

3/05

“LEARNING ON THE GO” Early Literacy Activities for Tots

By the time children are two years old, they understand 300 to 500 words. Amazingly, most children start school knowing between 3,000 and 5,000 words! Children who have larger vocabularies become better readers. Reading books to your children that have pictures of things you may not see often introduces unfamiliar words like “skyscraper”, “desert” or “hippopotamus”. When out walking, expand on the names of common sights. Instead of “flower”, say “daisy” or “tulip”. Rather than “tree”, point out a “cottonwood” or a “ponderosa pine”. While making faces, use words to describe different feelings: happy, sad, scared, hurt or surprised. Then ask your child to make a face and guess what he’s expressing. Preschoolers think it’s fun to learn a new word, like “outstanding”, and use it over and over during the course of a day. These are just a few ideas to increase your child’s vocabulary, but the most important way is simply to *talk* and *listen*.

Early literacy is what children know about reading and writing *before* they can actually read and write. These activities build **vocabulary** (knowing the name of things), one of the six pre-reading skills your child can start learning from birth. For more information, look at “Reading Rocket ” at pbs.org/launchingreaders or call Healthy Start at 728-KIDS.