

# LITERACY WHEN SCHOOL IS OUT: Ideas for Supporting Learning at Home



When children are not in school, it's important to still keep practicing reading and writing skills so that they are on-track and ready to learn when school starts again. Literacy skills help children better understand and communicate with the world around them, setting them up for success in school and life. Parents and caregivers can encourage children to build literacy through simple and fun activities. Literacy at home is an opportunity to encourage children to be creative, whether they are reading a book, doing an art project, playing games, making a movie, or storytelling with family and friends.

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**1** ROLL THE DICE TO CREATE A STORY

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**2** RHYMING AND WORD CHALLENGES

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**3** TELL YOUR OWN STORY

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**4** MAKE A STORY OF YOUR OWN

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This tip sheet provides four practical ideas for supporting literacy at home. Each of these ideas:

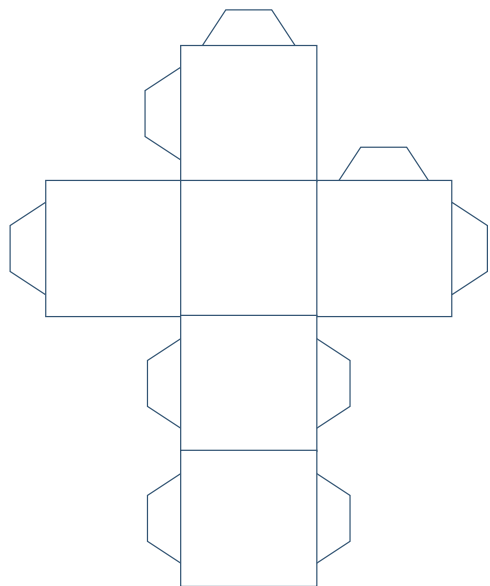
- » Is child-directed and does not require a lot of work for parents or caregivers
- » Encourages children to explore their own interests
- » Can be repeated, using different topics on different days
- » Is low- or no-tech
- » Provides optional links to additional free resources, if you have access to a smartphone or computer

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# 1 ROLL THE DICE TO CREATE A STORY

**STEP 1: *Make dice!*** Your child can create story dice by making cubes out of paper. Before taping together the cube (with the paper still flat), ask your child to draw a different image, for example, an object, an animal, a favorite food) on each square. Then, tape together the edges to create a cube. Make more than one dice to have more story options!



**STEP 2: *Create a story!*** Roll the dice and see what image come up. Write a few sentences and draw a picture to start your story. Then roll the dice again to keep adding to your story. Think about how to make fun connections between the imagines that come up on the dice.

Think about creating a beginning, middle and end to connect the parts of the story.

- » How does the story begin? "Once upon a time..."
- » How does a story keep going? "And then..."
- » How does a story finish? "The End."

**OPTION 1:** Go big by using empty cardboard boxes! Draw or glue a picture to each side of the box, and then roll and build a tower out of the box to "read" the story from top down.

**OPTION 2:** After rolling the dice and writing down the story, turn it into a performance! Your child can retell the story to you or a small audience in your home or make a home video of their story.



## 2 RHYMING AND WORD CHALLENGES

Make literacy fun with some literacy-based challenges for your child. For example:

**ALLITERATION** is when words begin with the same sound—like “sneaky” and “snake.” Challenge your child to:

**LEVEL 1:** Come up with as many words as they can that start with a certain sound (or letter)

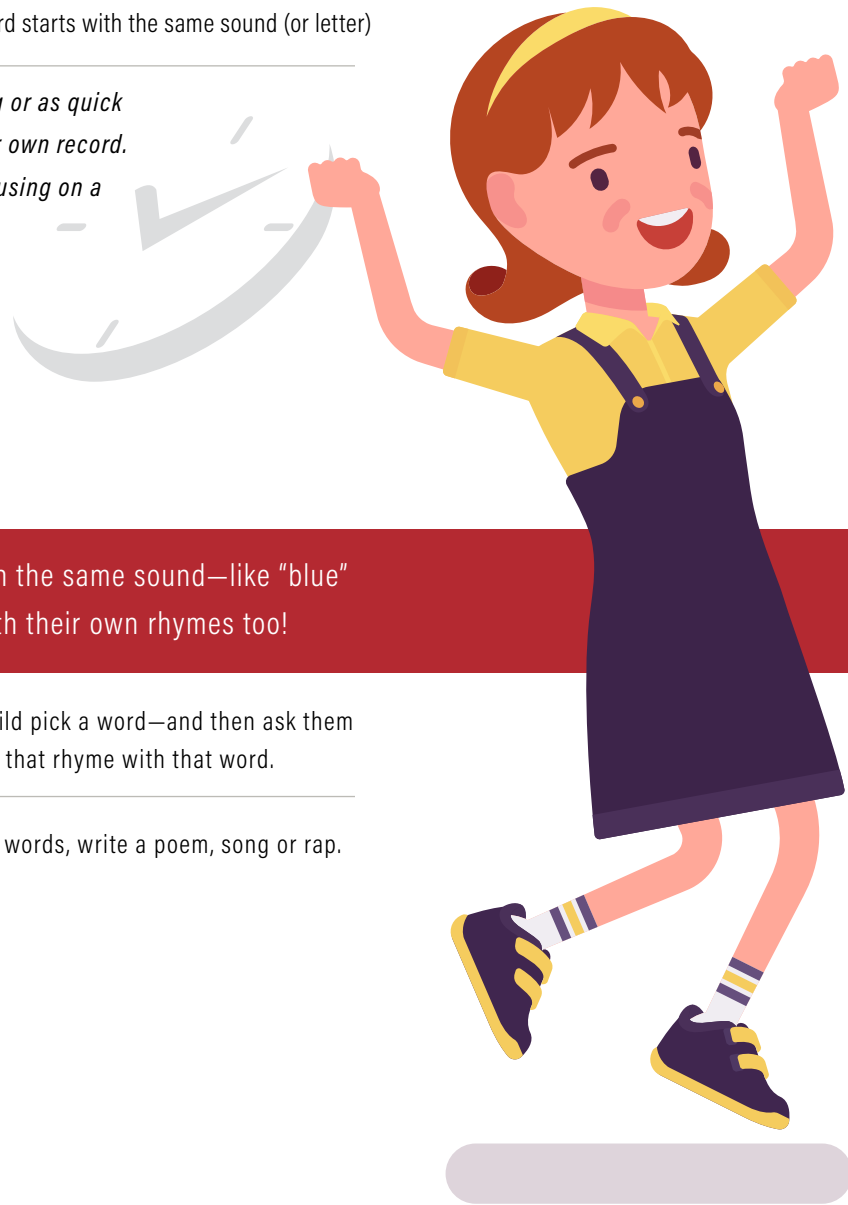
**LEVEL 2:** Write sentences where each word starts with the same sound (or letter)

*For an added challenge, set a time—as long or as quick as you'd like—and see if they can beat their own record. Work your way through the alphabet by focusing on a different sound each day.*

**RHYMING** is when words end with the same sound—like “blue” and “shoe.” Children can come up with their own rhymes too!

**LEVEL 1:** Pick a word – or have your child pick a word—and then ask them to come up with as many words as possible that rhyme with that word.

**LEVEL 2:** Based on that list of rhyming words, write a poem, song or rap.



For more ideas like this, check out [www.ReadingRockets.org](http://www.ReadingRockets.org). Reading Rockets provides ideas to help children to read, parent tips in 11 languages, and connects to resources on PBS and YouTube. In addition, [www.colorincolorado.org](http://www.colorincolorado.org) is a bilingual (English/Spanish) site for families of English language learners, supported by the National Education Association and the AFL-CIO.

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## 3 TELL YOUR OWN STORY

Children are natural storytellers and love to share their ideas and stories. Ask your child to tell a story about something they love or are interested in—this could be about their family, their neighborhood, or a topic that they are curious to explore more.

**First**, encourage your child to find an inspiration for their story. For example, this could be a photograph, a picture in a magazine, an object in your house, or a scene outside their window.

Then, ask your child to:

- » Brainstorm story ideas
- » Plan the story in words and/or pictures
- » Tell you the story!

**OPTION 1:** Make a comic book for the story

**OPTION 2:** Make a movie for the story on your phone or tablet

Ask your child to think about:

**CHARACTERS:**

- » Who is this story about?
- » Who else is in the story?
- » What are they like?

**SETTING:**

- » Where does this story take place?
- » When does it take place?

**PLOT:**

- » What happens in the beginning, middle and end of the story?



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## 4 MAKE A STORY OF YOUR OWN

Children practice reading comprehension skills like identifying the main idea or making predictions every time they read or listen to a story, article or book.

Ask your child to pick a story or article that they are interested in. As you are reading with your child—or as your child is doing independent reading—have them pause in the middle and ask:

### MAIN IDEA:

*What do you think this story is about?*

### MAKING PREDICTIONS:

*What do you think is going to happen next?*

Then, get creative and ask your child to tell their own ending to the story!



### FOR MORE IDEAS AND ACCESS TO FREE STORIES AND BOOKS:

**STORY MENTORS**, a program of the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, has a free library of books for children at reading levels and at-home guides for parents (<https://storymentors.org>).

**THE READS PROGRAM**, developed at Harvard University, has free reading activities designed for use by families ([www.readslab.org](http://www.readslab.org)).

**STORYLINE ONLINE** streams free videos of actors reading children's books aloud, with captions so children can read along ([www.storylineonline.net](http://www.storylineonline.net)).

**UNITE FOR LITERACY** ([www.uniteforliteracy.com](http://www.uniteforliteracy.com)) has books on many topics for children of all reading levels. Children can read along with the book as it is read out loud, including in English, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Tagalog, Somali and other languages.

You can listen to more stories and books on **AUDIBLE** (<https://stories.audible.com/start-listen>), including in Spanish and in Chinese.

