



Radio Stations : **All Community Radio Stations**  
Subject : **Early Childhood Development**  
Audience : **Parents, caregivers and educators**  
Program Topic : **When will my child learn to read and write (LOVE)**

**Guidelines to the presenter**

- Presenter – please familiarize yourself with the brief and the use the facts effectively by referring to them from time to time during the show.
- You should be seen as a peer rather than an authority.
- Offer guidance or opinion rather than telling people what to do.
- Encourage people to seek further information
- Always keep the objectives and outcomes in mind and drive these.

**Topic:**

**When will my child learn to read and write?**

**Objectives:**

- To inform parents that emergent literacy starts from birth with a strong foundation in language.
- To inform parents that the most important component in this emergent literacy is a loving, responsive adult, who encourages, supports and provides plenty of emergent literacy experiences for the young child.
- To enable parents to make the link between spoken and written language.
- To inform parents the different ways children use symbols and how this develops into

the ability to read and write.

- To highlight the importance of supporting and modelling good listening skills.
- To give parents ideas of practical activities that will support and encourage emergent literacy.
- To emphasize the importance of mother tongue.
- To encourage them to play a significant role in their young child's development through spending quality time with them in LOVE, PLAY TALK.

### Introduction

In the last couple of weeks we've been looking at the miracle of language development in the early years, and the critically important role parents play in providing a rich language environment for their little ones as they LOVE, PLAY, TALK to them. We've looked at the close connection between this language development and the rapid brain development that's taking place. And we've seen that while each child is an individual who develops at his or her own pace and time, the child's development in different areas is all inter-connected and builds on what has gone before.

Join us today as we look at how this early language becomes the foundation of his learning to read and write when she goes to school.

Questions	Facts/Information
<p>1. <i>Literacy is the 'in' word in education today and we know that many South Africans are really worried because our literacy rates, as measured by tests in school, are poor. What exactly is literacy?</i></p>	<p>Literacy is a complex set of skills and understandings that cover 4 basic areas: listening, language, reading and writing, all of which are closely interrelated and interdependent. We all want our children to read well and read early. But literacy is not something that waits until a child starts school and gets taught by a teacher. The complex</p>

<p>2. <i>What are the key things that are essential to children's development of literacy?</i></p>	<p>process of literacy starts before birth with the ability to hear and from birth as the child develops the ability to speak, understand and use language. There are many underlying foundational skills and concepts that the young child needs to have mastered before he is ready to master the complex tasks of reading and writing.</p> <p>The most important element in developing listening, language, pre-reading and pre-writing skills is a responsive adult who LOVES, PLAYS and TALKS to the child from birth; an adult who stimulates a child's interest in the language of his environment; who builds on what she knows and encourages all his attempts to communicate in many varied ways. <b>And who better than a loving parent!</b> And it can all be done through play in a relaxed and happy environment, by providing our little ones with lots of opportunities to actively explore their environments and make meaning through language or representing through their drawings, other creative activities or imaginative play. An adult who just uses language to direct, instruct, control and punish children, will not help them develop complex language skills. However, loving and responsive adults, who use the richness of their mother tongue to discuss ideas, explore new concepts, tell stories, extend vocabulary and introduce new ideas; who use questions that stimulate</p>
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<p>3. <i>What is the link between spoken language and written language?</i></p>	<p>their little ones to think and respond, play a critically important role in laying a strong foundation for language and literacy.</p> <p>Oral or spoken language and understanding is the foundation that underpins literacy and the eventual ability to read, write and comprehend. Put simply, writing is merely a way of expressing one's views or communicating through written symbols. However, learning to write is a highly complex process involving the interaction of physical and cognitive or intellectual factors. The child must have the physical ability and eye-hand control to hold and manipulate a crayon, pencil or paint brush, as well as the intellectual ability to make connections and construct meaning using a specific set of symbols. Writing is a problem solving activity involving the linking of invisible spoken language with visible symbols, that is, making words and language visible. Provided young children are given plenty of repeated opportunities over the years to talk, play, experiment with various art media and experience a rich language environment, they generally master the art of writing in their first few years of school.</p>
<p>4. <i>So if writing is a way of using symbols, what are other ways young children use symbols?</i></p>	<p>Young children start to use symbols early on. Words themselves are symbols for people, objects, actions or ideas. As young children's imaginations develop they start to use objects to represent other objects. So for example a box</p>

becomes a car, a train, a cot or a stove; playing 'house' is a representation or symbol of family events; drawing and painting become representations of people or objects in the child's environment. The more parents introduce the child to the written word in her environment through looking at books, noticing road signs, words on T shirts, labels in shops or on products, the easier it will be for the child to make the connection and understand that written words are also symbols that stand for things. Draw your child's attention to what you are writing and the purpose of that writing when for example you make a shopping list; write down someone's name and telephone number; write a note to a friend; keep a journal. When children understand that writing has a purpose, it encourages them to try it out. And do support and encourage every attempt they make to communicate. Don't correct their mistakes. If they feel self-confident, believe in their ability and are not frightened to take risks, they will eventually master reading and writing.

5. *Listening well is obviously an important part of developing literacy. How do we develop our children's listening skills?*

We can help our children to develop good listening skills by modelling good listening and listening carefully to them when they are talking. When we speak, we need to speak quietly, clearly and slowly, using use correct pronunciation of words. We can draw children's attention to different sounds that animals or vehicles make and when they're a bit older,

make them aware of the beginning sounds of words and then help them find other objects that begin with the same sound. Songs and rhymes play an important role in developing good listening skills. Rhyming is all about matching sounds. Your 4 to 5 year old will love to clap the syllables of her name or various objects i.e. Non hlan hla (3 claps) or Ja bu lan i (4 claps). Play whispering games to get little ones to listen really closely and there are many other word games like “I spy with my little eye, something beginning with ‘rrrrr’ – the starting sound of an object. This is a great way to keep little minds busy during long car or bus trips.

6. *Is drawing a first step to writing?*

Yes, drawing is an important first step to writing. Little ones need plenty of opportunities to experiment with various art media and activities. Thick crayons or pencils that are easy for little fingers to grasp are best. Initially your toddler may hold the crayon in his fist and bang it on the paper. She will be so excited to see she can make a mark! Eventually he will start to scribble and experiment with lines, circles and other shapes. Often the first representation is a circle that becomes a face. Rather than showing your child how to draw things, rather help them to observe carefully. Use a mirror and help your little one to look carefully and name his body parts and see where each part is in relation to the rest of his body. As the child integrates this information, her drawings will begin to add

<p>7. <i>How does one help the child make the link between their drawings and writing?</i></p>	<p>more detail and become more recognizable. Remember it's the process of creating and the brain work this requires that's really important for the child, not what the end product looks like! And your job as parent is to show interest, chat to your child, support, encourage and admire. There's no right or wrong!</p> <p>Once your child is starting to represent things in his drawing, for example people, houses, trees, animals and vehicles, you could offer to write the name of the object underneath. Show that you value these attempts to communicate by displaying these drawings. Your little one will relate with great interest to her name and the letters that make up the name. This is usually the first word that young children learn to write. As their drawings become more varied, you can keep a journal where your child draws something that happened on that day, or will happen on a future date. You can write the name of the day at the top and a description of what happened underneath. This is the time to make up stories together, get your child to illustrate them, and you write the story underneath. You could get your child to draw pictures of what you need to buy at the shops &amp; you make your shopping list next to it. Take your child on outings and then get them to represent what they enjoyed most in pictures, or collage or using photographs. You can write down what your child says underneath. A 5 to 6</p>
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<p>8. <i>So really learning to write is not much different to learning to talk?</i></p>	<p>year old will love to make birthday cards, send invitations, draw maps, write shopping lists or letters to granny or grandpa.</p> <p>Yes – you’re so right. Children learn by watching, listening, learning, copying and experimenting. When children see print around them and watch the people they love reading and writing in their daily lives, they become curious and want to learn to read and write themselves. When they have something they want to communicate, they give writing a try! Their first squiggles may just be ‘pretend writing’ and may not look anything like the letters we use, but these are their first steps in using writing to communicate. And then, just like with learning to talk, children get better and better at writing when we encourage them and take their efforts seriously – by writing with and to them, and by reading what they write. Don’t correct their mistakes, they’ll get it right soon enough as they get older and are taught by the teacher.</p>
<p>9. <i>Which written languages should parents use?</i></p>	<p>As we’ve already discussed, young children are incredibly able to pick up the languages they hear spoken by the people around them. A strong foundation in a child’s home language is the basis for all successful learning because, to learn well, we need to understand well. When children know their home language well, they can learn other languages, as well as reading</p>

<p><i>10. What comes first, reading or writing?</i></p>	<p>and writing more easily. Sometimes it is difficult to find written stories in South African languages, as many of them are written in English or Afrikaans. However, you can still tell the story in your home language. And do look for opportunities to show your child your home language in print, especially if there are books available at the library. If you have a library near you, it is a wonderful resource and your librarian will be a great support in helping you to find suitable books.</p> <p>As reading and writing are both strongly founded on language, they tend to develop together and the one depends on the other. Confidence in one area develops confidence in the other. The young child soon learns that you turn the pages of the book from left to right; that reading and writing start at the top of the page and moves from left to write and from top to bottom of the page. Lots of experience with books and the written word helps young children understand how the reading and writing system works. They learn to distinguish between letters and numbers, and to remember the sounds that letters make, before learning how to combine those sounds into words. Learning to read and write is rather like cracking a code!</p>
<p><i>11. Should parents teach their little ones to read and write? Wouldn't this give</i></p>	<p>As long as loving and responsive parents are ensuring that their young children are growing</p>

<p><i>them a good head start at school?</i></p>	<p>up in a language rich environment with lots of LOVE, PLAY, TALK; lots of stories and opportunities to learn rhymes and songs; opportunities to discuss ideas, feelings and experiences; lots of opportunities to draw, paint, cut, paste and experiment with creative activities – parents will have given their little ones a strong foundation for learning to read and write. The actual mechanics of reading and writing are quite challenging and should best be left to a qualified teacher. Parents should rather focus on encouraging, supporting and acknowledging all their little one’s attempts to read and write, and encourage them to experiment without being frightened of making mistakes. A child who feels confident and believes he ‘CAN DO’, will learn to read and write under the guidance of a supportive teacher.</p>
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<p><b>Conclusion</b></p>	
<p>So once again, we’ve seen how important you the parent are! You are your child’s first and most important teacher! The strong foundation you help your child construct in the first years of life, will be the strong foundation for his growth and development, his ability to learn to read and write, her ability to think, learn, problem solve and create. And all this is possible through LOVE, PLAY, TALK – 3 simple little actions done every day during your daily life activities. Your investment of time and attention to your precious little one will be richly rewarded. Have fun!</p> <p>Be sure to listen again next week to our next topic as we look at how maths can actually be fun!</p>	

## Learning outcomes

After listening to this show the audience should:

- Know that emergent literacy starts from birth with a strong foundation in language.
- Know that the most important component in this emergent literacy is a loving, responsive adult, who encourages, supports and provides plenty of emergent literacy experiences for the young child.
- Be able to make the link between spoken and written language.
- Know the different ways children use symbols and how this develops into the ability to read and write.
- Know the importance of supporting and modelling good listening skills.
- Gain ideas of practical activities that will support and encourage emergent literacy.
- Understand the importance of mother tongue.
- Be motivated to play a significant role in their young child's development through spending quality time with them in LOVE, PLAY TALK.