

AAC Learning Networks

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Curated List of Literacy Ideas



We asked our AAC community for their favorite literacy ideas, helping parents engage with literacy during everyday home routines. Here are the results.

This is for educational purposes. This is not an exhaustive list. Inclusion does not signify endorsement. We encourage you to explore and judge for yourself which to add to your toolbox. Happy reading!

General ways to encourage shared and independent reading in a child who may show reluctance or frustration

Repetition! Start with small steps, maybe just get the book out. Then open the book. Flip through the pages. Look at the pictures - build exposure and interest in the book before you "read" the entire book.

Draw from various media forms. Find a book on video, audiobook, and hardcopy book. Present the book in these different forms.

Prop books on the bookshelf with the cover facing out so your child can see the covers to select a book.

Just **talk about the pictures** and not read word for word.

Leave books in different areas of the home so your child might happen to pick one up and look at it.

Different forms of hardcopy books; provide something to touch, feel, manipulate

Touch and feel books:

- https://www.amazon.com/Childrens-Books-Touch-Feel/s?rh=n%3A4%2Cp_n_feature_eight_browse-bin%3A14487163011

Lift-the-flap books:

- https://www.amazon.com/Childrens-Books-Pop-Up-Lift-the-Flap/s?rh=n%3A4%2Cp_n_feature_eight_browse-bin%3A3269850011
- <https://usborne.com/us/books/browse-by-category/lift-the-flap-books>
- <https://books.disney.com/character-series/lift-the-flap/>

Indestructible books:

- Several companies make these books. Here is one:
<https://www.hachettebookgroup.com/imprint/workman-publishing-company/page/workman-brands/indestructibles/>

Push-pull-spin books:

- <https://www.amazon.com/Disney-Mickey-Friends-Courtney-Acampora/dp/0794441629>
- <https://www.amazon.com/Disney-Classics-Turn-Learn/dp/1405466499>

Poke-a-dot books:

- https://www.amazon.com/s?k=poke-a-dot+books&i=stripbooks&crd=1CBRKTCOVH0BO&srefix=poke-a-dot+books%2Cstripbooks%2C130&ref=nb_sb_noss_1

Puppets bring the story to life and allow the child to see motion and feel the puppet along with the story:

- <https://www.amazon.com/Books-Puppets/s?k=Books+with+Puppets>
- <https://www.lakeshorelearning.com/search/products/page-1/sort-best/num-96/loc-072?view=grid&Ntt=puppets>

Adapted (or adapting) hardcopy books to “read”

Chameleon Reader: Uses a pen that when contacts stickers, allows you to hear a recorded message. <https://www.chameleon-reader.com/>

Leap Frog Reader Pen and accompanying books: The pen goes along with the books. https://store.leapfrog.com/en-us/store/p/leapreader-reading-and-writing-system/_/A-prod21301

Page fluffers: Helps the child to flip the pages.

<https://www.pathstoliteracy.org/resource/page-fluffers/>

- Tape popsicle sticks to the pages of a book
- Place self-adhesive felt pads at the middle edge of each page (this separates the pages to help your child turn one page at a time)

Sites for digital books

Bookflix: (may be available for free through your local library)
<https://bookflix.digital.scholastic.com/?authCtx=U.628847788>

Tumblebooks: (may be available for free through your local library)
<https://www.tumblebooks.com/>

YouTube books read aloud:

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=kids+books

Bookshare audiobook reader (you can send a certificate saying you have a disability to get free access): <https://www.bookshare.org/cms/get-started/human-narrated-audiobooks>

Spotify audiobooks: (e.g. Magic Treehouse) You can listen to audiobooks at home or driving in the car.

****Note for children who use switches:**

Apps on an iPad can be adapted for switch use.

- You first need to set up a switch interface such as AbleNet's Blue2Blue: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zscd2VdD1us>
- Then, you create a "recipe" to allow the switch to operate the book, like to turn the pages.
- This 20-minute video explains how to switch adapt to read books in Tarheel Reader on an iPad: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nuYw4vgH6Hw>
- This is a step-by-step PDF for creating recipes for any app or website on an iPad: https://www.ablenetinc.com/content/html/Downloads/Switch_Downloads/simplifying_switch_access_with_recipes.pdf

If you are using a laptop or desktop computer:

- You will need a switch interface such as: <https://www.especialneeds.com/shop/assistive-technology/switches/switch-interfaces.html>
- The easiest way to quickly have your child access a book is to position the mouse cursor on the "turn page" arrow. The child clicks their switch and this click mimics the mouse click on the arrow. You can turn the "read to me" option on and the book will be read to you. Your child can then turn the page of the book.

Customized hard-copy books using your photos and text

Use real-life photos, pictures of family, friends, favorite things and activities, a day at school, or summer vacation to create hardcopy books. Add simple text to go with each photo.

Make a personalized ABC Book: A is for Apple. I love apples. B is for Bath. Me in the bath. C is for car. My dad's car is blue. Etc.

Pinhole Press: <https://pinholepress.com/c/photo-books>

Shutterfly:

- <https://www.shutterfly.com/photo-books/>
- <https://www.shutterfly.com/photo-books/board-books/>

Snapfish: <https://www.snapfish.com/photo-book>

Customized ebooks using your photos and text

Tar Heel Reader: This is a community of folks (e.g. parents, teachers, SLPs) who add simple customized books. You can search for a child's preferred topic. They can practice reading it or have it read to them. You can also create your own customized book, accessible on their website. <https://tarheelreader.org/>

Pictello (iOS app, \$19.99): This is an easy way to create customized stories for your child. You collect 5-10 photographs on a topic. You place one picture per page and write the text that goes with it. Your child touches the picture to "read" it and touches the arrow to turn the page. <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/pictello-visual-stories/id397858008> (*Pictello allows you to download Tarheel Reader books. If your child is distracted by being on a web browser, you can download Tarheel Reader books to Pictello and then only use the app Pictello for your child's "bookshelf".*)

Story Creator (iOS app, free): This is similar to Pictello but doesn't require exact fine motor to turn the page using the arrow. It requires a child to know how to swipe to turn the page. You record your voice which may be helpful or distracting for a child. <https://apps.apple.com/ca/app/story-creator-easy-story-book-maker-for-kids/id545369477>

Book Creator (iOS app, \$3.99): This is similar to Pictello but uses a swipe to turn the page and recorded voice. <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/book-creator-for-ipad/id442378070>

Other ways to embed literacy into the day

Board games: There are many boardgames specific to literacy. If your child can read but is a reluctant reader, try to find a board game that speaks to your child's interests.

- Monopoly
- Clue
- Trekking the National Parks

Card games:

- Pokemon
- Uno
- Go Fish
- Memory cards with words and pictures on them

Trading cards:

- Football
- Star Wars
- Pokémon

ABC spongy toys for the bath. Can use them by naming the letters, saying their sounds (encourage your child to say it in their brain), and also spell simple words.

Spelling occurs when typing names of songs or videos into a web browser. You can model, “hmm, how do I spell that? w w w. y o u t u b e. c o m, that gets the Youtube page”.

Keep a **whiteboard** in the kitchen. Write down shopping lists or recipes. Read aloud during this task.

Shopping **receipts**: “Hmm, did we buy Oreos? I’m not sure. Let’s look at the receipt.”

Maps: “How do we get to school? Turn right on 15th. Turn left on 3rd. There is school!”

Alphabet phonologic ideas to embed at home

Leapfrog Fridge Phonics: https://store.leapfrog.com/en-us/store/p/fridge-phonics-magnetic-letter-set/_A-prod19267

Large letter stamps with big handles: <https://www.amazon.com/Large-Letter-Stamps/s?k=Large+Letter+Stamps>

Scavenger hunt in the house of beginning sounds (e.g. Let’s find B items – bathtub, ball, book)

Making letters out of pie dough or playdoh or soap bubbles or shaving cream.

Some of our favorite iOS apps for alphabet or phonological awareness

Writing wizard: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/writing-wizard-school-ed/id631446426>

Montessori Crosswords: <https://apps.apple.com/au/app/montessori-crosswords-for-kids/id384334005>

Word Wizard: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/word-wizard-for-kids-school-ed/id447312716>

Starfall: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/starfall/id707189889>

Little Reader: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/kids-learning-to-read-little-reader-cvc-words/id430616830>

General suggestions to embed the AAC system into reading or writing

For Gestalt Language Processors (GLP), you can **add parts of a story onto the device** to help simplify a book with longer sentences.

Use the keyboard on the device to type letters or words along with your reading the book or involved in any art or writing activity.

Use the "Chat" section in communication apps to **make comments while reading**, like, "Oh no!" "Yikes!" "That's terrible" "how 'bout we turn the page" etc.

Add specific book titles to the AAC. Creating book pages so repetitive words, phrases or sentences are programmed into the AAC. Model using this while you are reading.

Up the size of the text on the buttons of the AAC system.

Add multiple lines in the message window to see more text.

Enlarge the button that leads to the alphabet.

Use the AAC to model alongside when singing songs (e.g. for Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, program "star, are, high, sky" on a page to model the rhymes).

NWACS is the oldest and longest-running organization in the Pacific Northwest for the support of persons with complex communication needs. It is a non-profit, completely volunteer organization that was founded in the late 1970s. We focus on educating and raising awareness about augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).

Learn more: www.nwacs.info