

Learning on the Go: Literacy Tips for Young Children

Playing with Words

One of the ways that parents and caregivers can help young children learn pre-reading skills is to show them that words are made up of different sounds and can be taken apart and put back together in different ways.

A fun way to start teaching this skill is to play around with compound words—words like “outside” and “lampshade”—that are “two words in one.” Start by saying “outside” slowly, “out—side”, and point out that outside can be taken apart: “out” and “side”. Then say “lampshade” and ask your child what would be left if you took away “lamp”. Help your child figure out that the word “shade” is left. You can play this game with a variety of words, such as teapot, cupcake, sailboat, carport, baseball, and billboard. (It’s a great opportunity to teach your child new words, too!)

If this is too easy for your child, then s/he might be ready for a more advanced game. Think of some simple one-syllable words such as sit, cat, pin, fan, pup, and go. Start by saying “sit” slowly, emphasizing the first sound—“sssss—it”, and ask what would be left if you took away the “s”. Help your child figure out that “it” is left. Then try other simple words. This game helps children to figure out the beginning sound of a word and to learn that words are made up of different sounds.