Theme or shape book			247
 Scrapbook			248
 'Lift the flap' book			249
 Zigzag book			250
Making a book	2	90 mins.	251-252
Session Summary		10 mins.	253
Home Activity 12 - Home-made books			253
 Home-made books			254
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Introduction

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

Prepare a display of children's books. You will need a wide variety of children's books. Take care to include a number of 'fun' books, such as pop-up books, 'lift the flap' books, and textured books, as well as simple baby first books and number books.



You should also include some examples of home-made books. If you do not have any from a previous class, prepare a few yourself using **Making books, Parents' Pack F, p. 3.**

What to do:

Begin by reviewing the **Home Activity**. (Please note: the **Making books** session is a 'stand alone' session that may be scheduled at the facilitator's discretion. For this reason, a specific home activity is not designated.)

Invite the parents to spend a few minutes viewing the book display you have prepared.

Explain that today's session will be all about making home-made books.

Questions to ask:

- *Have you ever made books for your children?*
- *What kind of books did you make?*
- *Did your children help you?*
- *Have any older children made their own books in school?*



Looking at making books with children

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

Use the display of children's books prepared for the introduction.



Refer to **Parents' Pack F, p. 2 - What about home-made books?** and **pp. 3-7, Making books.**

What to do:

Take one of the home-made books from the display and show it to the parents. Ask them to identify some of the activities that were involved in making this book.

Sample answers:

- deciding what type of book to make
- making up a story
- recalling events
- copying or tracing
- cutting and pasting
- drawing pictures
- looking for pictures in magazines
- writing text

Ask the parents to consider how making a book can be a valuable learning activity for children.

Sample responses:

- Children are interested in seeing their ideas written down.
- It could help them to learn about books.
- Making a book helps children get ready to read.
- They can 'read' their books to other family members.

Add to the discussion by referring to **Parents' Pack F, p. 2 - What about home-made books?**

Turn to **Parents' Pack F, pp. 3-7 - Making books.** Present examples of store-bought and home-made books of each of the types described and discuss how they were made.



Looking at making books with children

Invite the parents to examine the variety of materials that you have brought for book making. Do these give the parents ideas for making their own books?

Ask the parents to brainstorm ideas for books. Write all their suggestions on the flipchart. Refer to the suggestions in **Parents' Pack F, p. 2 - What about home-made books?** Add some of your own ideas.

When you have a good list of ideas, give the parents ten or fifteen minutes to think about the books they will make.





What about home-made books?

As children become familiar with the books and stories of others, they may want to start recording their own ideas and stories. Making a home-made book with them is a natural next step after storytelling and a delightful way to help children learn about books.

You can make a book for a child of any age.

You can make a book about things you know will interest your child, for example:

- a story about a family trip,
- a 'Me Book' with pictures and drawings about your child,
- a book about the family pet,
- a rhyming book,
- stories about other family members,
- holiday books - Christmas, Easter, Halloween,
- a birthday book,
- a book about going to playschool or school,
- a book about going to the doctor, or dentist.

Involving your child in making a book teaches him many things about how books 'work'. He will learn that:

- a book has a cover page with a title;
- the title tells you what this book is about;
- the book is communicating someone's thoughts and ideas to others;
- there is a beginning, a middle and an end to the book;
- the pages are read left to right.

Making home-made books also involves opportunities for learning about writing and numbers. You can encourage your child to:

- help you write the words;
- draw pictures to accompany the words;
- help cut out pictures for gluing onto the pages;
- help fit pictures and other objects onto a page;
- help cut out a design for the book;
- see that numbers are included in many text messages.

Most of all, seeing his own thoughts and experiences produced in book format will boost your child's confidence, especially if other family members give him lots of praise and encouragement!



Making books

Making home-made books is an excellent way to interest your child in reading and writing. You do not need special talents or a brilliant imagination. Just think about your child's own interests. You can make a book with your child, or for your child. Either way, your child will be thrilled to see that his words and everyday experiences are important enough to be published!

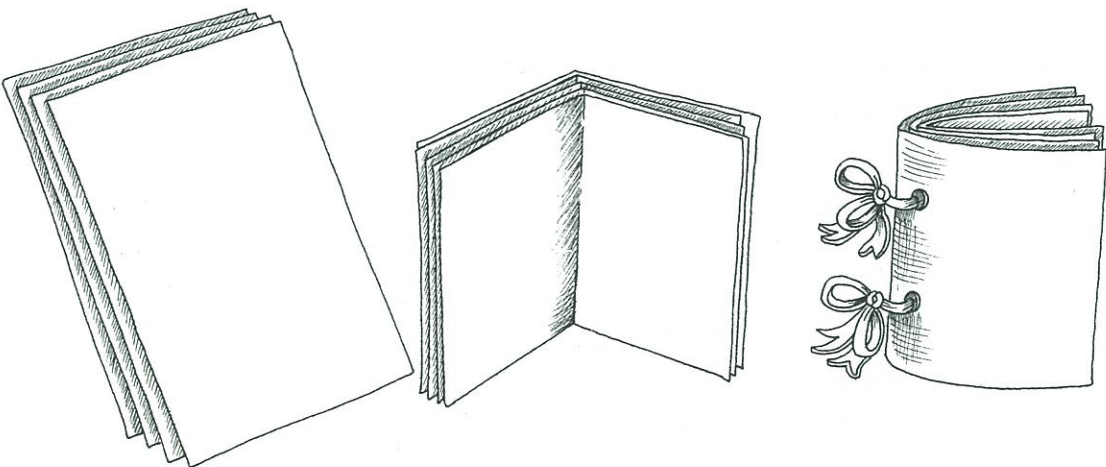
There are many ideas for making books. Here are some suggestions for:

- theme books
- shape books
- scrapbooks
- 'lift the flap' books
- zigzag books

To make the most of these books, you first start with a basic book shape.

Basic book shape

- Place several sheets of paper on top of each other.
- Fold these in half.
- Staple the folded side together or punch holes and thread with ribbon or wool to bind the book.



Theme or shape book

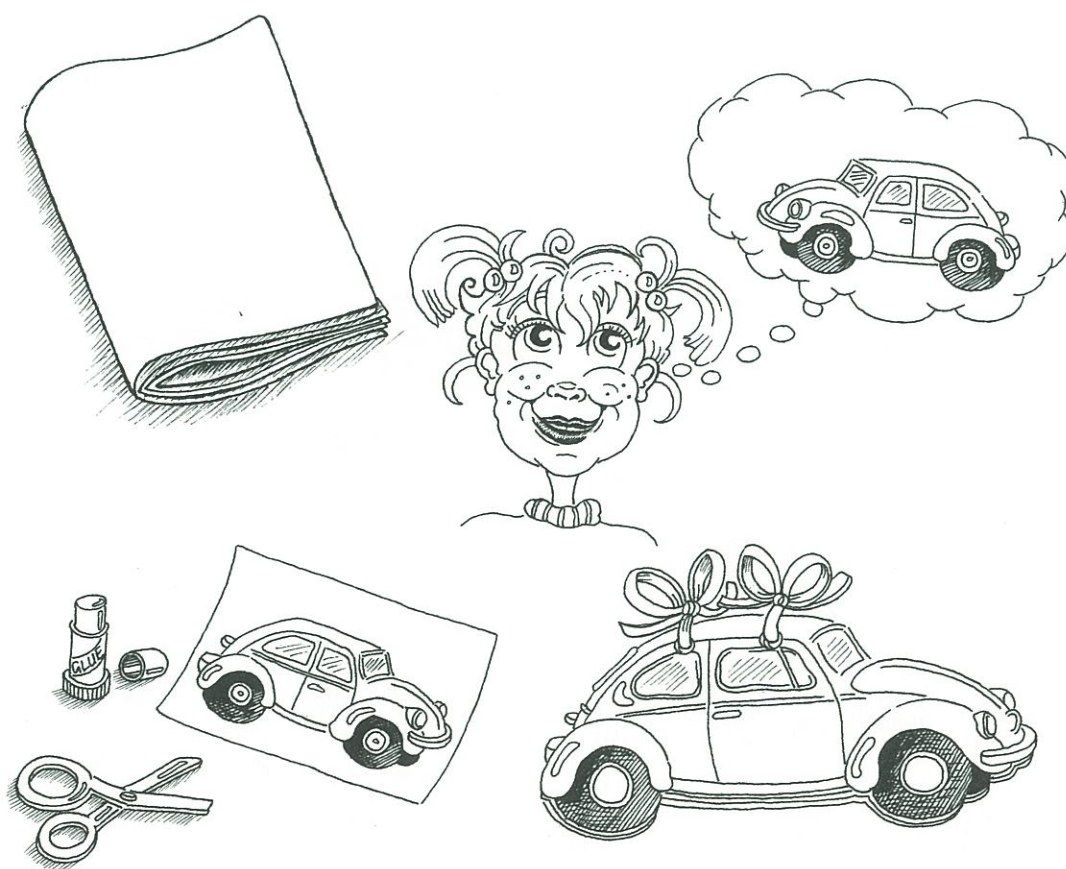
Start by making the **basic book shape**.

Next, decide what your book will be about.

Does your child like cars? Make a book about cars and cut it into the shape of a car.

Have you had a visit to the seaside recently? Make a book about your trip and cut it into the shape of a fish.

How about a book called, 'Our House'? You can cut the book into the shape of a house. Your child can help you make the book by filling in the windows and door with squares of coloured cloth. For the inside, cut out pictures from magazines of furniture, food, toys, etc.





Scrapbook

Start with the **basic book shape**.

Choose an idea for a topic, such as 'my favourite things', 'my family', 'where I live', 'animals', or 'toys'. The possibilities are endless.

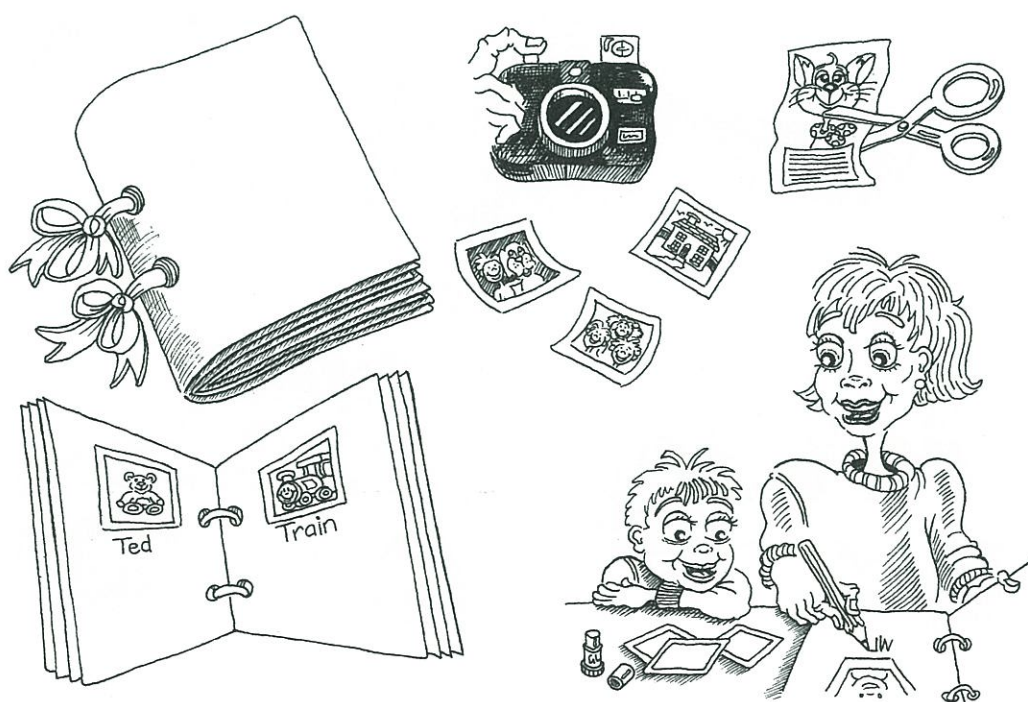
Cut out pictures from magazines or catalogues, or use photographs and stick them into the scrapbook to create the pictures.

If you are making the scrapbook with your child, you can let your child glue the pictures into the book. Talk about the pictures as he sticks them in.

When your child is finished, ask him what he would like you to write under each picture. Read his words or sentences back to him.

Decorate the cover with wallpaper or shiny coloured paper, or let your child draw a picture. Make the book eye-catching.

Punch two holes at the side and weave a ribbon or wool through the holes to make a decorative binding.





'Lift the flap' book

You can use any book shape to make a 'lift the flap' book.

You can use any idea to make a 'lift the flap' book.

You make a 'lift the flap' book by 'hiding' part of a picture or part of the text under a flap (a square of paper or cloth) that can be lifted.

You might make a book about your child's day and hide a picture of one of his favourite toys under a flap on each page.

You might cover up certain words with a small flap. Draw or glue a picture of the hidden word on the flap. Your child can tell what the word is from the picture and then 'lift the flap' to read the print.





Zigzag book

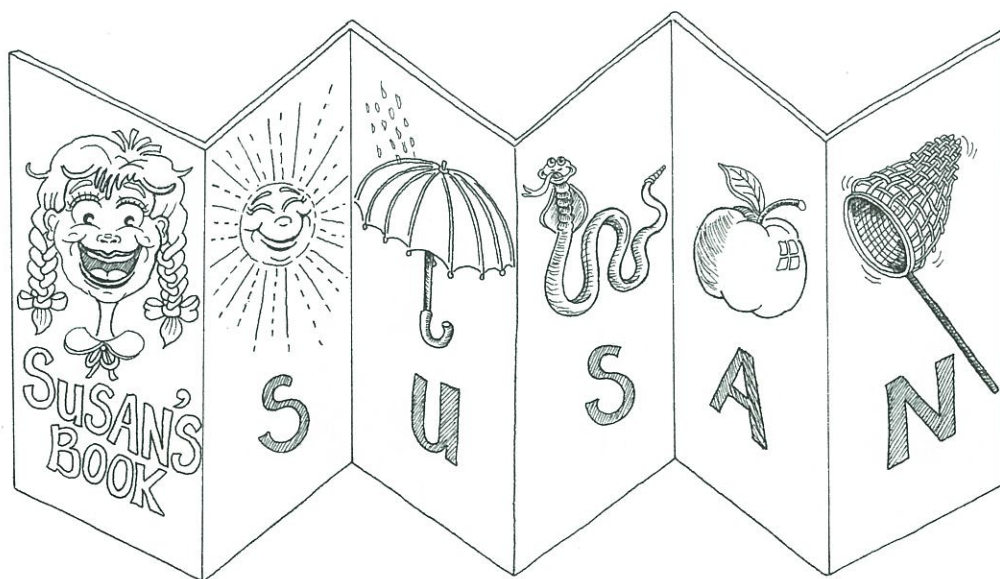
Start with a long strip of paper.

Fold the strip first one way and then the other (accordion style) until you get to the end of the strip.

You can make your zigzag book very simple by putting one letter on each panel to spell out one word or your child's name.

You can also make your zigzag book into a storybook by writing a few sentences on each panel.

Illustrate your book by using magazine pictures or drawings on each panel.





Making a book

To prepare:



You will need:

- plain and coloured paper
- crayons/markers/pencils
- paints and paintbrushes
- a stapler
- a paper punch
- a scissors
- string
- glue



The following items are the added bits that will make the books creative and interesting. Collect as much as you can of these items:

- wallpaper scraps (various textures and designs)
- scraps of material
- knitting wool
- ribbon
- newspapers and magazines
- cotton wool
- aluminium foil
- dried leaves, flowers, straw
- buttons and sequins
- old birthday and Christmas cards
- dried lentils and pasta
- shells
- any other bits and pieces that will make the books as interesting and creative as possible.

What to do:

Using their ideas from **Activity 1**, ask the parents to plan their story lines for a few minutes, then collect their materials and make their books.

Encourage the parents to keep the story ideas and language as simple as possible for their first attempt. There are many examples of fun books with one word or one sentence on a page.

Making a book

Parents may want to practise **simple** handwriting styles. (If you have access to computers, parents may wish to print their texts, and then cut them out and paste them into their books.)

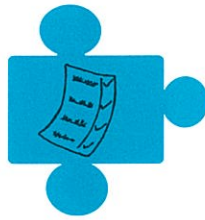
Circulate as the parents work and be available to help out if needed. In particular, some parents may ask for help with spelling.

When everyone has finished, invite the parents to share their books with the rest of the group as a closing activity.

You could ask for an informal oral book report from each parent.

- *What is the title of your book?*
- *What type of book is it (fiction, non-fiction, fairy tale, informational)?*
- *How did you decide on the particular layout and design that you used?*
- *Are you happy with your finished book? Why or why not?*
- *How do you think your child will respond to the book?*





Session Summary

End the session with a short discussion about home-made books. Remind the parents that making a book is an excellent activity for combining all the learning strands: talking and listening, reading, writing, and maths.

Summarise the key points of the discussion on the flipchart.

Ask the parents to think about how they will share their home-made books with their children.



Home Activity 12 - Home-made books

Encourage the parents to share their home-made books with their children during the week. Refer to the questions in **Home Activity 12 - Home-made books**, to help them think about the activity. Some of the parents may also like to try making a home-made book with their children and bring in their results to share with the group.



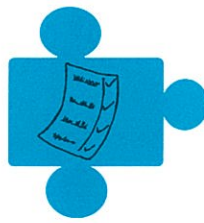
Home-made books

When and where did you share your book?

What did your child like about the book?

What comments did other family members make about the book?

What other types of books does your child like?



Session Notes

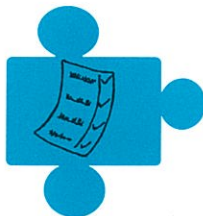
What worked well in this session?

Were there any difficulties?

What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?

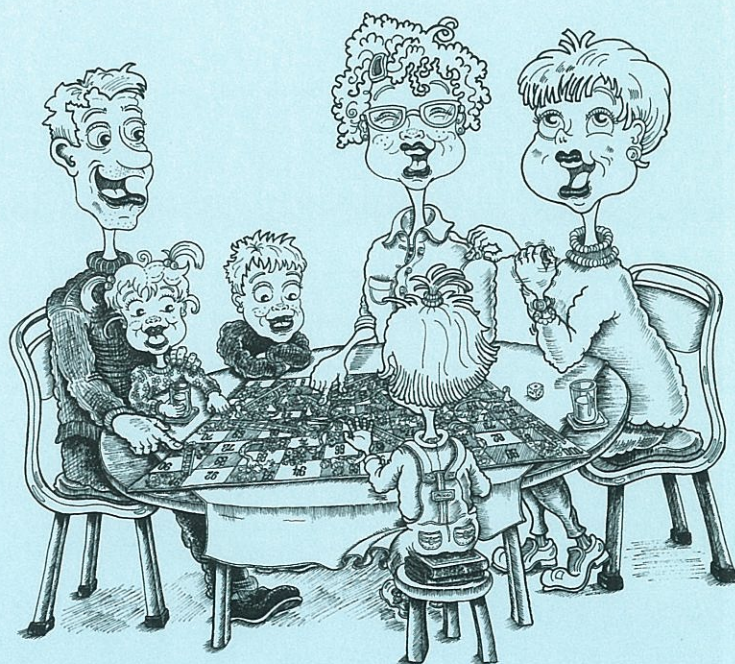
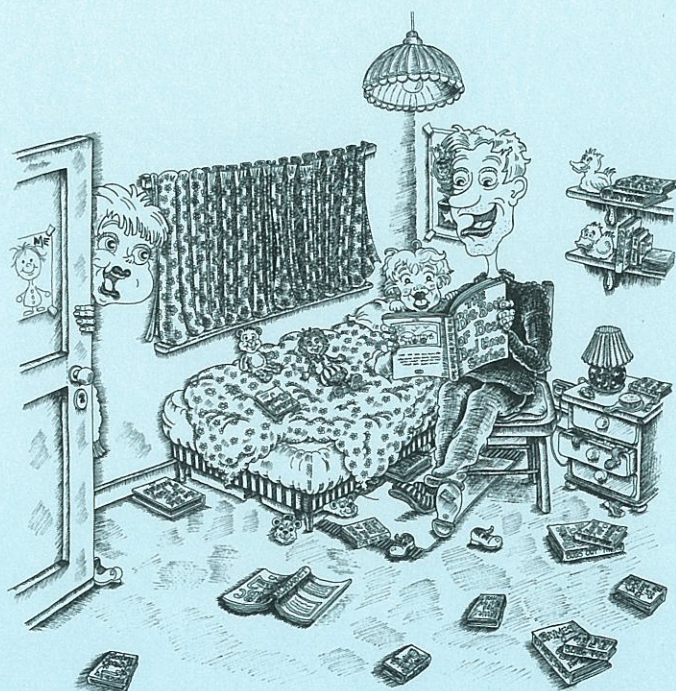
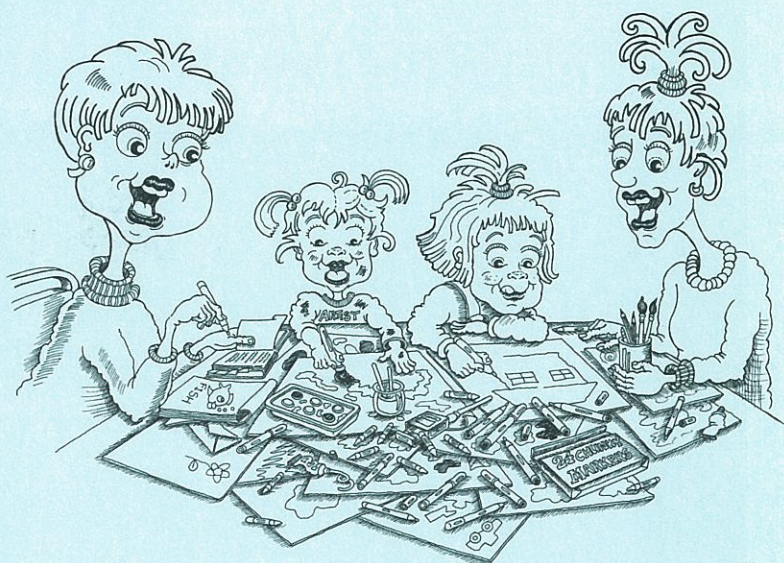
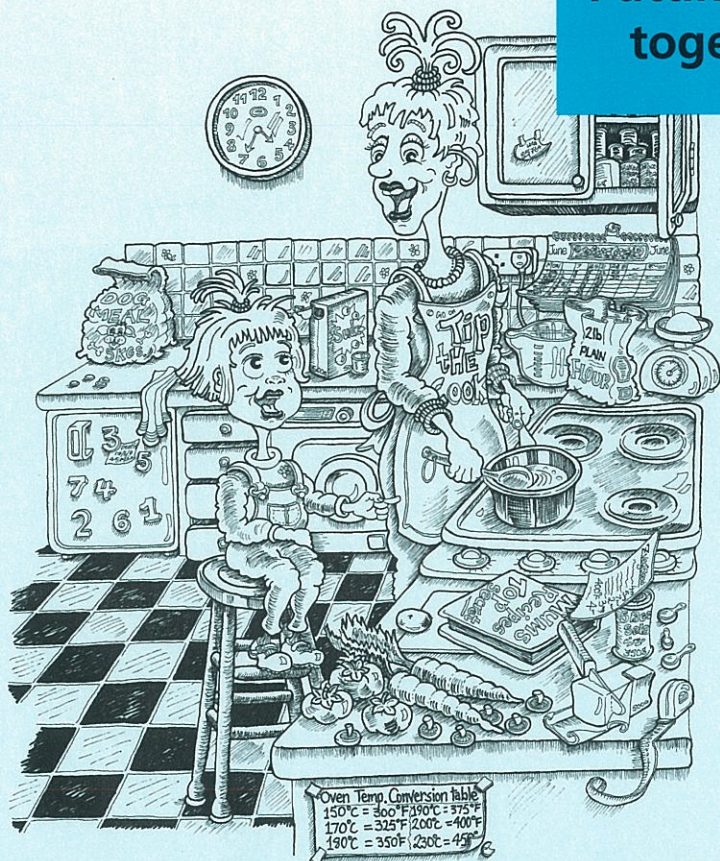


Session Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

13



Putting it all together





In this session parents will:

- review their experiences on the course and consolidate their learning;
- reflect on the different learning situations presented during the course;
- explore the links between the different session topics;
- use a variety of media to demonstrate what they have learned.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	260
Frameworks for learning	1	25 mins.	261-262
 A good place to learn			263
Mini-shop	2	30 mins.	264-265
Learning begins at home	3	60 mins.	266-267
Session Summary		10 mins.	268
Home Activity 13 - Learning from play			268
 Learning from play			269
Session Notes			270



Introduction

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

Arrange a display of props as reminders of the content of the last twelve sessions.

For example:



Session 1: box from **What's in a box?**

Session 2: Photopak pictures depicting parents as teachers

Session 3: flipchart page with Photopak pictures and talk bubbles

Session 4: flipchart page with a group rhyme

Session 5: puppets

Session 6: storybooks

Session 7: **Kitchen cupboard bingo** game

Session 8: child's drawing

Session 9: writer's toolkit

Session 10: maths tools

Session 11: home-made maths game

Session 12: home-made book

What to do:

Review the **Home Activity**.

Display the props and give the parents about five minutes to look them over for a quick review. Leave the props on display for the rest of the session.

Explain that today's session is an opportunity to look back on all that has been discussed during the course and to consider the links between the different topics presented. In particular, you will be asking the parents to consider how the skills of talking and listening, reading, writing, and maths are interrelated.

Remind the parents of situations mentioned during the course where skills overlap, for example:

- talking and listening as part of learning to read;
- writing as a form of communication to be read;
- using maths to name and describe things in stories.

In school, these skills might appear to be taught as separate subjects, but in everyday living these skills are combined in all kinds of ways. It is also important to look at how these skills are interrelated because they support one another in the learning process.

Frameworks for learning

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

There are two options for this activity. Please choose the one you think is most appropriate for your group:



What's happening? Make up four Photopak displays on separate flipchart pages by putting a selection of five or six photos under the topic headings:

- the daily routine
- activities in the local community
- games and play
- stories, songs and rhymes

Picture this... You will need cards from the Photopak.



Refer to **Parents' Pack F, p. 9 - A good place to learn.**

What to do:

What's happening?

Divide the parents into four groups. Give each group a marker and one of the prepared flipchart pages.

Ask the parents to look at the page and make a note of the reading, writing, maths, talking and listening activities happening in the photos. Encourage them to write their comments on the flipchart page around the photos.

After ten or fifteen minutes, bring everyone back together and let each group spend about five minutes sharing their observations with the others.

Picture this...

Give each parent one card from the Photopak. Make sure you include photos that depict examples of:

- the daily routine
- activities in the local community
- games and play
- stories, songs and rhymes



Frameworks for learning

Write these questions on a flipchart page.

- *What's happening in the picture?*
- *Does this activity involve:*
talking and listening?
reading?
writing?
maths?
- *What examples can you name?*

Ask the parents to think about these questions as they look at their cards for a few minutes and then invite them to share their observations. Give prompts, if necessary. Try to ensure that everyone participates, but don't force anyone.

Whether you have used **What's happening?** or **Picture this...**, after you have heard from everyone, sum up by explaining that each of the photos displayed depicts activities taking place in a learning environment that is familiar to children:

- the daily routine in the home,
- places in the local community,
- familiar games and play activities,
- familiar stories, songs and rhymes.

Remind the parents that in previous sessions you talked about how these environments provide many learning opportunities within a framework where the child feels secure. The observations and comments made by the parents in this activity have provided many examples of these learning opportunities. Ask the parents to give reasons why they think children would feel secure in these environments.

Sample responses:

- They know the people.
- They know where they are.
- The task is very familiar.
- They know what is expected of them.
- They know help is at hand if they get stuck.

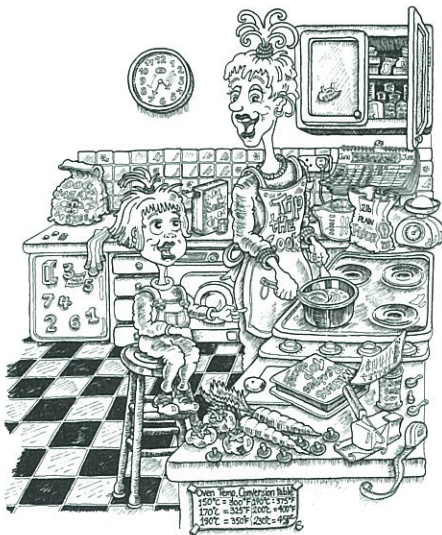
Finish by referring to **Parents' Pack F, p. 9 - A good place to learn.**



A good place to learn

When a child feels comfortable and secure in her environment, she is more confident about trying new things. A child feels relaxed and ready to learn when:

She knows where she is.



She knows the people with her.



She knows what's happening.



She knows what's expected of her.





Mini-shop

To prepare:

Preparation for this activity requires some financing and shopping beforehand.

Explore possibilities for donations from local shops to keep your costs to a minimum. However, if the **Mini-shop** is outside your budget, you can choose the alternative activity, **Catalogue shopping**.



For the **Mini-shop** you will need a selection of children's books, games, toys, art supplies, puzzles, etc. Make an attractive display for your selections.

You will also need a 'shopping bag' for each parent.

For **Catalogue shopping** you will need: catalogues, fliers, magazines, scissors, glue and paper.



Write the following discussion questions on a flipchart page:

- *Why would your child like the gift you chose?*
- *How could using this gift involve interaction with other people?*
- *Would your child be able to use this gift for a long time, or would she outgrow it quickly?*
- *What are some of the things your child would learn while playing with this gift?*

What to do:

Mini-shop

Tell the parents that this activity is a chance for them to apply what they have learned in the course in a practical way.

Focus the parents' attention on the **Mini-shop**. Give each parent a shopping bag and invite them to shop for an item that they will be taking home. Make the suggestion that the parents choose something that their children would enjoy.

When everyone has finished their shopping, bring the group back together and ask the parents to share their choices. Use the questions on the flipchart page to encourage discussion about why they made their choices.

Mini-shop

Catalogue shopping

Invite the parents to go on an imaginary shopping trip. Spread the catalogues, magazines, fliers, etc. out on a table. Give each parent a pair of scissors, cellotape or glue, and a blank page.

The parents can each spend £10-£20 on gifts for their children. They are to use the catalogues, magazines, etc. to shop for their gifts. They should select their gifts by cutting out the picture of the item and gluing it onto the page.

When everyone has finished their shopping, bring the group back together and ask the parents to share their choices. Use the questions on the flipchart page to encourage discussion about why they made their choices.





Learning begins at home

To prepare:



You will need a copy of the story book, '**Jason's Day**', for each parent.



You will need a variety of materials for the parents to use in making their exhibits:

- several different kinds of paper
- cardboard and poster board
- boxes
- ends of wallpaper
- scrapbooks
- old newspapers, magazines, pictures, postcards, etc.
- ribbons, cotton wool, scraps of cloth
- poster paints, pens, pencils, markers and crayons
- rulers, scissors, cellotape, Blu-Tack, and glue
- modelling clay or Playdoh

Make up a few sample displays to help the parents think of ideas, for example:

- a poster or collage or a painting about learning in the home;
- a box with different images of family learning on each panel;
- a wallpaper scroll depicting learning activities;
- a scrapbook of ideas about family learning;
- figures made of modelling clay in a scene about family learning.

What to do:

This activity is intended to give the parents an opportunity to individually reflect on their experiences and to describe these experiences through a visual presentation to the group.

To begin, give a copy of '**Jason's Day**' to each parent. Let them read the story or read it to them, then ask the parents for their opinions of the story.

Learning begins at home

Questions to ask:

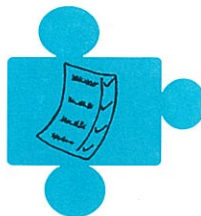
- *Do you think your children would like this story? Why or why not?*
- *What learning opportunities are depicted in these pictures?*
- *How could this book be used as a learning activity?*

Invite the parents to create their own versions of 'Jason's Day' to demonstrate some of the things they have learned on the course. Show them your samples and talk about how they were put together. Encourage them to suggest other ideas. If you think it helpful, suggest a title for their exhibits, such as 'Learning begins at home'.

Make sure the parents have space to work. Encourage discussion and sharing. Be on hand to give help if needed. Allow about 45 minutes for the project work, then bring the parents back together and invite them to share their work with the group.

If some of the parents haven't finished, encourage them to finish their projects at home and bring them in for the last session. You may need to lend them materials to use at home.





Session Summary

Ask the parents to refer to the **Spotlights** on talking and listening, reading, writing, and maths.

- How have the **Spotlights** been helpful?
- What are the connections between the **Spotlights**?
- How can the **Spotlights** be useful to you in the future?

Some of the parents may need to finish their projects at home.

Give the parents copies of '**Jason's Day**' to take home to their children. Encourage them to use the book with their children and to talk about the story. Let them know you will look for feedback in the next session.



Home Activity 13 - Learning from play

Ask the parents to take a little time to observe and listen to their children playing pretend games. Read over the questions on the **Home Activity - Learning from play** and ask the parents to think about these as they observe their children playing.



Learning from play

Does your child like to play pretend games?

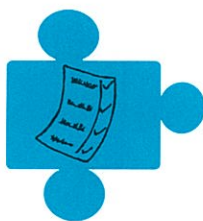
What are the pretend games about?

Does your child have a favourite game that she plays frequently?

Does she use props such as toys or does she dress up in costumes?

Are other children involved?

Do these games involve reading, writing or maths activities? Can you give some examples?



Session Notes

What worked well in this session?

Were there any difficulties?

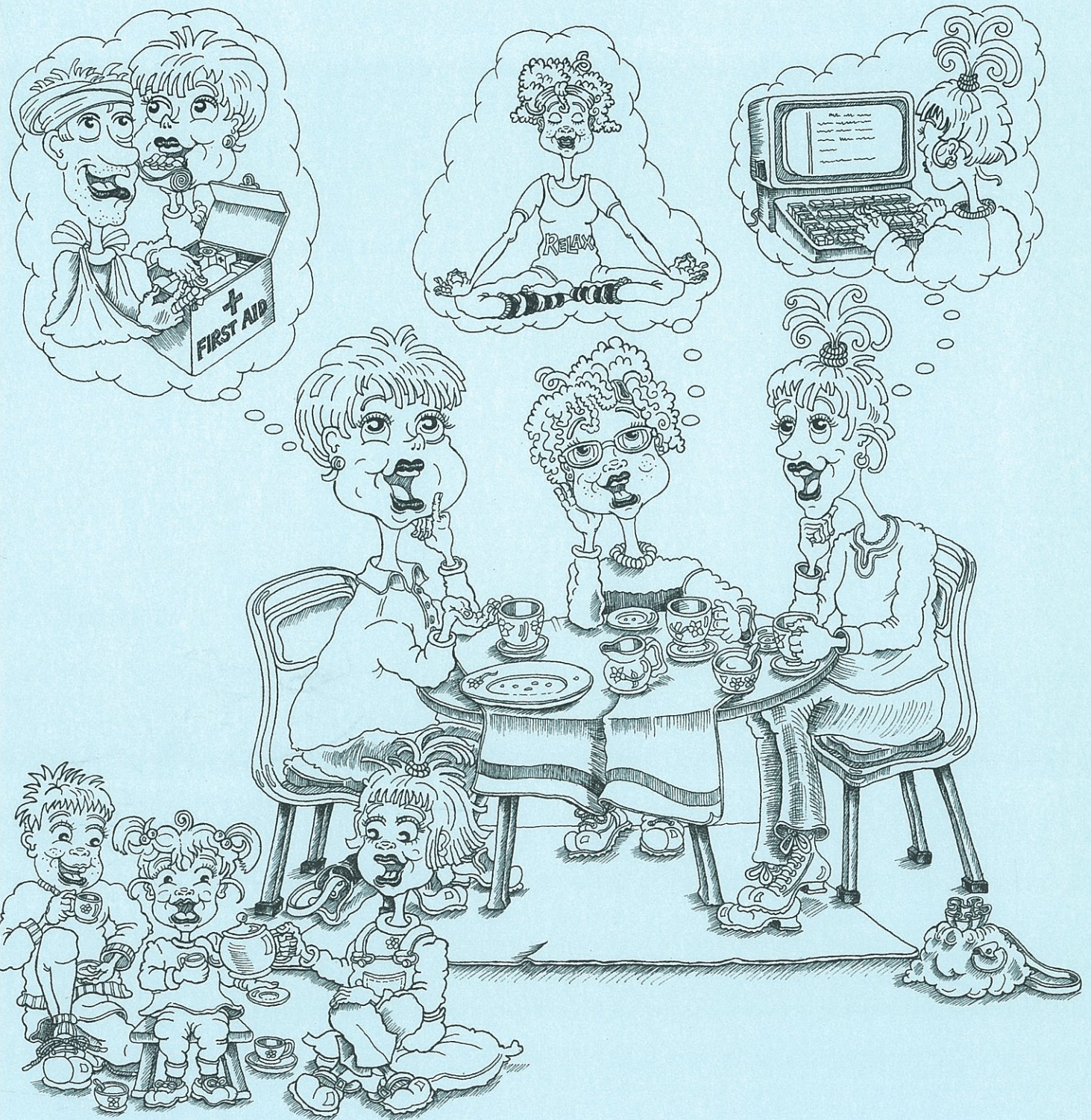
What feedback did you get from the parents about this session?

What did you do to include different interests and needs?

Is there anything that you will do differently the next time?



14

Making
connections



**In this session parents will:**

- acknowledge personal learning experiences on the course;
- identify interests and needs for further learning;
- explore community resources available for families;
- complete a course evaluation.

Description	Activity	Time	Page
Introduction		10 mins.	274
Opening a door	1	30 mins.	275
What's out there?	2	45 mins.	276
 What's out there?			277
Course evaluation	3	15 mins.	278
 Course evaluation			279-280
Last but not least	4	30 mins.	281
Pack evaluation for facilitators			282-283



Introduction

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.



Gather and display information about local community resources, e.g. adult education classes, FÁS courses and other job training schemes, crèche/child-minding services, family support services, legal aid services, money management advice and other financial services, community centres, support groups, housing and rent allowance schemes, Health Board and Social Welfare information. Also have on hand a few telephone directories and relevant local information guides.

What to do:

Review **Home Activity 13 - Learning from play.**

Ask the parents to share feedback about 'Jason's Day'.

If any of the parents worked on completing projects at home, allow time for them to display their work.

This last session is designed to provide facilitators with a strategy for finishing the course while at the same time opening the door for further learning opportunities.

Explain to the parents that, as this is the last session in the course, the main activity will be to congratulate them on their participation and achievements in the course. You will also be asking them to take some time now to evaluate how well the family learning course has met their expectations and to consider what additional needs and interests they may have for themselves as well as for their children. You will also be providing them with information and advice about where to access further services to meet their needs and interests.



ACTIVITY 1

14



30 mins.

Opening a door

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart, paper, markers and Blu-Tack.

Write the questions for discussion onto the flipchart.

What to do:

Explain to the parents that, while the primary focus of the course has been on how parents help their children to learn, this session is about 'making connections' between what the parents have learned, what they would like their next steps to be, and how they can proceed.

Ask the parents to work in pairs. Give each pair a flipchart page.

Draw their attention to the questions that you have prepared on the flipchart.

Ask the parents to discuss these questions with their partners and write down their responses on the flipchart page.

When everyone is finished, ask them to stick their pages to the wall. Invite the parents to walk around and read and discuss their responses with each other.

Take particular note of suggestions for further learning. Is there a way the family learning course team can facilitate additional courses? Can you advise the group where they can access additional adult education services?

Questions for discussion:

- *Before you started the course, what did you think it would be like?*
- *What do you think is the most important thing that you did on this course?*
- *What did you do on the course that made you feel proud of yourself?*
- *What benefits do you think this course has had for you, your children, your family?*
- *What would you like to learn more about?*
- *Is the place where you learn important to you?*
- *Is the size of the group important?*
- *Is there anything that you would need help with, in order to attend a class, e.g. childminding or transportation?*

You may want to invite someone from your local adult education services to come and speak to the group.





What's out there?

To prepare:



You will need a flipchart and markers.

Refer to the display of community services and adult education literature prepared for the introduction.



Refer to **Parents' Pack F, p. 11 - What's out there?**

What to do:

Most people are not aware of all the resources that their local community has to offer. This activity is designed to help the parents to become more familiar with community resources.

Divide the parents into small groups. Give each group a flipchart page and markers.

Draw the parents' attention to the prepared display.

Invite each group to see how many of the local services and resources listed on **Parents' Pack F, p. 11 - What's out there?** are available in their community.

- Which ones can they locate?
- Which ones have they accessed?
- Which ones are new to them?
- Which ones do they think would be useful to them?
- Can they suggest additional services and resources not listed?

Invite the parents to create a map of the resources in their local community. They can use the location of your centre as a reference point. Can they mark in the approximate town centre? Suggest that they represent each of the services and resources as a picture or a symbol. Ask them to visualise how near or how far each is to your centre, to their homes, or to the town centre, and place them on the map accordingly.

When the groups have finished, ask them to stick their maps onto the wall along with posters from **Activity 1**. Let them spend a few minutes reviewing them.

Questions to ask:

- *Are there significant areas of strengths in your community?*
- *Are there areas of weakness in your community?*



What's out there?

What are the resources in your community?

Where would you find:

Family support services

- crèche facilities?
- child minding services?
- parent-toddler groups?
- preschool services?
- parenting courses?
- youth clubs?

Health Board services

- your local hospital?
- mental health services?
- health education courses, e.g. a stress management or first aid course?

Financial advice

- social welfare offices?
- Money Advice and Budgeting Service?
- your local credit union?

Legal advice

- free legal aid?
- family mediation services?

Educational support and services

- a guidance counsellor?
- adult education classes?
- an educational psychologist?
- local primary schools?
- local secondary schools?

Employment services

- job clubs?
- the Unemployment Resource Centre?
- FÁS offices?
- Local Employment Services?
- trade union offices?



Course evaluation

To prepare:



Refer back to the aims and expectations discussed in **Session 1 - Getting started**.

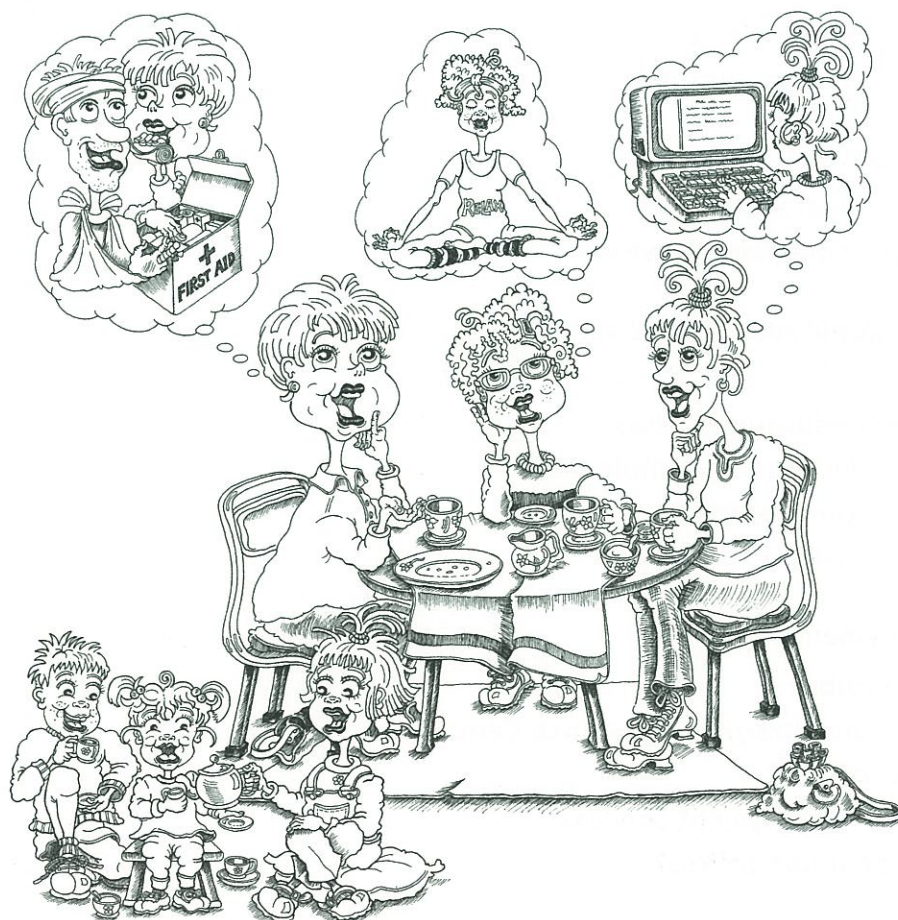
Refer also to the course topics in **Parents' Pack A, p. 4 - Core topics + Other possible topics**.



Photocopy a course evaluation for each parent. The course evaluation is also contained in **Parents' Pack F, pp. 12-13**, but you will need to be able to collect a copy for your own evaluation.

What to do:

Briefly review with the parents the course aims and expectations and the topics discussed at the beginning of the programme. Then invite the parents to make their own evaluations of the course. Read each question and give them time to respond. When they are finished, collect their evaluations and thank them. Emphasise that their comments will be very helpful in planning future courses.





Course evaluation

Please photocopy for each parent

1. How did you find the programme overall?
 Very helpful _____
 Somewhat helpful _____
 Not helpful _____
2. Did the course help you meet your learning aims?
 Yes _____
 No _____
3. Have you learned things that helped you work with your child on reading, writing and maths?
 Yes _____
 No _____
4. Has the course helped any other children in the family with reading, writing and maths?
 Yes _____
 No _____
5. How did you find the organisation of the course?
 Excellent _____
 Very good _____
 Fair _____
 Poor _____
6. Was the venue for the course satisfactory?
 Yes _____
 No _____
7. Was the timetable for the course satisfactory?
 Yes _____
 No _____

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.



Last but not least

To prepare:

Review the suggestions for last session activities and gather appropriate materials.

What to do:

During the period of time that the parents have spent together, they will have formed relationships, both with individuals and with the group as a whole. It is important to include an activity for acknowledging the significance of these relationships. Some of the activities could take place on a different day and should be planned by the whole group.

Here are some suggestions:

- Organise a special trip with the parents and their children or the parents alone: to the zoo, an open farm, horseback riding, a leisure centre.
- Have a Family Learning Project Evening for the parents and their families. Display the projects that the parents created in **Session 13**. You could also invite parents who may be thinking about coming onto a course.
- Put a big piece of paper on each parent's back with cellotape or Blu-Tack. Ask the parents to draw or write something positive on each other's back.
- Give each parent a book token as a parting gift.
- Leave time at the end for a party. Ask each parent to bring something.
- Present course certificates to the parents.



Pack evaluation for facilitators

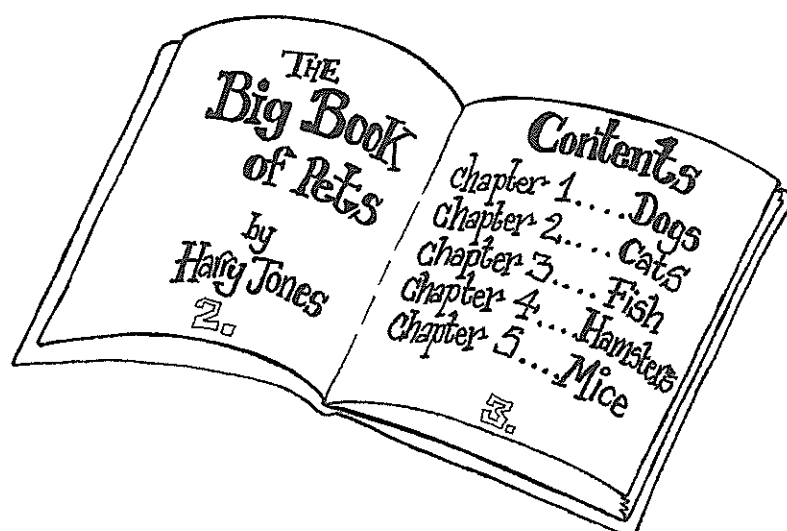
Dear Facilitator,

Thank you for using the Family Learning Resource Pack. We hope that you found it helpful in planning and implementing your work in family learning.

We would be interested in obtaining feedback about how you have used the pack. Please photocopy, then complete and return the **Family learning resource pack evaluation**.

Best wishes,

Jan Godfrey
Moirá Greene





Family learning resource pack evaluation

- 1 How useful was the Family Learning Resource Pack in facilitating your family learning course?
very helpful helpful somewhat helpful not helpful
- 2 Which sessions did you find most effective?
- 3 Did you have any difficulties using the pack?
- 4 Is there anything that would enhance your ability to use this pack in the future, e.g. further training, extra sessions, more audio-visual supports?
- 5 How do you feel the participants benefited from your family learning course/programme?
- 6 Do you have additional comments/feedback?



Session Notes

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