

A Literacy-Rich Home

What's a literacy-rich home?
It's a house that is filled with plenty of reading materials and writing tools — and plenty of chances to use them.
Use these clever ideas to invite reading and writing into every room of your home.

Kitchen

- Serve letter-shaped foods. Alphabet pasta, soup, and cereal are three fun choices. You can also find ABC cookie cutters at a grocery, craft, or dollar store. Use them to cut sandwiches and pancakes. Have your youngster identify each letter before digging in!
- Post a daily menu on the refrigerator, and read it together. Your child will know what he's eating that day, and he'll soon learn to read words like "chicken," "peas," "oatmeal," and "eggs."
- Look at recipes and food packages

while cooking with your youngster. Ask her questions. ("What does the recipe say to add next?" "Does that say 'bake' or 'broil'?")

- Hang a bulletin board, chalkboard, or dry-erase board as a family message center. When someone leaves a note, read it with your child: "Please pick up the dry cleaning." You might also use it to write a new word he's learning so it will catch his eye each time he walks by.

- Ask your youngster to write with you. When you pay bills or do paperwork, give her paper and pencil. Encourage her to practice writing her name or to look around the kitchen and write down words for the things she sees.

Bedroom

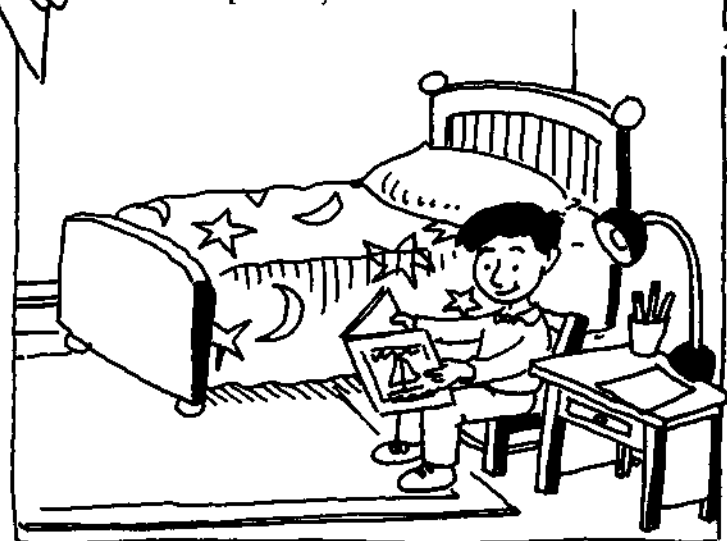
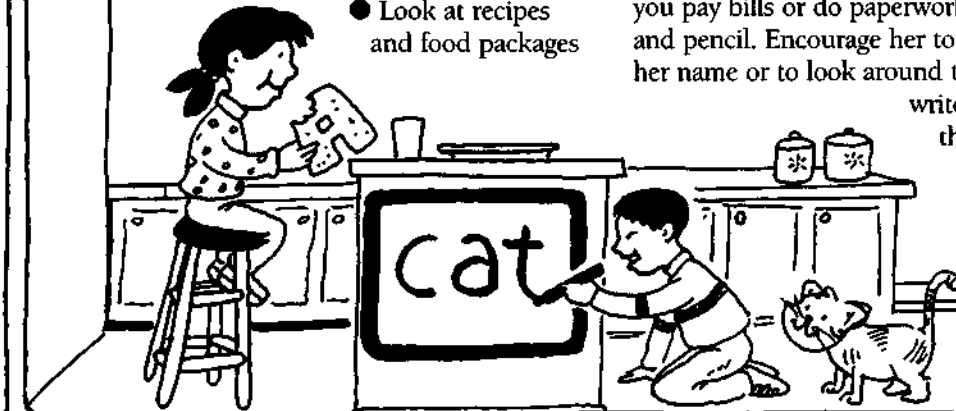
- Make a special "book nook" for your child. This is a quiet, inviting place for him to read that includes pillows and a changing supply of books. You might use a corner of his room or his closet with the doors removed. Make a temporary reading spot by draping a sheet over two chairs or setting up a small pop-up tent, baby pool, or large appliance box.

- Put a wide variety of writing paper and tools on a desk or table. Set out plastic cups with crayons, washable markers, thick pencils, paintbrushes, glitter glue, and colored pencils. Your youngster can write on poster board, lined and unlined paper, construction paper, and sticky notes.

- Create a word wall. Ask your child to write each letter of the alphabet on a separate index card. Using tape, attach the letters to the wall. Then, she can write words she's learning on other index cards and hang them below the beginning letter.

- Give your youngster a box of word-making tools. Alphabet stamps are usually available at dollar stores or craft stores. Cut letters out of kitchen sponges so your youngster can dip them in washable paint and stamp letters on paper.

- Place items in your youngster's toy box that teach letters, such as alphabet blocks, puzzles, and even an old computer keyboard.



Bathroom

- Letters cut from craft foam (available at a craft store or in the craft section of a discount store) will stick to the bathtub. Create a full alphabet, and help your youngster spell a word like "splash." Show him how to make new words by removing the first three letters ("spl") and adding a new letter ("d" for "dash" or "m" for "mash").

- Let your youngster write on the mirror with shaving cream. She can spell "Goodnight" or another message for her sister to find later. *Tip:* If the bathroom's steamy, show her how to write on the mirror using her fingers.

- Keep a basket of magazines on the floor. Add to your stack by asking relatives and friends to pass on old ones. You can read articles to your little one while she takes a bath.



Family Room

- Build a book collection. Visit yard sales, thrift stores, used book stores, and library book sales. Your child's school may sponsor an annual book fair or offer monthly catalogs listing books at discounted prices. Collect a variety: picture books, nursery rhymes, poetry, beginning chapter books, nonfiction, children's dictionaries and encyclopedias, and atlases.

- Organize your home library. Your child will be more likely to read if she can find what she's looking for. Consider sorting books into plastic baskets by theme, author, or type. Label each basket with permanent marker on masking tape. *Note:* Remember to include books your youngster has made, too.

- Let your child dictate or help you write captions in photo albums and scrapbooks. He'll enjoy looking at the pictures and reading the words below.

- Together, write down lyrics to your youngster's favorite songs, and store them with her tapes or CDs, near the radio, and in the car. Encourage her to read as she sings along.

- Collect free bookmarks from the library or bookstores, or have your child make his own out of construction paper. To encourage him to practice using them, get a beginning chapter book. Read one chapter each night, and have him mark your place for the next night. Store extra bookmarks in a jar on his bookshelf.

- Have a variety of board games on hand that require some reading, and consider having a family game night once a week. Look for junior versions of family favorites, such as Boggle, Scrabble, or Scattergories. Read directions together. If a game requires scorekeeping, ask your child to write down players' names.

