



"I spy a picture book!"

Fun everyday activities
for families getting ready for school



This booklet has been developed as part of the Literacy Champions programme. Volunteers, many of whom are parents themselves, have been spending time with families from across London sharing ideas and activities designed to inspire young children's interest in sharing books and talking.

We would like to share some of these ideas with you so you can enjoy doing them with your child too. Thank you to all of the families, volunteers and professionals who have contributed to this booklet.

Launch of London Literacy Champions, part of the Mayor's Team London Programme, June 2011



Mayor of London, Boris Johnson

Improving childhood literacy unlocks a myriad of opportunities and bestows a life-long passion for learning. Every parent wants the best start for their child, and the London Literacy Champions project is making reading a fun part of their children's daily lives.

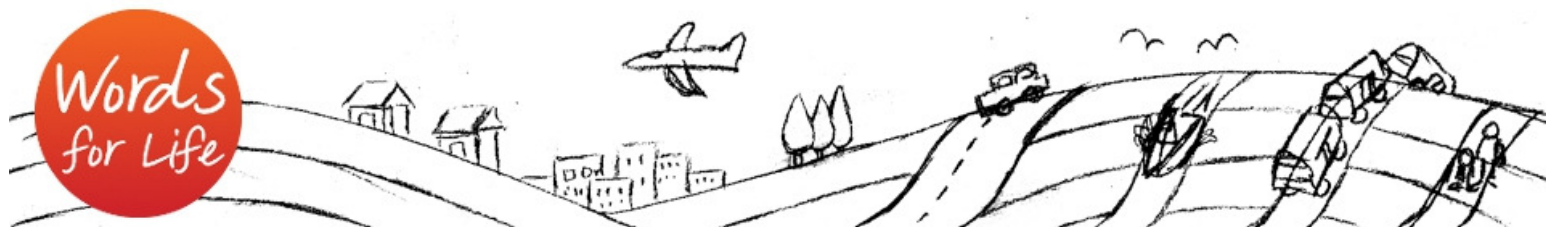
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Boris Johnson'.

Visit the Words for Life website at

www.wordsforlife.org.uk

for even more great activities plus useful information, tips and free downloads

The logo for 'Words for Life', featuring the text in a white, rounded font inside a red circle.



Welcome

Sharing books and talking with your child from the moment they are born gives them the best possible start in life.

As a parent or carer you have a special role to play. The good news is you don't need to be an expert to help your child reach their potential. You can do so much through everyday activities that really make a difference and help develop your child's skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Chattering and singing together develops listening and speaking skills.



Sharing books inspires children to love books and want to learn to read.



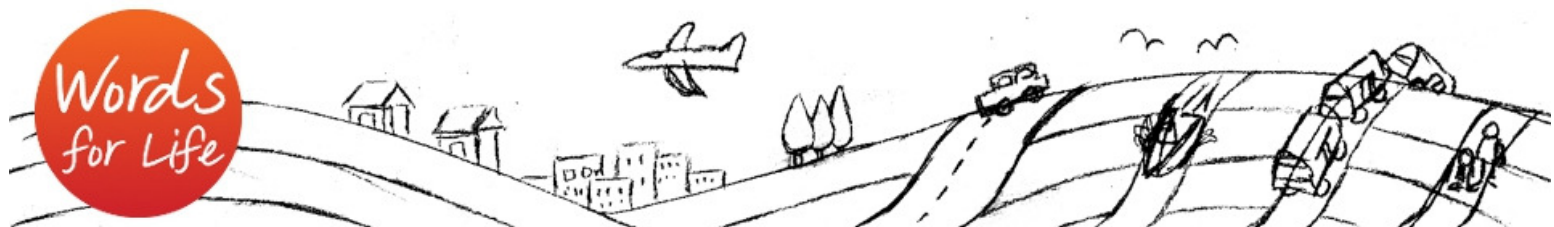
Scribbling and drawing develops early writing skills and helps children express themselves.



Noticing signs and words out in the street helps children understand the world around them.



Words
for Life



How to help your child reach their potential

Young children's brains develop very quickly and they take in more than we can ever imagine. Even if your baby isn't talking yet, they are listening and making sense of what you say and all that is around them. Talking with, listening to, and involving your child in what is happening day to day can make a big difference to their learning and development.

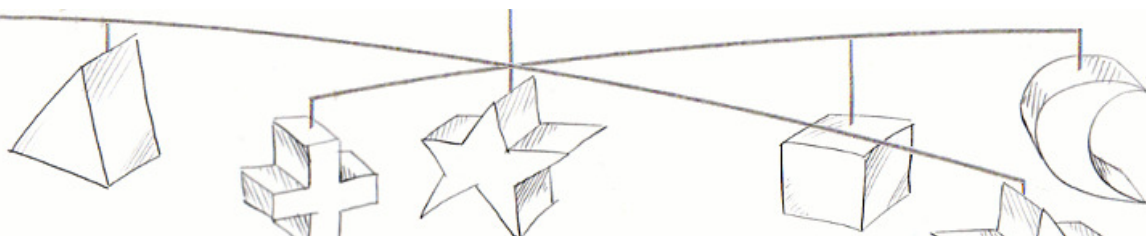
Make opportunities

Everyday experiences can make for great adventures. A trip to the shops or a bus journey can be fantastic opportunities for looking, listening and talking. When you can, try something new or different, for example taking your child somewhere interesting like a museum, many of which are free. Going somewhere new is exciting and a chance for new conversations.



Do and show

Your child learns from you and often wants to copy what you do. Join in with activities, share books and enjoy yourself, and your child will too.



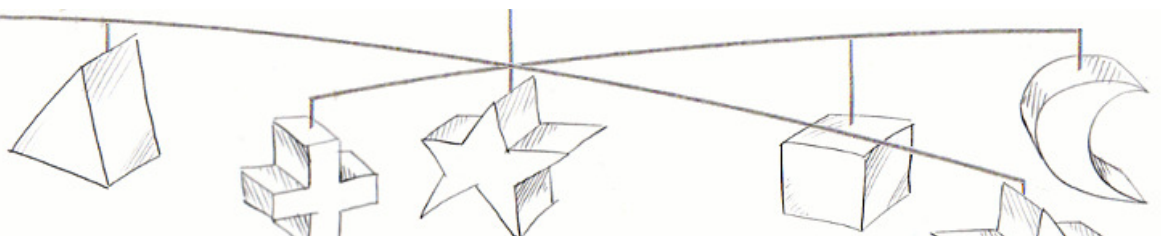


Listen and involve

Find out what your child likes to do and what their interests are. Choose books with your child that follow their interests and involve them in sharing books with you. When reading and talking about the story give plenty of time for your child to think and respond to any comments and questions you make.

Give praise

Offer encouragement to your child and praise when they do something well. Let them know you are proud of what they can do. Sometimes, they'll surprise you with knowing things you didn't even know they knew.



Make it up

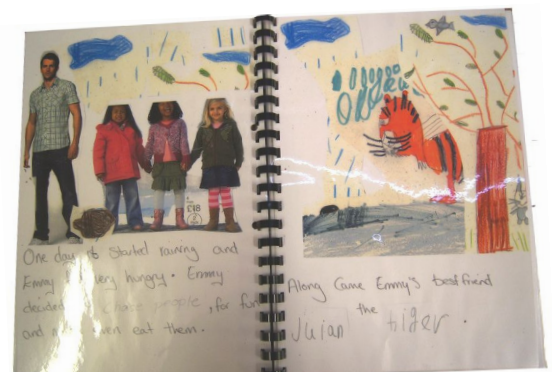
Making up stories encourages children to be creative and to use their imagination. Encourage your child to express their ideas through pictures.

Sean and Leona's story

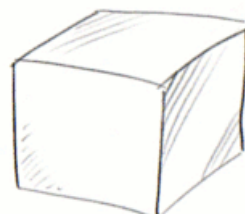
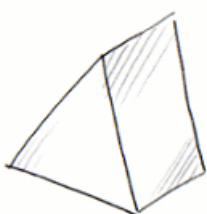
Five-year-old Sean, his little sister Leona and their mum met with Melissa, a Literacy Champion volunteer at St. Mary's Catholic Infant School in Croydon. Melissa showed them how easy it was to make their own stories.

"When you're making up your own stories you can be as silly as you like," said Melissa. "I started by asking Sean to think of an animal, then Leona came up with its name and their mum decided where it lived. We went round and round like that, adding bits to the story. We ended up with a story about a big brown bear called Emmy who lives in a cave. Emmy started chasing people for fun, but got hungry and tried eating them until her friend Julian the tiger came along with hot dogs, her favourite food.

It was really fun. I really enjoyed listening to the story. All of us were laughing, it was so funny!"



Some pages from the book Sean and Leona made with their mum



What you need

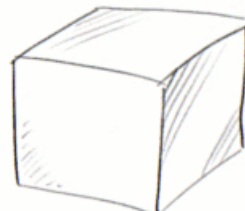
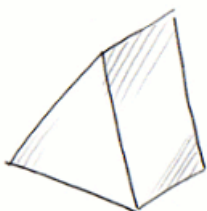
- Paper, pens and coloured pencils
- Child-safe scissors
- Glue
- A plain exercise book or pad

How to make your very own storybook

- Start by asking your child to **think of a character**.
- **Give prompts** with comments or questions to help your child build the story with you.
- **Take it in turns** to tell the next part of the story.
- Once you have told the story **write it down together**.
- **Draw pictures** to go with the words and roughly cut round the words and the pictures. Stick them into a book to make a complete story.

Quick tips

- This activity can work well with a small group of children aged three years and above.
- You can use props to inspire ideas, such as everyday objects you have around the house that might form part of the story.
- You might like to share some books together first to get ideas going and to get your child to think about what elements make up a story.



Get out and about

The world is full of exciting words and pictures, from cereal packets and street signs to shopping aisles. Get out and about and encourage your child to explore the world around them.

Sajad's story

Three-year-old Sajad and his mum met Mehnaz, a Literacy Champion volunteer at Downsell Primary School in Waltham Forest.

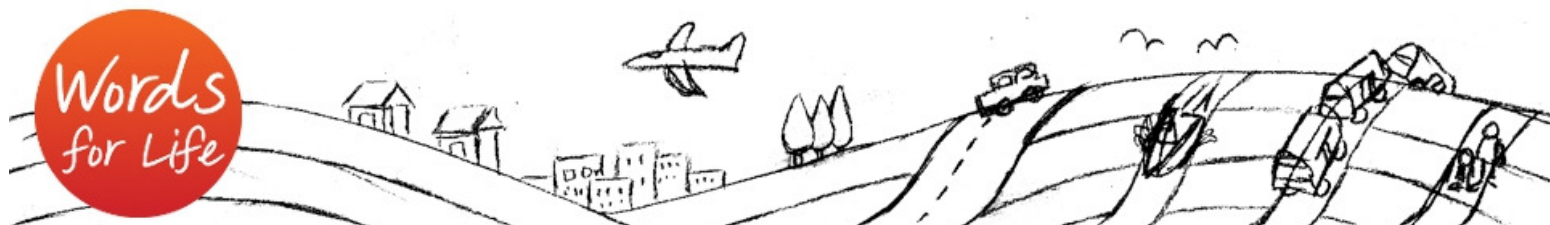
Together, they found a simple recipe for soup and Sajad had a go at making a shopping list of ingredients. Mehnaz gave Sajad a set of pictures of different vegetables and with his mum he picked out the vegetables needed for the soup. They threaded the pictures together on a string to make a picture card key ring to take with them to the local supermarket. In the supermarket Sajad used his key ring to help his mum find the vegetables for their recipe and they talked about how many of each vegetable they needed, their colours and shapes, and which were their favourites.



Sajad helping his mum in the supermarket

What you need

- Pencil and paper for your child to use to make a shopping list
- Pictures of fruit and vegetables
- Child-safe scissors
- Hole punch
- String or ribbon for threading through the pictures



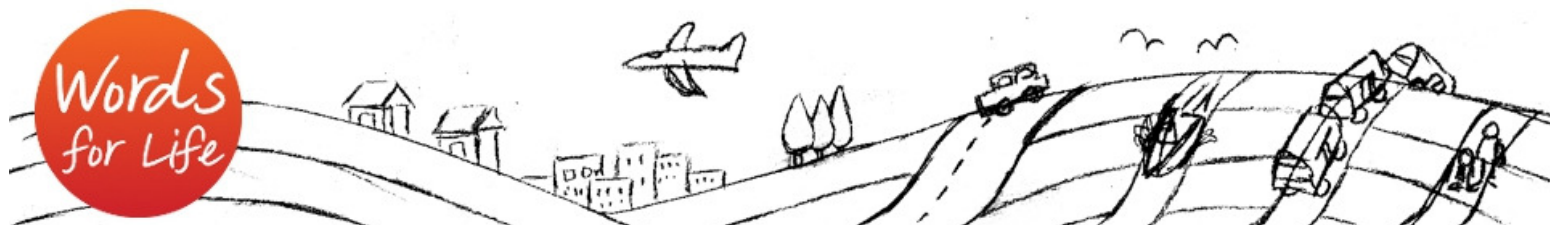
How to make and use a picture card key ring

- **Choose a simple recipe.**
- **Find pictures** of ingredients either from magazines or from the internet and help your child **cut out** the pictures.
- **Make a key ring** by punching a hole in one corner of the pictures and tying them loosely together.
- **Go shopping** with your key ring and ask your child if they can **spot and name** items from the pictures. Talk together about what you see.



Quick tips

- Supermarket magazines are great for pictures of food and are often free.
- You can make lots of different types of picture cards – for example, they can include pictures of typical sights such as a bus stop, post box and shop front.
- If you have a camera, you can take photos of places you know, like the nursery, or somewhere you pass every day. You can make these into a picture card key ring of important places for you and your child.
- Picture cards are a great way of entertaining your child when you are out. You can use them anywhere, on the bus or walking through the park to encourage conversation.



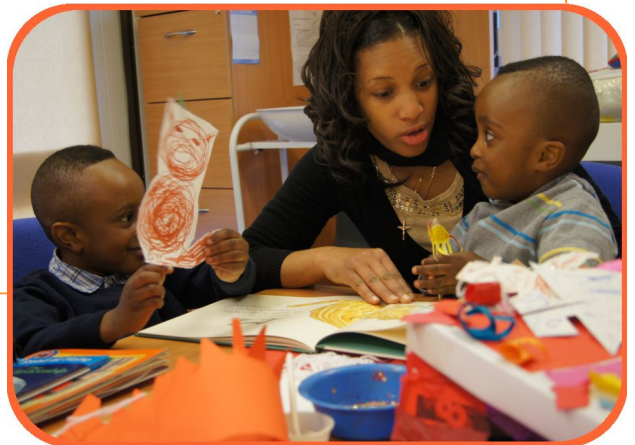
Bring a book to life

Sharing books inspires a love of reading. It's a great way to spend time together and share a cuddle.

Rhema's story

Four-year-old Rhema and his mum spent time at Ethelred Children's Centre in Lambeth.

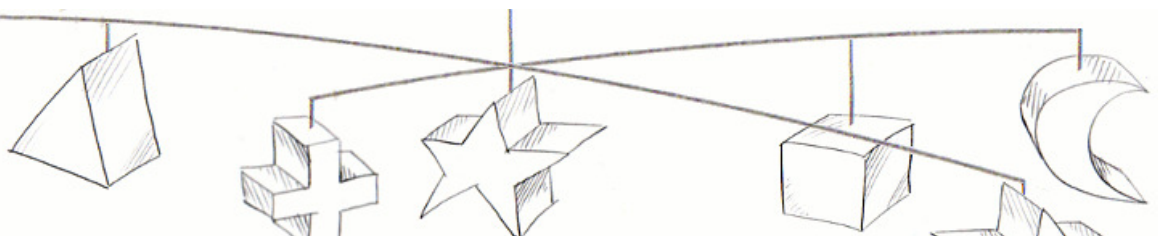
Rhema's mum wanted to make reading fun. Literacy Champion Tracey showed her how by making simple puppets. Rhema enjoys stories about animals so they had a look at a book about cats. They drew pictures of the cats in the story, cut them out and taped them on to lolly sticks. Tracey asked questions about the cats in the story and Rhema and his little brother joined in with the puppets.



Volunteer Tracey with Rhema and his little brother having fun with homemade puppets

What you need

- A book your child enjoys
- Paper and pens or pencils
- Child-safe scissors
- Sticky tape
- Lollipop sticks, straws or anything to make a stick for your puppet



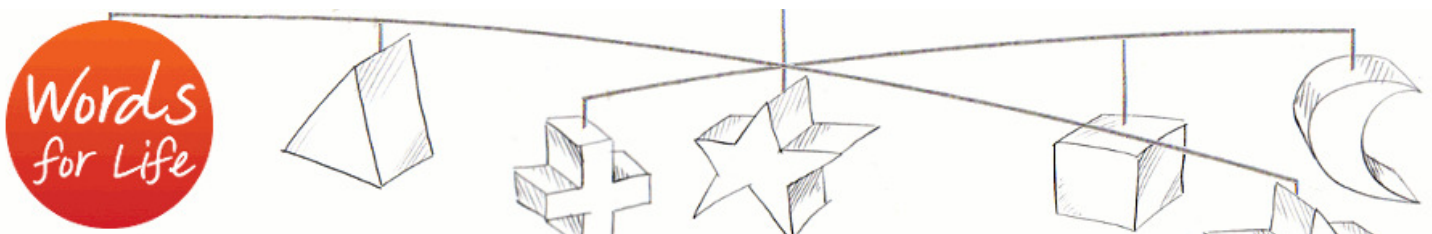
How to make and use story puppets

- Help your child **choose a book** about things they enjoy, for example it could be trains or animals, princesses or dragons. You may want to start with your child's favourite book .
- Help your child **draw a picture** of one or more of the characters in the story and make it into a simple stick puppet.
- Encourage your child to listen out for when their character is introduced and to **bring their puppet to life** in time with the story.
- **Add to your collection** of puppets. Your child can become a character in the story too, using their own photo or a picture they have drawn. Experiment by making different puppets from old socks or gloves.



Quick tips

- If you are busy, even ten minutes sharing a book a day can help your child develop a love of stories and reading.
- Story time can happen any time and any place, just keep a book with you or by the bath or bed. A story at bedtime is the perfect way to settle your child and send them off to sleep.
- Look at the pictures in the book and talk about what you see and what you think is happening. Use your imagination to explore the pictures and come up with your own stories together.
- Your local library has loads of books that you can borrow for free. Take a trip with your child to choose books they are interested in.



Sing a song

Singing songs and rhymes helps your child develop speaking and listening skills. Joining in with group rhyme time activities is a great way for children to make friends and socialise.

Literacy Ambassadors are active in their communities, inviting their friends and family to come along to rhyme time or story time sessions at their local library or children's centre.



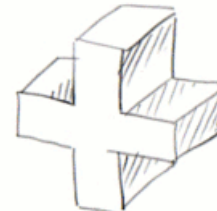
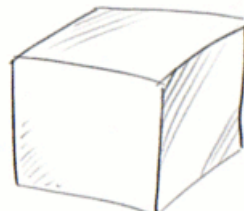
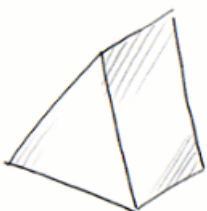
Ambassadors' meeting at Brixton Library, Lambeth



A rhyme time session at Brixton Library, Lambeth

What you need

- Song and rhyme lyrics
- CD of songs and rhymes
- Rhyme books from the library
- Cushions for parents and children to sit on
- Plastic bottles and rice for making shakers



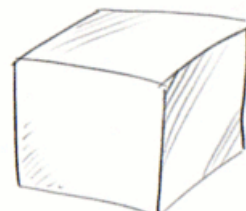
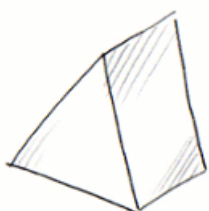
How to set up a songs and rhymes group

- **Get together** with friends and family with young children.
- Ask each parent or carer to **bring along** the words to their child's favourite song or rhyme. They may know them by heart, or can write them down, bring a book or print the words from the internet.
- **Take it in turns** to share a parent and child's favourite song or rhyme.
- Introduce **actions to go with the words** and get everybody moving.



Quick tips

- Singing is particularly enjoyed by children aged three years old and younger. Older children like to have a go at repeating the rhymes and singing them back to you.
- Play CDs of songs and rhymes to give background sound and to create a lively atmosphere (you could get these free from your library).
- Don't worry if your singing voice is rusty or out of tune, it doesn't matter and the more you sing with your child the more confident you will become.
- Putting actions to words helps children understand the songs and be fully involved and active.
- You can also have a go at making shakers using small empty plastic bottles and filling them with rice, lentils or seeds.



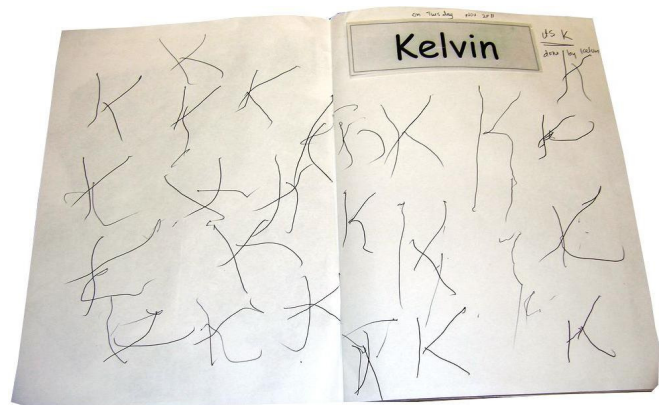
Capture and record

Capturing your child's learning helps them value and feel proud of everything they do.

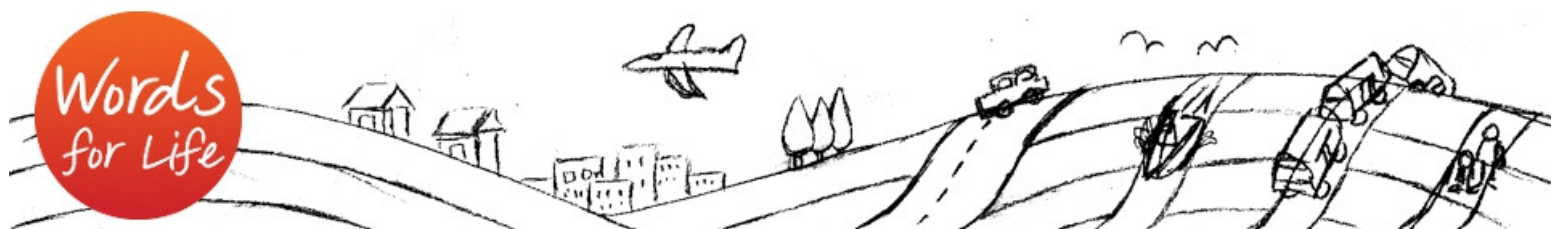
Kelvin's story

Three-year-old Kelvin and his mum met with Mehnaz, a Literacy Champion volunteer, at Downsell Primary School in Waltham Forest.

Mehnaz gave Kelvin his own scrapbook and told him he could put in it whatever he wanted. Every time they met, Mehnaz helped Kelvin stick in photos and examples of the fun things they had been doing each week. Mum let Kelvin scribble in his scrapbook and it didn't matter if it wasn't neat. Kelvin filled whole pages of his scrapbook with the letter K for Kelvin. His mum was surprised to find out how much he knew. "Look how much he's talking! Where did he pick that up?" she asked Mehnaz. "I write everything!" said Kelvin, proudly.



Some pages from Kelvin's scrapbook



What you need

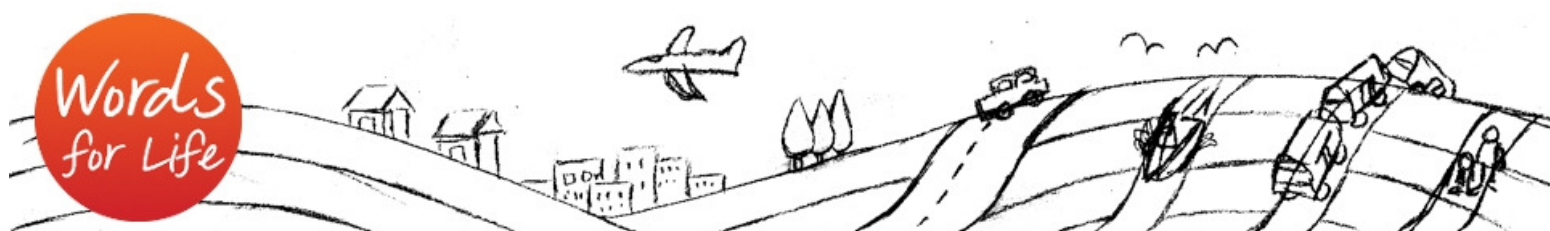
- A scrapbook
- Pens and pencils
- Photographs
- Magazines and catalogues
- Child-safe scissors
- Glue

How to make a creative scrapbook

- Help your child **decorate the front** of their scrapbook. They can draw a picture of themselves or choose a photo to stick on and write their name on it.
- Add words or drawings about your child's **favourite things**, such as foods, places or toys, or photos of your family or pets.
- **Choose books** to share based on your child's favourite things and record stories you have read together. Your child can draw pictures or add in letters or words from the books with your help.
- **Keep adding** to your scrapbook to build a visual record of books shared, visits and activities.

Quick tips

- Be creative. Encourage your child to scribble and draw and stick in pictures they make. Cut out favourite pictures from magazines and make collages. Add in words of new songs and rhymes together and jot down words and phrases your child says.
- Try using glitter, paint, stickers or anything to make your scrapbook fun and colourful.
- If you have a camera, take pictures of your child making and doing things day to day.



Top tips

Make the most of everyday opportunities with your child. Talk with them, listen to them and involve them in daily routines. Here are some top places to share books and have great conversations.



Use picture cards when out and about

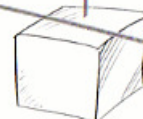
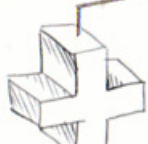
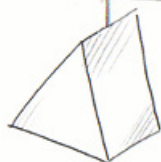


Keep a buggy book to hand



Notice letters and numbers on journeys

Play "I spy" with letters or colours





Make up stories at
bathtime and bedtime



Read to toys or pets

Try books on CD, or
with DVDs

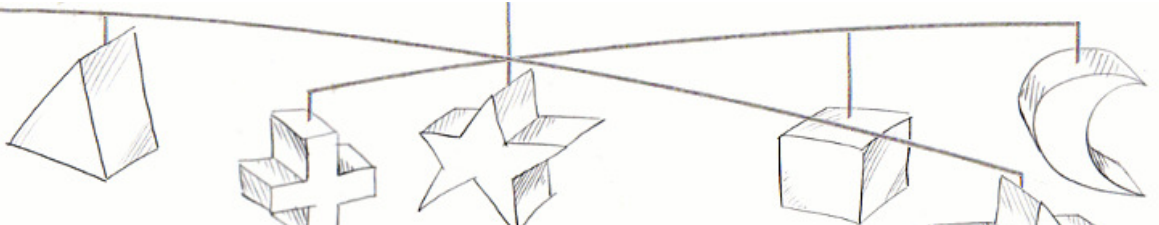


Sing a song together while
you do the housework



Make and use
puppets to help bring
stories to life

Words
for Life





For more great family activities, visit
www.wordsforlife.org.uk



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London Literacy Champions is a Team London project delivered by the National Literacy Trust and funded by the Mayor of London and the Reuben Foundation. The project has been running in the following boroughs during 2011 and 2012: Barking and Dagenham, Bexley, Brent, Bromley, Camden, Croydon, Ealing, Havering, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Newham, Redbridge, Sutton, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest and Wandsworth.

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