



Setting Up Your Environment to Support Children's Literacy Development

Learning about reading, writing, listening, and speaking is not confined to the boundaries of any one area in the home. There should, however, be a special place that is the hub for literacy learning.

- ⇒ Include space for looking at books, listening to recordings, writing, and retelling familiar stories. The key to creating an effective literacy area is to make it an inviting place where children will want to spend time.
- ⇒ Locate the books in a quiet area of the home, where children can look at them undisturbed. Make sure soft chairs and pillows are nearby. Create a warm, cozy environment with a rug on the floor, a big beanbag cushion, a rocking chair, or even a mattress or futon covered with an attractive piece of fabric. Also, let children know that it's okay to take books to the dining room or coffee table to read.
- ⇒ If possible, attractively arrange books on low, open shelving with their covers facing out to spark children's interest. Draw children's attention to special books by displaying them on the shelf with props related to the story.
- ⇒ Decorate the walls near the bookshelves or the sides and backs of shelving. Book jackets, photos of children with the provider or their families reading, and children's artwork can all make this area more inviting.
- ⇒ Store writing materials on shelves or group them in storage containers such as bins, cans, folders, and boxes. Label the containers with both pictures and words. Use English and home languages when appropriate.
- ⇒ Charts and signs help create a print-rich environment. Display the alphabet at a child's eye-level near the table that is used for writing so that children will have a model when writing.
- ⇒ Light the area well. Natural light, if possible, is always best; a standing lamp, a table lamp, or an overhead fixture can provide extra lighting if necessary.

