

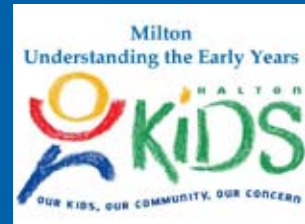
Language & Cognitive Development



What is it? Language and cognitive development includes word and number recognition, counting and memory, as well as advanced literacy such as reading and writing.*

Why is it important? Children who enjoy stories and being read to, and whose cognitive development is appropriate to their age and stage, are children who are prepared to learn and succeed—at school and throughout life.

What can I do to build my child's language and cognitive skills? Your child is constantly watching and learning from you. This makes you your child's first and best teacher. But you don't need to teach "a lesson"—just look for teachable moments. Start by watching your child. See what he or she is doing, then join in. Children learn by playing, so be sure and have fun while exploring books and magazines with your child, as well as singing counting songs and playing games that enhance memory and creativity. For fresh, fun ideas on strengthening your child's language and cognitive skills, talk to an early years specialist or try some of the activities listed below.



The activities below are grouped by age:

INFANT

TODDLER

PRESCHOOLER

Hold your baby so that he or she is looking outwards (instead of at you) and walk around your house, pausing to look at things. Name the items you see.

Sing little songs or play simple games with repeating sounds (e.g., "Baa Baa Black Sheep").


Play "Five Little Piggies Finger Grab": Recite the nursery rhyme while touching each of your baby's fingers in turn. Then let your baby grab your fingers as you say the rhyme again.

Cuddle together to read a book that has simple sentences or rhymes and big pictures.

Have fun playing "What Sound does the Animal Make?": Cut out pictures of various well known animals. Ask the question, "What sound does a make?" and then answer by making the sound.


Give your baby a stroller ride to the library and borrow *Time for Bed* by Mem Fox or *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle. If there is a baby-parent program that day, then stay, play and have fun.

*This definition is from the Early Development Instrument, which is used to measure the readiness to learn of kindergarten students.




Work with your child to make a scrapbook of all her or his favourite things and people, then talk about it with your child. You can label some of the people and things.

Look for specific things as you go for a walk (e.g., “Let’s look for big trucks”). If there is a bunch of one thing together, you can count them for your child.



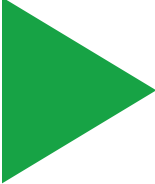

Count the stairs as you walk up or down. “One step, two step, three step...”

Make a collage using stickers and whatever craft supplies you have on hand. Together with your child, sort and count the various craft items (e.g., pipe cleaners) while working on your project.



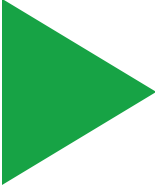
Sing counting songs, such as “Five Little Monkeys” or “The Elephant Song,” and have fun acting out the lyrics.

Take a trip to the library and borrow *Black? White! A Book of Opposites* by Laura Seeger or *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do you See?* by Bill Martin. Talk about the pictures and concepts with your toddler, then look for them in the real world.



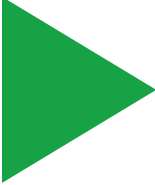

Together with your child, cook something he or she enjoys eating. Use this time to explore such things as measurements, numbers, colours, words and textures.

Gather together a bunch of old magazines or colour flyers, then let your child cut or tear out pictures of things she or he likes. Together, make a collage and give the masterpiece a title.



Gather a selection of objects that go together (e.g., brush and comb, shoe and sock, fork and spoon, and so on), then let your child have fun matching them.

Play “I Forget”: Say a sentence but “forget” an important word. Ask your child to help you figure out the missing word (e.g., “I had the best ice cream today. It was sooo... Hmm, what’s the word? Can you help me figure it out?”).



Ride or stroll to the library and borrow *Letters in the Library* by Bonnie Farmer or *The Cake that Mack Ate* by Rose Robart. Try and have a rhyming conversation and laugh at the results.

