



INDIANA EARLY LEARNING FAMILY GUIDES

ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

This guide provides an overview of the importance of English/language arts when promoting foundational learning as well as how to support children's development at home.

- Indiana's Early Learning Standards include concepts for children's development and address skills and abilities that children are to achieve from birth to age five. These standards are also aligned to Indiana's K-12 Academic Standards.
- While children do have the predisposition to learn languages, this does not happen without external intervention and support. Adults play a vital and irreplaceable role in a young child's speech development and literacy knowledge. Frequent interactions with others, as well as providing opportunities to use (and witness the use of) written language in daily life, enable children to become competent readers, writers, speakers, and listeners.

Primary Skills Include:

Communication Process

- Speaking and listening
- Engaging in conversations

Early Reading

- Alphabet awareness
- Sounds & words
- Awareness & understanding of concepts of print
- Comprehension

Early Writing

- Mechanics of writing
- Communicating a story

Additional Resources:

- [Articles for Families on Literacy: National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\)](#)
- [Support Writing at Home: NAEYC](#)
- [Supporting Your Child's Reading at Home by Regional Educational Lab Program \(REL\) Southeast](#)

HOW FAMILIES CAN HELP AT HOME

Communication Process

- Talk about your day and share your thoughts. Then, ask your child about their day!
- Play listening games with children (e.g., I Spy, Simon Says).
- Use descriptive language (e.g., instead of “big” use the word “gigantic”).
- Model communication skills while playing (e.g., Talk/ask questions about what their trucks are doing).
- Repeat incorrect phrases correctly (e.g., Child says, “We **goed** outside today!” and you respond, “Yes! We **went** outside today.”).
- Have conversations often with your child and use rich vocabulary while making eye contact and listening actively.
- Ask your child questions that require more than a yes/no response (e.g., “What was your favorite thing to do at the park?”).
- Consider using informal times to talk to your child (e.g., Meal times, bath time, etc.).

Early Reading

- Read a variety of books with your child.
- Use your child’s stuffed animals or sock puppets to demonstrate conversations and to retell stories.
- Make letters out of available objects (e.g., playdough, string, or sticks).
- Point out print to your children during their regular routines (e.g., “Can you find a sign with the first letter in your name?”) or go on a letter hunt with your child.
- Play a rhyming game (e.g., “What words sound alike . . . cat, bat or cat, pop?”).
- Clap out syllables of your child’s name (e.g., Han-nah = clap, clap), as well as other familiar names and objects.
- Have conversations with your child about what you are reading and why (e.g., “I am reading the directions on this box to learn how to make this recipe.”).

Early Writing

- Create books using paper stapled together with your child. Write stories about your family, toys, etc.
- Provide opportunities for your child to work with various materials to scribble, draw and create (e.g., playdough, sand, dirt, or rice).
- Incorporate writing in play (e.g., Write out food order when playing restaurant or make a grocery list when playing grocery store).
- After reading a story, ask your child to tell or draw their favorite part of the story.



INDIANA EARLY LEARNING FAMILY GUIDES

MATHEMATICS

The Indiana Department of Education is dedicated to informing and educating families about your child's education since you are your child's first and most important teacher. This guide provides an overview of the importance of mathematics and suggestions of what you can do at home to support your child's development.

- Indiana's Early Learning Standards include concepts for children's development and address skills and abilities that children are to achieve from birth to age five. These standards are also aligned to Indiana's K-12 Academic Standards.
- Mathematics helps children survey their environment and start to form a sense of order. This beginning sense of order is of primary importance in constructing a solid foundation for future success. Children's mathematical development is nourished by everyday play activities and exploration of the world around them. Adults can support the development of mathematics by incorporating math into everyday activities.

Primary Skills Include:

- **Numeracy:** Counting, understanding written numerals, and number relationships
- **Computation and Algebraic Thinking:** Mathematical structure, patterning
- **Analysis and Classifying:** Classification and data collection
- **Geometry:** Special relationships, learning to identify, describe, analyze, compare, and create shapes
- **Measurement:** Concepts of time and general measurement

Additional Resources:

- [Learning Math Concepts from Home: National Association for the Education of Young Children](#)

HOW FAMILIES CAN HELP AT HOME

Numeracy

- Play games and sing songs that include counting, estimating, understanding patterns, and numbers (e.g., Sing songs that include clapping various patterns).
- Have children estimate how many are in a particular group of objects then count them together
- Count steps to a certain location.
- Use cooking, baking, and meal time as opportunities to talk about numbers (e.g., Have your child set the table, counting while placing the items or do it alongside them.).
- Provide opportunities for your child to explore writing numerals by tracing, painting, or creating numerals with different objects.

Computation & Algebraic Thinking

- Help your child think about objects as a permanent set (e.g., Put a specific number of objects in a row, and then change the arrangement. Then ask, "Are there more or less?").
- Notice, point out, and create patterns in your home and in everyday activities (e.g., Create a pattern with crackers and pretzels at snack time. Then, your child can recreate the pattern or create their own.).

Geometry

- Create an obstacle course using chairs, tables, pillows and anything else you have. Use words such as "over," "under," "through", and "around" to explain the route.
- Point out similarities and differences between two- and three-dimensional shapes (e.g., Circles and balls, squares and blocks).
- Use bath time as time to explore volume by filling and emptying cups with water.

Data Analysis

- Sort laundry together in different ways (e.g., Before washing, sort by dark and light colored clothing. After washing sort by who it belongs to, as well as matching socks).

Measurement

- Use words to indicate time like yesterday, today, and tomorrow when talking with your child.
- Show your child and involve them in measuring things on a daily basis (e.g., Cook with your child and talk specifically about measurements according to recipes).
- Measure things around your home with different units of measurement (e.g., Stack cups to see how tall something is).



INDIANA EARLY LEARNING FAMILY GUIDES

Science

The Indiana Department of Education is dedicated to informing and educating families about your child's education since you are your child's first and most important teacher. This guide provides an overview of the importance of science and suggestions of what you can do at home to support your child's development.

- Indiana's Early Learning Standards include concepts for children's development and address skills and abilities that children are to achieve from birth to age five. These standards are also aligned to Indiana's K-12 Academic Standards.
- Infants and young children are natural scientists. Guidance and structure expands their curiosity and activities into something more scientific – to practice science. The goal is to help children understand the natural world through a process known as scientific inquiry. As children investigate, they acquire knowledge that explains the world around them, for instance, why snow or ice melts. Scientific knowledge helps us predict what might happen, helps us solve problems, and creates expanded technologies to serve our needs.

Primary Skills Include:

- **Physical Science:** Counting, understanding written numerals, and number relationships
- **Life Science:** Awareness of life, awareness of preservation, protection, and care of living creatures and plants
- **Earth and Space Science:** Awareness of seasons and weather
- **Scientific Curiosity/Method:** Exploring and investigating the world around us
- **Engineering:** Solving problems using a creative design process
- **Computational Thinking:** Breaking down of larger tasks into smaller steps, and determining the order of a set of steps needed to complete a task, recognizing patterns or repetitions in that process, as well as recognizing if a step is out of order or incorrect

Additional Resources:

- [Articles for Families on Science: National Association for the Education of Young Children](#)

HOW FAMILIES CAN HELP AT HOME

Physical Science

- Ask questions about objects (e.g., Are the clothes wet or dry? We put them in the dryer so they will be dry.).
- Narrate daily experiences and tasks using consistent language (e.g., Using bath time as an opportunity to dump and fill).
- Provide time for children to investigate, explore, and ask questions (e.g., What do you think will happen if...).
- Experiment with cause and effect. Make a prediction then test it (e.g., Will it sink or float in water?).
- Melt ice and discuss what happens!
- Play a guessing game with unique items in your house (e.g., How do we use this? What else could it be used for?).

Earth & Space Science

- Notice the weather, then talk about how it feels and sounds. Talk about the differences from day to day and season to season.

Life Science

- Observe wildlife in your neighborhood or around your home.
- Plant and care for flowers or vegetables in gardens or windowsill containers if possible.

Engineering

- Take opportunities to assemble things together (e.g., toys, furniture).
- Build structures using household items (e.g., cardboard, sticks, packing materials, blankets, or sheets).
- Create and test different types of ramps with different household objects.

Scientific Inquiry/Method

- Celebrate effort in creative thinking and trying new things - even if they don't work as planned!
- Ask questions, explore options, and learn together. You don't always need to know the "right" answer, but work with your child to find more information (e.g., research the correct answer on the internet together).

Computational Thinking

- Follow a routine for daily tasks (e.g., getting ready for bed and step one is change into pajamas. Step two brush teeth.) As children get older, ask them what comes next in that routine.
- Talk about the steps of a task and whether you can do those steps in a different order.



INDIANA EARLY LEARNING FAMILY GUIDES

Social Studies

The Indiana Department of Education is dedicated to informing and educating families about your child's education since you are your child's first and most important teacher. This guide provides an overview of the importance of social studies and suggestions of what you can do at home to support your child's development.

- Indiana's Early Learning Standards include concepts for children's development and address skills and abilities that children are to achieve from birth to age five. These standards are also aligned to Indiana's K-12 Academic Standards.
- For young children, social studies takes into account self-development, appropriate practices, citizenship, democratic principles, and key understandings of the social sciences: history, geography, government, and economics. These concepts are built around the child's personal experiences and understanding of the relationship between self and others.

Primary Skills Include:

- **Development of Self:** Understanding the concept of self within the context of their family and community
- **History & Events:** Chronological thinking, historical knowledge, and foundations of government
- **Geography:** Awareness of the world in spatial terms, places and regions, and environment and society
- **Economics:** Understanding the way people make and spend money
- **Citizenship:** Cooperating and understanding the purpose of rules and taking responsibility as a member of a community

Additional Resources:

- [Articles for Families on Social Studies: National Association for the Education of Young Children](#)

HOW FAMILIES CAN HELP AT HOME

Development of Self

- Talk about events and holidays special to you and your family.

History & Events

- Talk about your day (e.g., First, we woke up, and next, we ate breakfast.).
- Follow a consistent yet flexible routine at home (e.g., First, we will eat dinner and then take a bath.).
- Prepare children for the next activity (e.g., In five minutes, we will have dinner.).
- Read books together and discuss what happened first in the story, what happened next, etc.
- Share photos of you or your child when you/they were younger and discuss how you've changed.
- Discuss past, present, and future events (e.g., Remember last week when we dug out your winter coat? That's because it was really cold outside!).
- Use daily opportunities to point out community helpers (e.g., When a fire truck passes, you can say, "Oh! The firefighters must be going to help someone!").
- Point out and discuss community and cultural symbols (e.g., logos, street signs).
- Have a family "vote" (e.g., Today, we can have tacos or spaghetti for dinner. Who would like tacos?).

Geography

- Use simple location terms (e.g., here/there, over/under, left/right).
- Look at maps and encourage your child to create simple maps of places they know.
- Talk about landmarks and geographical characteristics within the community (e.g., statues, buildings, parks, rivers).
- Talk to your child about your neighborhood and the people and animals they see (e.g., When you seeing a neighbor with their dog, discuss safe interactions with animals.).

Economics

- Discuss what work, chores, or tasks happen at home and who is responsible for them.
- Talk about how much items might cost at the store (e.g., bananas costs 19 cents).

Citizenship

- Work as a family to create or talk about family rules (e.g., We take our own dishes to the sink after dinner. It makes clean-up easier and faster!).



INDIANA EARLY LEARNING FAMILY GUIDES

Student Wellbeing

The Indiana Department of Education is dedicated to informing and educating families about your child's education since you are your child's first and most important teacher. This guide provides an overview of the importance of student wellbeing and suggestions of what you can do at home to support your child's development.

- Indiana's Early Learning Standards include concepts for children's development and address skills and abilities that children are to achieve from birth to age five. These standards are also aligned to Indiana's K-12 Academic Standards and Employability Skills Standards.
- Developing wellbeing in young children is crucial. Success in the skills of self-regulation and positive social behaviors, along with nurturing and satisfying relationships, leads children to a positive sense of self.

Primary Skills Include:

- **Sense of Self:** Self-awareness and confidence and identification and expression of emotions
- **Self-Regulation (Control):** Impulse control and emotional regulation
- **Conflict Resolution:** Negotiating to manage conflicts with peers
- **Building & Maintaining Relationships:** Social development/engagement with others

Additional Resources:

- [Indiana's Employability Skills Standards](#) - These skills allow students to be prepared for the changing needs of today's workforce.
- [ECLKC: Promoting Children's Self-Regulation with Tucker the Turtle](#) - Tucker the Turtle is a fun interactive resource created to help children and families learn strategies to work through big feelings like anger.
- [ECLKC: Discover Feelings](#) - Resource to promote conversation around a child's feelings.

HOW FAMILIES CAN HELP AT HOME

Sense of Self

- Make materials available to your child, and let them lead or direct activities to support their independence and creativity.
- Have conversations with your child about emotions and appropriate ways of expressing their emotions (e.g., What does it look like to be angry? When I'm angry, I try to take deep breaths until I feel calm.).

Self Regulation

- Create consistent (but flexible) routines for your child, particularly in times of big life changes and uncertainty.
- Prepare children for the next activity (e.g., In five minutes, we will have dinner.).
- Identify emotions with words, and help your child to associate words with their emotions consistently (e.g., I see you are crying. Are you are sad?).
- Provide a calming space if possible and model using self-soothing tools and techniques (e.g., fidgets, breathing exercises).

Conflict Resolution

- Read books and stories with your child that discuss conflict resolution.
- Point out and praise examples of conflict resolution as conflicts arise.

Building & Maintaining Relationships

- Talk to your child about what it means to be a friend and maintaining their friendships (e.g., When your child is missing one of their friends, consider ways to reach out to them such as phone, mail, or virtually!).
- Model positive, healthy relationships with other adults and children (e.g., making eye contact and using active listening skills when talking to others).



INDIANA EARLY LEARNING FAMILY GUIDES

Approaches to Play & Learning

The Indiana Department of Education is dedicated to informing and educating families about your child's education since you are your child's first and most important teacher. This guide provides an overview of the importance of approaches to play and learning and suggestions of what you can do at home to support your child's development.

- Indiana's Early Learning Standards include concepts for children's development and address skills and abilities that children are to achieve from birth to age five. These standards are also aligned to Indiana's K-12 Academic Standards and Employability Skills Standards.
- Approaches to play and learning addresses the development of executive functions, such as initiative, persistence, and flexible thinking. Adults foster the development of executive functional skills through by opportunities for engaging play experiences. In-depth play experiences develop and strengthen the child's ability to make choices, ultimately leading to independent decision making in other areas of life.

Primary Skills Include:

- **Initiative & Exploration:** Initiative and self-direction and interest and curiosity as a learner
- **Flexible Thinking Skills During Play:** Seeing situations in more than one way and finding new solutions
- **Attentiveness & Persistence:** Paying attention, focusing, and continuing even when frustrated
- **Social Interactions During Play:** Engaging in imaginative and cooperative play with one another

Additional Resources:

- [Articles for Families on Play: National Association for the Education of Young Children](#)

HOW FAMILIES CAN HELP AT HOME

Initiative & Exploration

- Be flexible with plans, provide time for children to explore their interests, and provide choices when possible.
- Look for new learning opportunities and experiences (e.g., pick books on particular topics to learn more).
- Provide the opportunity for your child to do tasks themselves (e.g., putting on clothes, dusting furniture), and provide praise even if it isn't done fully correctly.
- Observe, ask questions, and support your child in their exploration at home (e.g., "I see that you're interested in dinosaurs. Do you want to learn more about that?" If the child responds yes, consider seeking out more information using available resources.).
- Be curious with your child (e.g., if a child asks a question, give them a prompting response).

Flexible Thinking Skills During Play

- Support your child in using materials in different ways (e.g., using a television remote as a car).
- Point out flexible language (e.g., bat is an animal and a tool used in a baseball game).
- Model flexible thinking in everyday opportunities (e.g., using substitute ingredients in a recipe while cooking or making new rules for a game).

Attentiveness & Persistence

- Play interactive games with your child (e.g., Find games where children can develop coping skills for experiencing wins and losses.).
- Read to your child (e.g., continue a book that you weren't able to finish in one sitting).
- Create appropriate and safe responsibilities for your child (e.g., taking dishes to the sink, cleaning up toys).
- Give specific praises on a child's process and effort even if the project doesn't turn out as expected or fails (e.g., "You put a lot of time and effort into building that!").

Social Interactions During Play

- Model positive social interactions with other adults (e.g., making eye contact and using active listening skills with other adults).



INDIANA EARLY LEARNING FAMILY GUIDES

Creative Arts

The Indiana Department of Education is dedicated to informing and educating families about your child's education since you are your child's first and most important teacher. This guide provides an overview of the importance of creative arts and suggestions of what you can do at home to support your child's development.

- Indiana's Early Learning Standards include concepts for children's development and address skills and abilities that children are to achieve from birth to age five. These standards are also aligned to Indiana's K-12 Academic Standards.
- It is recommended that adults provide art experiences that are open-ended, process-oriented, and allow children to be creative and individualized in their artwork. Adults sometimes wonder if coloring books, patterns, and pre-cut models are appropriate art experiences for young children. These art experiences are often frustrating to toddler and preschool-aged children who do not have the manual dexterity or hand-eye coordination to stay within the lines, to cut along the lines, or to reproduce a picture made by an adult. Children like to draw or make things as they see them. Consider providing opportunities for children to be creative and individualized in their artwork.

Primary Skills Include:

- **Music:** Creative expression through voice, instruments, sounds, and objects
- **Dance:** Creative expression through movement
- **Visual Arts:** Visual art process and production and art appreciation
- **Dramatic Play:** Creative expression and interaction through pretend play

Additional Resources:

- [Articles for Families on Creative Arts: National Association for the Education of Young Children](#)

HOW FAMILIES CAN HELP AT HOME

Music

- Create musical instruments using different materials (e.g., pots and pans as drums).
- Sing familiar songs and chants.
- Play music that encourages movement and expression (e.g., music from various cultures, freeze dance) and dance with your children (e.g., sway/twirl with younger children).

Dance

- Provide time, music, and materials for your child to move both indoors and outdoors when possible.
- Seek opportunities to promote body and spatial awareness (e.g., use terms like up/down, low/high).

Visual Art

- Provide safe art materials (for indoor and outdoor use) that focus on the art process rather than an expected product.
- Consider using household materials to create art (e.g., recyclable materials, kitchen utensils, shaving cream). This could include building structures and create collages with various two-dimensional (magazines, ads) and three-dimensional (bottle caps, empty toilet paper rolls) materials.
- Produce temporary art with your child (e.g., use a stick to draw in the mud or sand, paint with water on outdoor surfaces).
- Encourage your child to use art (music, dance, visual art, and pretend play) to process emotions and life experiences (e.g., drawing to process the arrival of a new sibling, moving to a new house, family separation).
- Ask your child questions about what they have created.
- Point out colors, shapes, and symmetry indoors and outdoors (e.g., acknowledging leaves turning colors during the fall).

Dramatic Play

- Talk to your child about what it means to be a friend and maintaining their friendships (e.g., When your child is missing one of their friends, consider ways to reach out to them such as phone, mail, or virtually!).
- Model positive, healthy relationships with other adults and children (e.g., making eye contact and using active listening skills when talking to others).



INDIANA EARLY LEARNING FAMILY GUIDES

Physical Health & Growth

The Indiana Department of Education is dedicated to informing and educating families about your child's education since you are your child's first and most important teacher. This guide provides an overview of the importance of physical health and growth and suggestions of what you can do at home to support your child's development.

- Indiana's Early Learning Standards include concepts for children's development and address skills and abilities that children are to achieve from birth to age five. These standards are also aligned to Indiana's K-12 Academic Standards.
- Early childhood is the time children begin development of an active, healthy lifestyle. Children learn through active movement. The development of skills, knowledge, and attitudes that leads to such a lifestyle should begin early to ensure a lifetime of positive health. Young children need space, common materials, and opportunities for practice.

Primary Skills Include:

- **Health & Safety:** Health and safety practices and nutrition awareness
- **Senses:** How the five senses support processing information and body awareness
- **Motor Skills:** Fine and gross motor skills and oral motor skills
- **Personal Care:** Increased independence with personal care routines

Additional Resources:

- [Articles for Families on Nutrition, Health, and Safety: National Association for the Education of Young Children](#)

HOW FAMILIES CAN HELP AT HOME

Health & Safety

- Promote hygiene at home (e.g., “Let’s brush our teeth before bed!” or “Let’s wash our hands before dinner!”).
- Prompt and praise handwashing and other hygiene activities (e.g., coughing into their elbow).
- Promote physical health and wellness by incorporating physical activity into daily routines and schedules (e.g., going for a family walk after dinner).
- Encourage your child to identify symptoms of illness and wellness (e.g., “Show me what is hurting.”).
- Create a family emergency exit plan for your home and practice those plans (e.g., discussing and practicing evacuation routes and a meeting place for your family in the event of an emergency).
- Create a family safety procedure for severe weather and practice those plans.

Senses

- Think about ways to support sensory development at home (e.g., use bath time as an opportunity for exploring water and bubbles or cooking together as a time to explore the smells and textures of different foods.).
- Take time to discover outdoor areas in all seasons (e.g., go for a family walk and discuss how flowers smell and feel).
- Think about everyday opportunities for your children to use their senses (e.g., taste testing foods and asking “What does this feel/smell/taste like? What does it sound like when you bite into it?”).

Motor Skills

- Find ways to be active during everyday events (e.g., encouraging your child to stand or hop on one foot while waiting to cross the street).
- Find ways to use physical activity as quality time together (e.g., exploring nature, cleaning the house).
- Create active environments or go outside (e.g., move furniture to promote play or create an obstacle course inside).
- Think of indoor and outdoor activities that encourage specific physical movements (e.g., Hokey Pokey, tossing games, dancing, marching).

Personal Care Skills

- When time permits, allow your child opportunities to try to independently attend to personal care routines (e.g., dressing and feeding themselves, brushing their teeth, washing their face).



Brighter Futures Indiana is a resource to support families in understanding and enhancing a child's learning at home and while in care. This can be shared with families for more strategies on how you can support your child's development at home and is also available on **Facebook**.



The **Center for Disease Control's (CDC's) "Learn the Signs. Act Early." (LTSAE)** has free research-based, family-friendly resources on child development and developmental milestones. This includes a Milestone Tracker App that provides activities and support for families! Learn more at **Act Early Indiana**.



The **WFYI Bright By Text Service** is for parents and adults who care for young children, newborns through age five. When you register for the service using your child's birthdate, direct text messages will provide developmentally appropriate information, activities, and more from trusted national and local resources.



Vroom has activities to support children's brain development from infancy through age five.



Your local library can be a great resource for early education programs, and librarians can help provide and make book recommendations. Find your local library using the **Indiana State Library Public Library Directory**. If your local library is closed or too far away, check to see if they provide access to online resources (e.g., Libby, Hoopla).



Storyline Online - The Screen Actors Guild – American Federation of Television and Radio Artists(SAG-AFTRA) Foundation has an online library of Read Alouds by various actors and actresses.



Search online for videos to do yoga or take online field trips to places like museums and zoos.