

# Language and Literacy

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**Language development** refers to children’s emerging abilities to understand and use language. Language skills are receptive—the ability to listen to and understand language—and expressive—the ability to use language to communicate ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Children's language ability affects learning and development in all areas, especially emerging literacy.

**Emerging literacy** refers to the knowledge and skills that lay the foundation for reading and writing. For infants and toddlers, emerging literacy is embedded in the Language and Communication domain. This reflects how closely connected these emerging literacy skills are to very young children’s beginning receptive, expressive, and vocabulary skills. For preschoolers, Language and Literacy are distinct domains. They reflect children’s growing skills as they begin to grasp differences between spoken and written language, as well as how they are connected.

Language and literacy skills can develop in any language, and for the most part, they develop first in the child's home language. Supporting development of the home language helps prepare young children for learning English. Head Start and Early Head Start programs must promote language and literacy goals for all children that are age, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and responsive. However, children who are dual language learners (DLLs) need intentional support to develop their home language as well as acquire English. For example, this may include creating environments that include their home language and culture; planning and organizing thematic instruction; and supporting them through transitions.

To learn more about language and literacy development for DLLs, view the [Dual Language Learners video](#). Review the following resources under the [Planned Language Approach](#):

## Language and Literacy Domain

To read more about the Language and Literacy domain, visit the [interactive Head Start Early Learning Outcome Framework \(ELOF\)](#). There are two domains under the Language and Literacy domain: Language and Communication, and Literacy.

### Language and Communication Sub-Domains

The Language and Communication domain includes the following sub-domains for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers:

- [Attending and Understanding](#)
- [Communicating and Speaking](#)
- [Vocabulary](#)

The Language and Communication domain also includes the following sub-domain for infants and

toddlers:

- [Emergent Literacy](#)

## Literacy Sub-Domains

The Literacy domain includes the following sub-domains for preschoolers:

- [Phonological Awareness](#)
- [Print and Alphabet Knowledge](#)
- [Comprehension and Text Structure](#)
- [Writing](#)

## Effective Teaching Practices

The effective teaching practices that follow are grouped in three categories: Interactions, Environment, and Individualization. Examples of ways to support goals for children are provided by sub-domain. It is likely, however, that these practices will also support goals for children in additional domains and sub-domains. This is the nature of teaching and learning in the early years.

Topic: [School Readiness](#)

Keywords: [Literacy](#)

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