

Here are 7 early literacy games you can play anywhere!

Rhyme Machine

Since rhyming is such an important skill to master for reading, I love playing Rhyme Machine with my boys. There's no actual machine in this game, but we pretend to put a word into the 'machine' and then we try to think of as many words that rhyme with that word. Some are gibberish words, but that's okay! It's still rhyming and listening to the sounds in a word. Here's an example how the game is played.

Me: "What word do you want to put in the rhyme machine today?"

Student: "Let's put in 'kite'!"

Me: "Okay, let's see...kite rhymes with might! Your turn!"

Student: "Sight. Right. Tight."

Syllable Count

Another reading skill that's important for kids to know is counting syllables, or the parts of a word. This game is similar to the Rhyme Machine. We just shout out a word and then clap and count the syllables. We look around the room and find objects and find the syllables. Here's an example:

Me: "Find something in the room to count syllables."

Student: "Okay, how about couch! Couch has 1 syllable."

Me: "Awesome! Now can you find something in the room that has 2 syllables?"

Student: "How about 'lamp'? (claps out lamp) Nope. That's just 1. Let me try 'table'. (claps out table) Yes! Table has 2 syllables!"

I Spy

Hearing the beginning sounds of words is another important literacy skill. One way to practice this is with an I Spy game. To play this, find something in the room and tell them the beginning sound. Here is an example:

Me: "I spy with my little eye something that has a beginning sound of /l/."

Students: "A lamp?"

Me: "Yes! Lamp starts with an /l/ sound!"

Ssss Ssss Snake

Alliteration is a big fancy words, but it simply means the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words. For this game, you can practice with words beginning with the following sounds: /f/, /h/, /l/, /m/, /n/, /s/, /v/, /z/.

Come up with simple phrases where the words all begin with the same sound. Say the phrase

and have your child repeat it back, drawing out the beginning sound.

Here are some examples:

"Sssneaky sssnakes ssslides and ssslithers."

"Llllousy llllion lllloves llllemons."

"Hhhhairy hhhhhippo hhhhops on a hhhhhat."

"Ffffroggy fffflops on a ffffluffy ffffoot."

What Comes After...

For this game, I say a letter of the alphabet and ask my kids what letter comes next. It's such a simple game, but it really helps my kid with knowing the order of the alphabet.

Alphabet Search

A lot of times while we are driving, we play this alphabet search game. I will ask the kids to search for a letter of the alphabet. Whoever finds the letter gets to choose the next letter to find.

Rhyming Sentence

Another way we practice rhyming is with rhyming sentences. I start the sentence and have my kids fill in the blank. Here's an example:

Me: "Can you fill in the blank? The cat went ____."

Students: "Splat!"

Me: "The frog had a ____."

Students: "Dog!"

Me: "A shoe is ____."

Students: "Blue!"