



Five things to do with under threes: Literacy

Words are everywhere! Point out the words as you see them “Stop”, “Tesco” and “Disney on Ice”. Young children will begin to decipher the meaning of words by the symbol or picture. Road signs and door numbers are particularly appealing when they contain a letter from their name or their ‘number’ (age!)

Provide a print-rich environment at home. Does your child see you reading, consulting cookbooks, looking at manuals or menus? Model treating books respectfully, not leaving them on the floor or using them to prop up a table but rather placing them carefully back on the shelf. Consider a screen ban at certain times of the day.

Use themed books to build on your child’s interests, such as trains or dinosaurs. Often favourite books will be requested time and time and time again, which is normal, because familiar books are comforting to children and build confidence when heard again and again. They begin to understand and remember the language. However, you will want to build a varied library. Books can be treasured for a lifetime so encourage relatives to give a book on special occasions, like birthdays. It will be a thrill in years to come when the child reads “*Happy 3rd Birthday to..... Love from.....*”



Provide a variety of drawing and writing materials. It can be pen and paper or a finger or a stick in mud, salt or sand. Involve your child in writing shopping lists or making a card for someone special. Annotate their stories or what they say about a picture they have drawn. It will be a special treat to hear their own words read back to them.

Make reading fun! As your child grows older you can play games as you read. What word comes next? What rhymes with toes? You can start to change the stories *Goldilocks and the Three Hares* or read stories with a different twist, such as *The Paper Bag Princess* by Robert Munsch. Ask open-ended questions, such as, “What do you think will happen next?” or “I wonder how the little girl feels?”

Check out The Maple Tree website and Facebook page for sessions and more ideas.

