Educational Solutions
for Children, Inc.

BUILDING STRONG READERS FROM BIRTH TO AGE FIVE!

PRINT AWARENESS

LITERACY TOOLKIT

CONCEPTS OF PRINT



Educational Solutions for Children, Inc. | Birth-5 Literacy Resource
Created through funding provided by the Comprehensive Literacy Grant Initiative.

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WELCOME, TEACHERS!

Thank you for using the Print Awareness Concepts of Print Literacy Toolkit!



This toolkit is designed to help young children notice, understand, and use the basic rules about how print works. Together, we can build strong foundations for lifelong reading success!

1 WHY CONCEPTS OF PRINT MATTER

Understanding concepts of print helps children become aware of the way print works. These early understandings support children as they learn letters, sounds, words, and how to read.

Benefits Include:

- Builds early reading readiness
- Helps children understand how books work
- Promotes tracking print from left to right
- Supports awareness of letters, words, sentences, and spaces
- Encourages independence as readers
- Strengthens confidence with print

2 RESEARCH BASED BENEFITS

Research shows that children who understand concepts of print before they learn to read are better prepared to decode, read smoothly, and comprehend what they read.

Children who learn how print works are more likely to pay attention to text, connect ideas, and understand that print carries meaning.

Daily experiences with print help children develop strong literacy habits and set the foundation for school and life success.

3 HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

1 EXPLORE
Review the activities and choose the ones that fit your instructional goals.

2 PREPARE
Gather a few materials and set up center or small group activities.

3 ENGAGE
Introduce print in meaningful, real life contexts through play and exploration.

4 OBSERVE
Use the assessment tools to note progress, monitor growth, and celebrate small steps of success.

PERFECT FOR

- Classrooms
- Small Groups
- Intervention
- Take-Home Practice
- Literacy Centers
- Family Engagement

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STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

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This toolkit aligns with key early learning and literacy standards that support print awareness and early literacy development.

BIRTH–3
(INFANTS & TODDLERS)

Early experiences with songs, rhymes, and books build the foundation for lifelong reading.

KEY STANDARDS ADDRESSED

- Engages in back-and-forth interactions using sounds, words, and gestures.
- Responds to and enjoys finger plays, songs, and rhymes.
- Explores books and shows interest in pictures, print, and story.
- Demonstrates early understanding that print carries meaning.
- Develops attention and memory through repeated experiences.

PRESCHOOL
(3–5 YEARS)

Preschoolers strengthen print awareness and oral language through meaningful literacy experiences.

KEY STANDARDS ADDRESSED

- Identifies that print carries meaning and has a purpose.
- Recognizes some letters, words, and signs in the environment.
- Understands that we read from left to right and top to bottom.
- Participates in shared reading and retelling of familiar rhymes.
- Uses vocabulary and oral language to express ideas and make connections.

PRE-K
(4–5 YEARS)

Pre-K children use their knowledge of print to connect language with meaning and purpose.

KEY STANDARDS ADDRESSED

- Demonstrates understanding of basic concepts of print.
- Identifies letters and their associated sounds.
- Recognizes and produces rhyming words.
- Reads and understands high-frequency words.
- Retells stories and rhymes in sequence using key details.

KINDERGARTEN
(5–6 YEARS)

Kindergarteners apply print awareness skills to support reading comprehension and emergent writing.

KEY STANDARDS ADDRESSED

- Demonstrates a deep understanding of concepts of print.
- Reads emergent-reader texts with purpose and understanding.
- Uses phonological awareness skills to decode and encode words.
- Writes letters, words, and sentences to express ideas.
- Comprehends and retells nursery rhymes and connected text.

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WHERE DO I START READING?

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Students identify the beginning of print and understand that we read from left to right and top to bottom.

ACTIVITY AT A GLANCE

- **Focus:** Print Awareness
- **Grades:** Pre–K
- **Time:** 15–20 minutes
- **Group Size:** Whole group or small group

LEARNING GOAL

Students will identify where print begins and how we read from left to right and top to bottom.

MATERIALS

- Storybook page
- Pointer or reading wand
- Sticky notes
- Chart paper
- Crayons

WHAT TO DO

1. Display a large storybook page.
2. Explain that when we read, we always start in the same place.
3. Ask children to point to each part of the page as you say it.
4. Let children take turns using a pointer or their finger.
5. Discuss why we start at the top and read from left to right.

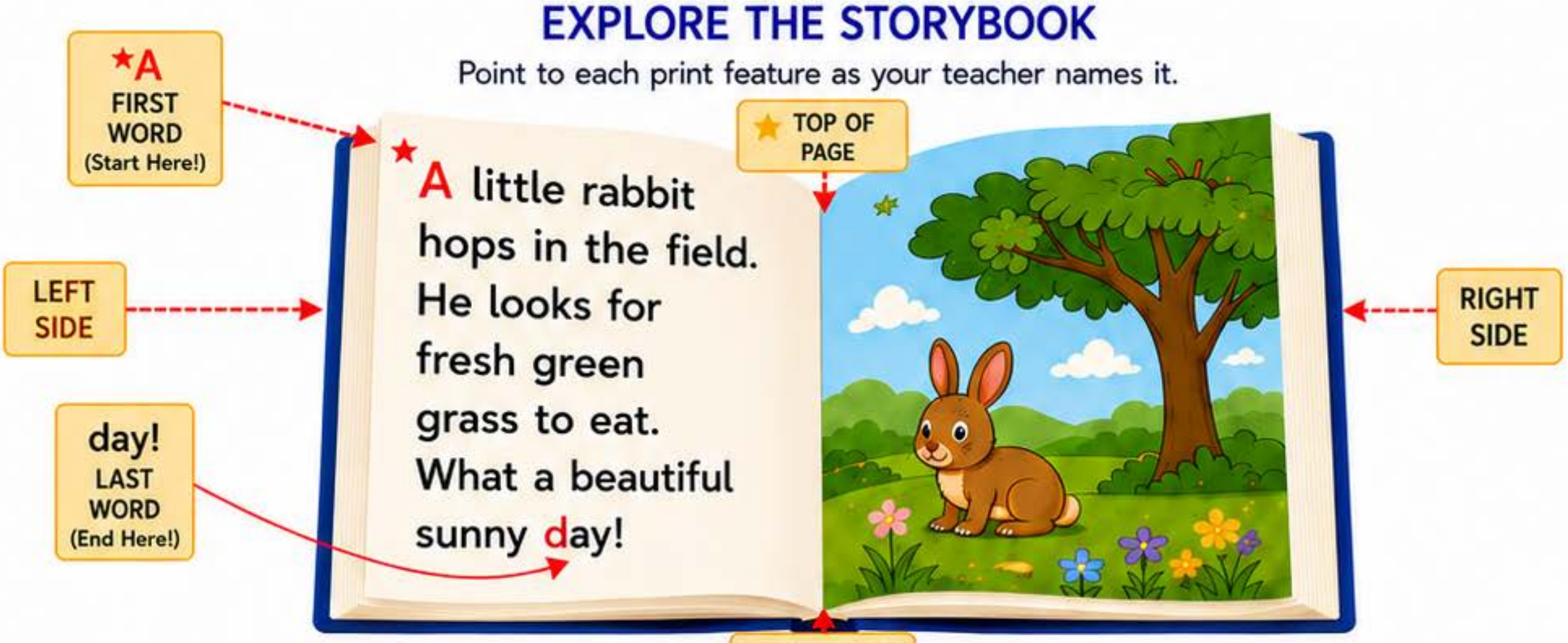
TEACHING TIP

Ask questions as you go!

- ✔ What is this?
- ✔ What do we use it for?
- ✔ Where else have you seen this word?

EXPLORE THE STORYBOOK

Point to each print feature as your teacher names it.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Where do we start reading?
- Which direction do we read?
- What do words tell us?



EXTENSION IDEAS

- Practice with different book pages.
- Let students draw their own page and label the parts.
- Create a "Start Here" anchor chart.

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READING LEFT TO RIGHT

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Students use a finger to follow print.

ACTIVITY AT A GLANCE

- **Focus:** Print Awareness
- **Grades:** Pre–K
- **Time:** 15–20 minutes
- **Group Size:** Whole group or small group

LEARNING GOAL

Students will follow print from left to right as they read.

MATERIALS

- Sentence strips
- Pointer or reading wand
- Chart paper
- Sticky notes

WHAT TO DO

1. Display sentence strips with pictures.
2. Model using your finger to follow the words from left to right.
3. Invite students to follow along with you.
4. Have students take turns following the sentences.
5. Celebrate their efforts!

TEACHING TIP

Model slow and steady finger tracking.

Encourage students to keep their finger under the words.

FOLLOW THE WORDS FROM LEFT TO RIGHT.

Use your finger to follow the words as you read.



I see a red apple.



The dog is happy.



What a sunny day!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Which way do we read?
- What do the arrows show us?
- What is the first word in each sentence?



EXTENSION IDEAS

- Circle the first word in each sentence.
- Highlight the last word.
- Create your own sentence and read it with a partner.

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READING LEFT TO RIGHT

Students use a finger to follow print.

Educational Solutions for Children, Inc.

ACTIVITY AT A GLANCE

- **Focus:** Print Awareness
- **Grades:** Pre–K
- **Time:** 15–20 minutes
- **Group Size:** Whole group or small group

LEARNING GOAL

Students will follow print from left to right as they read.

MATERIALS

- Sentence strips
- Pointer or reading wand
- Chart paper
- Sticky notes

WHAT TO DO

1. Display sentence strips with pictures.
2. Model using your finger to follow the words from left to right.
3. Invite students to follow along with you.
4. Have students take turns following the sentences.
5. Celebrate their efforts!

TEACHING TIP

Model slow and steady finger tracking.

Encourage students to keep their finger under the words.

FOLLOW THE WORDS FROM LEFT TO RIGHT.

Use your finger to follow the words as you read each sentence.

1. I see a big cat. 
2. The sun is bright. 
3. We like to play. 
4. Look at the bird. 
5. My mom is kind. 
6. The fish swims fast. 
7. I have a red ball. 
8. We went to the park. 
9. She has a blue hat. 
10. That is my book. 

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Which way do we read?
- What do the arrows show us?
- What is the first word in each sentence?



EXTENSION IDEAS

- Circle the first word in each sentence.
- Highlight the last word.
- Create your own sentence and read it with a partner.

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WORD OR PICTURE?

Students decide: Is this a WORD? or Is this a PICTURE?

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ACTIVITY AT A GLANCE

- **Focus:** Print Awareness
- **Grades:** Pre–K
- **Time:** 15–20 minutes
- **Group Size:** Whole group or small group

LEARNING GOAL

Students will identify words (print) and pictures (images).

MATERIALS

- Word and picture cards
- Chart paper
- Scissors
- Sticky notes

WHAT TO DO

1. Show a card to the students.
2. Ask: Is this a WORD or a PICTURE?
3. Invite students to respond.
4. Sort the cards by WORDS and PICTURES.
5. Celebrate their efforts!

TEACHING TIP

Model your thinking aloud.

Encourage students to explain how they know it is a word or a picture.

EXAMPLES

PICTURE



WORD

dog

WORD

apple

PICTURE



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is a word?
- What is a picture?
- How can we tell the difference?
- Where do we see words?



EXTENSION IDEAS

- Find words in the classroom.
- Take pictures of objects and write the words next to them.
- Make your own word and picture cards.

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Cut & Laminate for More Practice!

WORD OR PICTURE?

More Practice!

TEACHER REMINDER

Show a card.

Ask: Is this a WORD or a PICTURE?

Students respond and explain their thinking.

	car		Sun	
tree		Ball		cat
	apple		Airplane	
dog		Bus		house
	book		Flower	
umbrella		Cup		bicycle

SENTENCE DETECTIVE

Find the important parts in each sentence!

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ACTIVITY AT A GLANCE

- **Focus:** Print Awareness
- **Grades:** Pre–K
- **Time:** 15–20 minutes
- **Group Size:** Whole group or small group

LEARNING GOAL

Students will identify the first word, last word, capital letter, and punctuation in each sentence.

MATERIALS

- Sentence strips (provided)
- Magnifying glasses or pointers
- Chart paper
- Sticky notes or highlighters (optional)

WHAT TO DO

1. Display the sentence strips.
2. Explain that detectives look closely to find clues.
3. Read sentence to students or invite students to read each sentence.
4. Ask students to find the first word, last word, capital letter, and punctuation.
5. Discuss their findings together!

TEACHING TIP

Model how to look carefully at each sentence.

Encourage students to use their finger or magnifying glass as they search!

1. The cat is sleeping.
2. We are going to the park!
3. Do you like ice cream?
4. My sister has a blue hat.
5. Look out! The bus is coming!
6. I love reading books.
7. Where did you go today?
8. Let's make a yummy snack!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is the first word?
- What is the last word?
- Do all sentences start with a capital letter?
- What is the punctuation at the end?



EXTENSION IDEAS

- Write your own sentence.
- Draw a picture to match your sentence.
- Swap sentences with a partner and find the clues!

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SENTENCE DETECTIVE

Find the important parts in each sentence!

Educational Solutions for Students, Inc.

ACTIVITY AT A GLANCE

- **Focus:** Print Awareness
- **Grades:** Pre-K
- **Time:** 15–20 minutes
- **Group Size:** Whole group or small group

LEARNING GOAL

Students will identify the first word, last word, capital letter, and punctuation in each sentence.

MATERIALS

- Sentence strips (provided)
- Magnifying glasses or pointers
- Chart paper
- Sticky notes or highlighters (optional)

WHAT TO DO

1. Display the sentence strips.
2. Explain that detectives look closely to find clues.
3. Read sentence to students or invite students to read each sentence.
4. Ask students to find the first word, last word, capital letter, and punctuation.
5. Discuss their findings together!

TEACHING TIP

Model how to look carefully at each sentence.

Encourage students to use their finger or magnifying glass as they search!

1. The dog is playing in the yard.
2. Where did you go today?
3. I love my family!
4. Look at the big, bright moon.
5. We can read books together.
6. Can you help me find my hat?
7. Let's make a yummy snack.
8. Wow! That was so much fun!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is the first word?
- What is the last word?
- Do all sentences start with a capital letter?
- What is the punctuation at the end?



EXTENSION IDEAS

- Write your own sentence.
- Draw a picture to match your sentence.
- Swap sentences with a partner and find the clues!

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ACTIVITY 9

BOOK PARTS

Let's explore the important parts of a book!

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ACTIVITY AT A GLANCE

- **Focus:** Print Awareness
- **Grades:** Pre-K
- **Time:** 15–20 minutes
- **Group Size:** Whole group or small group

LEARNING GOAL

Students will identify the parts of a book: front cover, back cover, title, author, illustrator, and spine.

MATERIALS

- Picture book
- Book Parts Label Cards (provided)
- Chart paper or large book image (optional)
- Glue or tape (optional)

WHAT TO DO

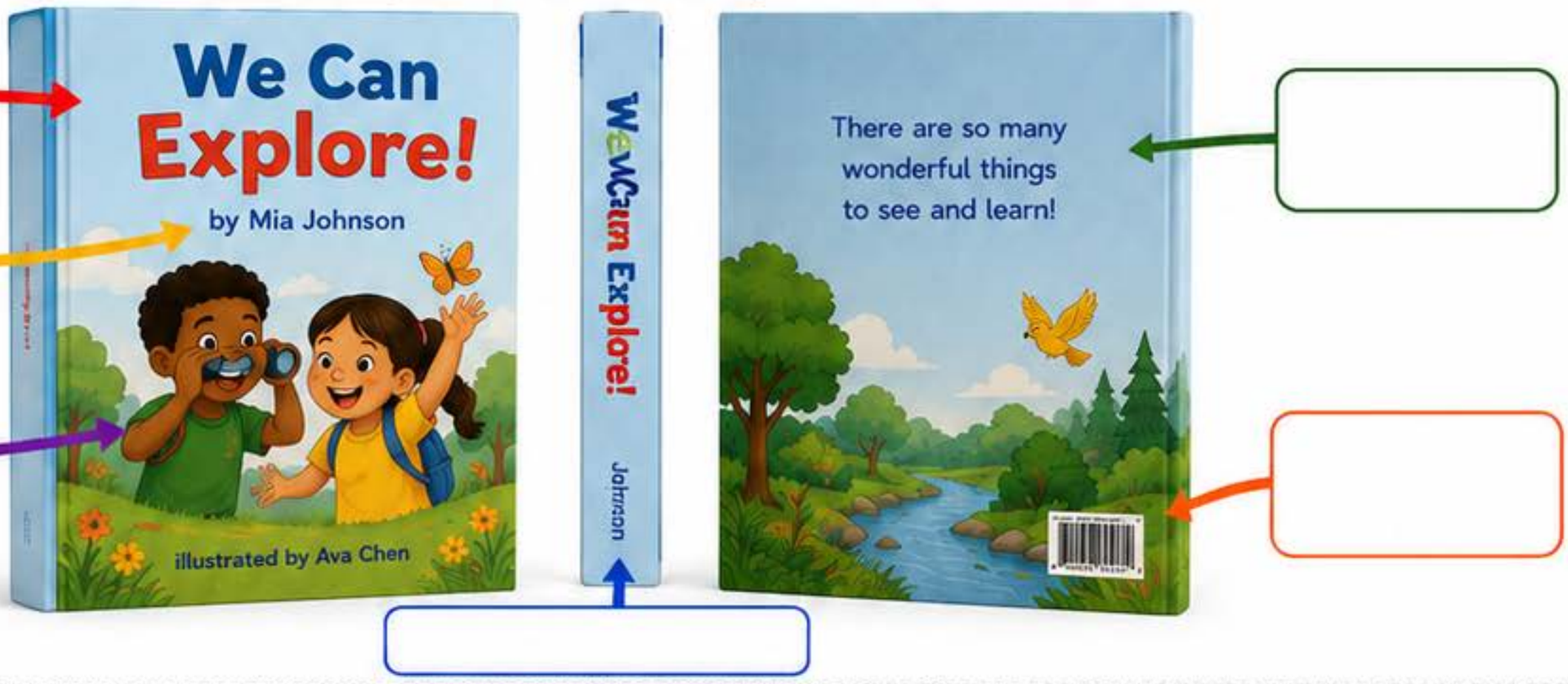
1. Show students a real book.
2. Explain that books have important parts that help us read and understand.
3. Introduce and model each part of the book.
4. Invite students to match the label cards to the correct part of the book.
5. Review each part together and discuss its purpose.

TEACHING TIP

Use a large book so everyone can see.

Point to each part as you name it and use simple, clear language.

Look at the book below. Cut out the labels and glue or place them in the correct spot to show the parts of the book.



Front Cover | Back Cover | Title | Author | Illustrator | Spine

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Which part tells the name of the book?
- Who writes the book?
- Who draws the pictures?
- What is the spine for?
- Why are all these parts important?



EXTENSION IDEAS

- Create your own book and label the parts.
- Go on a "book hunt" and find the parts in other books.
- Draw your favorite book and label each part.

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OBSERVATION CHECKLIST



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Use this checklist to observe and celebrate children as they explore books and identify important parts and print concepts.

Child's Name: _____ Date: _____ Observer: _____

SKILLS TO OBSERVE	CONSISTENTLY (Most of the time)	SOMETIMES (With support)	NOT YET (Needs more practice)	NOTES
1 Holds book correctly	○	○	○	_____
2 Turns pages front to back	○	○	○	_____
3 Tracks left to right	○	○	○	_____
4 Identifies title	○	○	○	_____
5 Identifies author	○	○	○	_____
6 Recognizes first word	○	○	○	_____
7 Recognizes last word	○	○	○	_____
8 Understands spaces	○	○	○	_____
9 Matches spoken words to print	○	○	○	_____
10 Recognizes letters	○	○	○	_____
11 Recognizes words	○	○	○	_____
12 Recognizes punctuation	○	○	○	_____

STRENGTHS I OBSERVED:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

NEXT STEPS:

- ★ Continue to build confidence.
- ★ Provide extra practice and support.
- ★ Encourage and celebrate every step!

WHAT CAN HELP:

- ✓ Daily songs and rhymes
- ✓ Fun sound games
- ✓ Books and storytelling
- ✓ Hands-on activities
- ✓ Family practice at home

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FAMILY CONNECTION

READ TOGETHER. LEARN TOGETHER. GROW TOGETHER.

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TALK

- Ask questions.
- Listen.
- Tell stories.

READ

- Read 10 minutes every day.
- Point to words.
- Talk about pictures.

SING

- Sing nursery rhymes.
- Clap and move to the beat.
- Repeat words and sounds.

PLAY

- Count together.
- Build together.
- Pretend and imagine.

FAMILY CHALLENGE

Can your family complete all 5 this week?

- ☐ Identify the parts of a book (front cover, back cover, title, author, spine, illustrator).
- ☐ Find words and letters on signs, labels, or packages.
- ☐ Discuss the difference between a picture and a word.
- ☐ Follow the words in a book from left to right.
- ☐ Ask questions about the story and talk about what happens.

Every little moment helps your child grow!

TRY THIS TONIGHT!

- Read a book together.
- Point out the front cover, back cover, and title.
- Find the author's name and talk about who wrote the book.
- Trace your finger under the words as you read left to right.
- Talk about the spaces between words and why they are important.

"I'm proud of you for learning today!"

YOU ARE YOUR CHILD'S FIRST TEACHER.

Thank you for being a part of your child's learning journey!

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