

KEYS TO GREAT PARENTING



Fun and
Learning
with Your
Baby or Toddler

Teaching Outline for KEY #2

Cuddle, Talk, and Read with Your Child **PART 3: READING, RHYMING, SINGING, AND SCRIBBLING**

Learning Objectives

- Parents will be able to select appropriate books for babies and toddlers of various ages.
- Parents will be able to demonstrate reading techniques for babies and toddlers.
- Parents will be able to sing simple songs and recite rhymes to babies and toddlers.
- Parents will attend a field trip to the local public library and become aware of resources for children.
- Parents will be able to discuss the value of scribbling for toddlers and appropriate responses when talking with toddlers about their drawings.
- Parents will be able to verbalize the problems with permitting babies and toddlers to watch quantities of television and videos.

Recommended Supplies and Arrangements

- ✓ Copies of Key #2 for all participants.
- ✓ Table for display of books for babies, toddlers, and young preschoolers brought by leader and participants. Books may be obtained from the public library as well as personal collections.
- ✓ Portable cassette tape or CD player.
- ✓ Cassette tape or CD of songs and rhymes for very young children.
- ✓ Copies of handout "Communication With Nursery Rhymes" for all participants.
- ✓ Copies of handouts "My Child is an Artist! The Stages of Artistic Development" and "Recipes for Sensory Fun for 2- and 3-Year-Olds" for all participants.
- ✓ Examples of toddler and preschool scribbling.
- ✓ Flip chart and easel.
- ✓ Felt tip markers.
- ✓ Masking tape.
- ✓ Selection of books for younger and older babies, toddlers, and 2 year olds that you have checked out from the public library or that you have borrowed from your home or from friends.
- ✓ Supply table for children's books brought by you and by participants.

- ✓ One sheet of writing paper and a pencil for each participant for small group book evaluation.
- ✓ Sheets from the flip chart cut in halves or other large plain paper for scribbling by participants, enough for one sheet per person.
- ✓ Sets of jumbo crayons or colorful washable felt tip markers, one set for each small group.
- ✓ Vehicles for transport of parents and children to local public library.
- ✓ Arrangements for tour and short talk on books for very young children by the librarian.
- ✓ Arrangements for library cards for participants.
- ✓ Copies of the half-page Skill Builder action plan form, enough for all participants.
- ✓ Pencils, enough for all participants.
- ✓ Participants' Skill Builder Log Sheets. Bring a few extra new log sheets for newcomers. Be sure to read "Using the Skill Builder Log Sheet: A Guide for Program Evaluation" before beginning the session if necessary for your full understanding of the evaluation process.

SHARING TIME (about 30 minutes)

Group Building (about 15 minutes)

A. Turn on the portable tape or CD player with songs and rhymes for young children as participants enter the room. If they spontaneously begin to sing and move to the music, join them if you feel comfortable doing so. Invite other arriving participants to bend, stretch, and sway as the music indicates, or simply to sit down, relax, and watch. When most of the group has arrived, gather them together and begin a conversation with some of the following questions.

1. "What has happened to make life enjoyable with you and your child since the previous meeting?"
2. "Were you able to do some talking and listening? How about some singing and rhyming?"

B. Ask participants to show the children's books they brought and explain why these books are special to them. Suggest that they point out features of the books that they and their children have especially enjoyed. This is a "teaser" for the book evaluation activity later in the session.

Adventures in Skill Building (about 15 minutes)

The primary goal of the Keys to Great Parenting Program is to help parents of babies and toddlers build and strengthen their positive parenting skills. Your role in this part of the session is to lead participants in sharing their successes and challenges in following through on their Skill Builder action plans that they completed at the end of the previous session.

This is one of the most important learning times of the entire session. Be as supportive and encouraging as you can.

Move participants from general sharing to focused thinking by saying something like, "Let's look for a few minutes at our Skill Builder action plans that we wrote for ourselves at the last session. Who would like to share with us about putting your previous Skill Builder into action?"

Stress that it takes courage to make out a personal action plan. As long as the individual has sincerely tried to follow through—even though he or she had only good intentions—it's a positive step in the right direction. The person didn't fail; he or she just went through a learning adventure that is a stepping-stone towards success.

As time allows, refer participants to the following questions (written on the flip chart) and permit free discussion on any of them:

- ◆ What did you learn about yourself and your management abilities?
- ◆ How did your actions affect your child?
- ◆ How did your actions affect the general atmosphere of your home?
- ◆ Which values do you share with other family members? Which values differ?

Hand out participants' Skill Builder Log Sheets and pencils. Hand out new log sheets to newcomers and briefly explain the purpose and procedure of the sheet. Ask participants to reread the words they wrote at the previous meeting. Encourage them to make a check in the box that best describes the degree of success they experienced with their action plan between meetings. When everyone has finished marking, collect the log sheets and set them aside until the skill builders time later in the session.

TO THE LEADER: As always, encourage participation among group members, but preserve the right of anyone to remain silent.

ADVENTURES IN LEARNING (about 45 minutes)

Tell the group that today's topic is developing language ability through reading, rhyming, singing, and scribbling. These communication activities are so important for children's later success in school. They are also great fun for adults and children to enjoy together, as the video excerpt shown in the previous session demonstrated.

A. Using and Evaluating Books for Babies and Toddlers. (about 15 minutes)

1. Refer participants to Key #2, pages 8-9, for characteristics of good quality books for various ages of babies and toddlers.
2. Tell participants that you are going to divide them into small groups to notice what is especially useful about the books you and they have brought.
 - a. They may use Key #2, pages 8-9, plus their own experience to help them decide the value of each book for various ages of babies and toddlers.
 - b. Ask them to write down the title and a few words of description for each book that they look at.
 - c. They may enjoy reading some of the books to each other, using dramatic techniques such as gestures, voice changes, facial expressions, etc., as time permits.
3. Call the whole group together. List on the flip chart the good and not-so-good characteristics of each group's books. Suggest that participants remember these characteristics when they purchase books or check them out from the library for their babies and toddlers. Tape the list to the wall for participants to continue to think about.

B. Use of Songs and Rhymes. (about 10 minutes)

1. Review qualities of good songs, rhymes, and fingerplays from the previous meeting.
2. Demonstrate songs, rhymes, and fingerplays by using the handout "Communication with Nursery Rhymes." Encourage participants to join with you. Point out learning qualities.

3. Ask participants to recall songs, and fingerplays they enjoyed as children and to share them with the group.

C. Scribbling (10 minutes)

1. Hand out “My Child Is an Artist! Stages of Artistic Development” and “Recipes for Sensory Fun for 2- and 3-Year-Olds.” Go over the stages of artistic development. (Emphasize that ages vary widely depending on the opportunity to explore the use of crayons or markers, interests, and individual aptitudes.) The same artistic stages can be seen with play dough and fingerpaint. These materials are best used with older toddlers and preschoolers who are able to follow directions about keeping art materials out of their mouths.

2. Explain the value of scribbling for the motor coordination needed for later writing and for cognitive functions such as spatial relationships, sequencing, and creative expression.

3. Refer participants to Key #2, page 10, as you point out helpful things to say to scribblers who are not yet ready to draw pictures that look like real objects or people.

4. Encourage parents to try scribbling in ways that show the artistic stages with large crayons, large paper, and large motions. This activity may help them identify with their toddlers’ efforts to communicate in written ways. Suggest that they practice open-ended comments about each others’ work, as discussed in Key #2 (also see handout). Praise their work and tape it on the wall, as if the wall were a refrigerator door at home.

D. Use of Frequent Television and Videos. (about 5 minutes)

1. Review section of Key #2, pp. 11-13.

2. Ask for 2-3 quick responses from participants.

3. Summarize by reviewing the importance of active participation in language and play activities for children’s learning, rather than passively watching the small screen.

E. Summarizing the Session. (about 5 minutes)

1. Summarize by saying, “When we lovingly play with our babies and toddlers in the language activities discussed today, we are taking advantage of a most important window of opportunity for early brain development. We are laying a basic foundation for their future success in school and in life. You are indeed your child’s first and most important teacher!”

2. Ask for comments from participants. Compliment them on their insights and on having fun with the books, songs, rhymes, and scribbling today. Having fun is also promoting learning!

SKILL BUILDERS (about 15 minutes)

As an educator, one of your important goals is to help members of your group apply what they have learned. Your tool for accomplishing this is the half-page action plan form called Skill Builders.

- Pass out copies of the half-page form and guide participants in creating their personal Skill Builders. You might begin the process by saying something like, “Think about what we’ve been learning today, and pick out a specific parenting skill you would like to improve. Exactly how do you want to strengthen this skill? Choose one small but important change you really want to make in the next few days. Write your action plan in the space provided.”
- Ask the members of your group to choose a reasonably small commitment for their Skill Builder action plans. Biting off too much at one time only sets a person up for frustration or

failure. The action plans should be specific and measurable. Having a definite game plan will help the participant follow through, and it will be much easier to measure the degree of success.

- Once everybody has had an opportunity to complete the Skill Builders, go around the group, allowing each person to share his or her action plan. As you listen, freely give compliments and encouragement. If another learning session will follow this one, remind participants to bring their Skill Builder forms with them next time. Knowing that they will have an opportunity to report on their action plans will be an added incentive for following through.
- Hand out the participants' Skill Builder Log Sheets. Briefly explain the purpose of the log sheet to newcomers to this session (see Key #1, Part #1, page 5, for introductory words). Encourage participants to write a few words that describe their Skill Builder action plan on the next line. Newcomers should write their words on the top line. Again assure participants that you will keep their log sheets confidential between meetings. Be sure to collect their log sheets and place them in a folder.
- After participants have completed their half-page Skill Builders and their log sheets, invite them to close their eyes, take several deep breaths, and relax. Then ask them to imagine that they are successfully carrying out their Skill Builder action plans just the way they want to. Lead them in visualizing the positive results and in experiencing how good it feels. Without rushing, you may want to guide them in going over these images a second time. Explain that mental pictures can be a very effective way of learning. Many athletes, for example, use visualization as an essential technique for improving their skills.

If you have a children's program that runs along with the parent meeting, you may say, "In a few minutes we will go to the children's room. As you play, you will probably observe how your child responds and will likely think about the many brain connections taking place every time you smile, talk, and cuddle with him or her. Notice the books and other written material on shelves or on the wall. Think about ways that you could place printed words around your home for your child to see and learn."

WRAP UP

- A.** Based on your prior research about transportation, tour planning, and procuring library cards, lead a trip to the local public library.
- B.** Ask participants to complete the following activities before the next meeting:
 1. Try to read at least one book and enjoy at least one song, rhyme, or fingerplay each day with your baby or toddler (the same activity can be repeated another day).
 2. Enjoy drawing and writing projects with your toddler and older children in your home. Bring examples next meeting and be prepared to describe the process your children went through to create the drawings.
 3. Notice the number of hours a day your family uses television, videos, video games, and computers. What changes toward more family language activities might you consider?