



Supporting informal learning at home

*A guide for parents and caregivers
of young children*



Written by: Brigid Comrie

**Wordworks**
Changing lives through literacy

Contents

- 1 Language
- 2 Talking and listening
- 3 Telling your own stories
- 4 Stories and books
- 5 Drawing and beginning to write
- 6 Making your own little books
- 7 Print around you
- 8 Letters and words
- 9 Rhymes and songs
- 10 Listening games
- 11 Good hearing
- 12 Maths is fun - the world is our classroom
- 13 Loving and trusting relationships

1 Language

Let's talk together! We know that language and communication skills are the foundation for all later learning. Most young children manage and enjoy learning more than one language. In the early years it is generally better for children to learn to read and write in their mother tongue. Help your child to be a good listener and a confident talker.

2 Talking and listening

Children learn language at home and in their community. They learn by listening, talking and playing with others. Questions help children to learn more. Encourage your child to talk and ask questions. Let your child know you are interested: listen and respond.



Talk about things you see around you, on the taxi, in the shop, and in pictures or magazines. Know that making mistakes is part of language learning. So don't correct children all the time – they generally learn by listening to you.

Talk about feelings too: "I feel because"



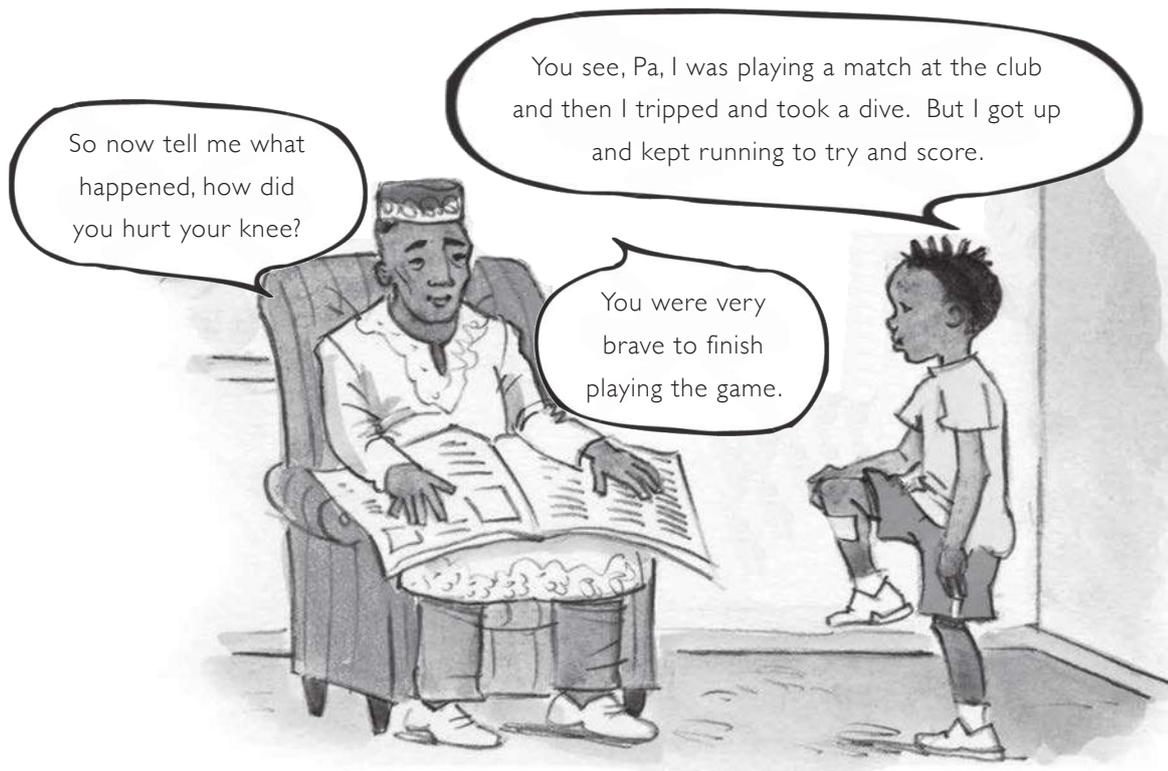
3

Telling your own stories

Tell stories and listen to each other. Children love hearing positive or funny stories about their families. These may be stories about your childhood or when your children were very small. Encourage your children to tell you about special outings, things that they have done and things that make them happy, sad or frightened. These stories can be the start of your child's little book.



Tell everyday stories together: Talk about what you are going to do - talking forward OR what you have done - 'talking back'. These simple 'stories' are the easy and natural way children learn language and become good story tellers.



4

Stories and books

Children enjoy looking at books, listening to and talking about stories and telling their own stories. Books help children to learn about many different things. By reading together and talking about what you read, children can learn:

- To listen and concentrate
- New words and more about language
- More about themselves, their feelings and the world around them
- To think! For example – What would happen if Or What do you think will happen now
- To remember story details and what happens in the story in the correct order
- To love books and stories

GIVE ME BOOKS, GIVE
ME WINGS TO FLY!



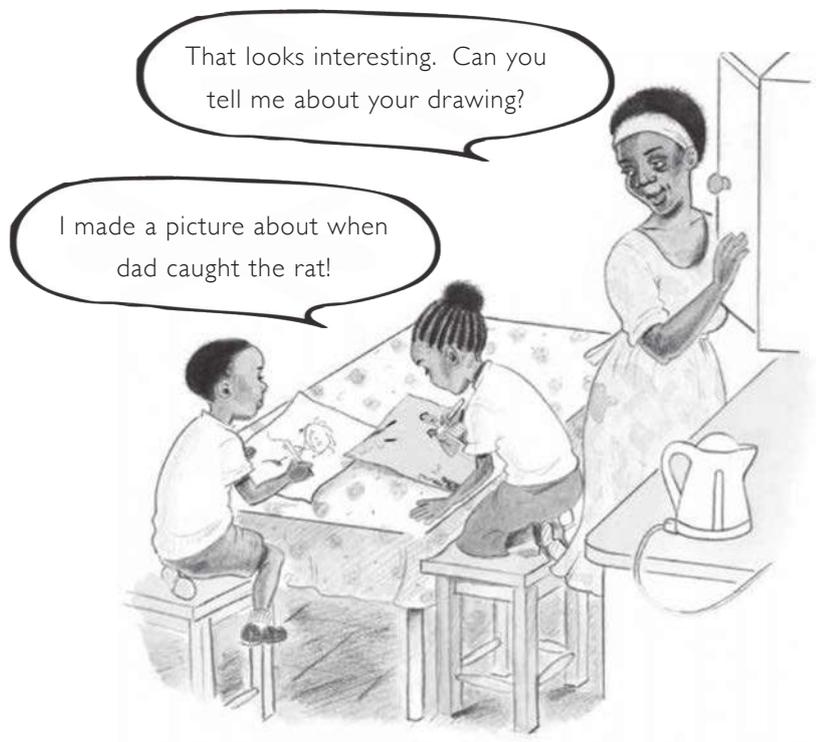
Make story time part of your everyday routine. Grannies and older brothers or sisters can become story readers or tellers too. Visit your library and share books with friends. Talk about stories you read and ask questions.

Telling and reading stories in an interactive way are some of the most important things parents can do with children to support their education.

5

Drawing and beginning to write

Encourage your child to draw. Make time and space for drawing. Talk about the drawings BUT don't make fun of the drawings or criticize them.



Encourage your child to experiment with writing – “Have a go!” Children learn by trying, experimenting and practising. From an early age children need to understand that writing is useful, and it has a purpose. Beginning writing may look like scribbles, this is how writing starts – encourage and keep writing together.

You can encourage your child to do the following:

- Draw and write about things he/she experiences
- Label drawings and add speech bubbles
- Label things that belong to different people
- Make lists such as a shopping list or a list of friends
- Write to communicate – write messages and letters to your child and enjoy the letters s/he writes to you

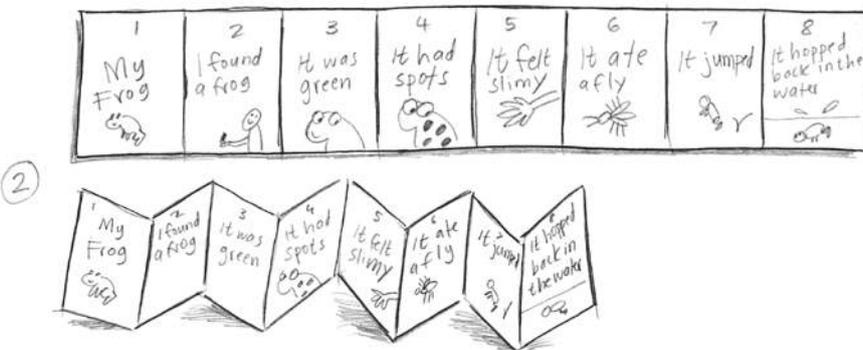
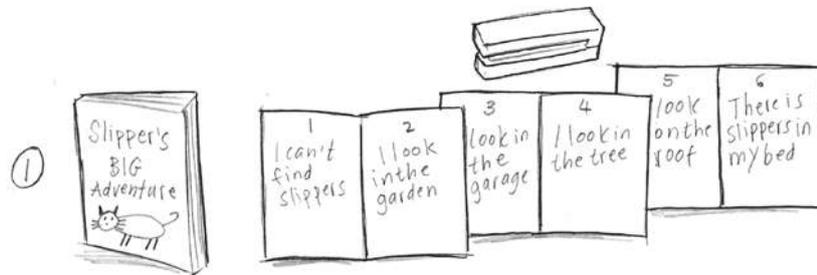


6

Make your own little books

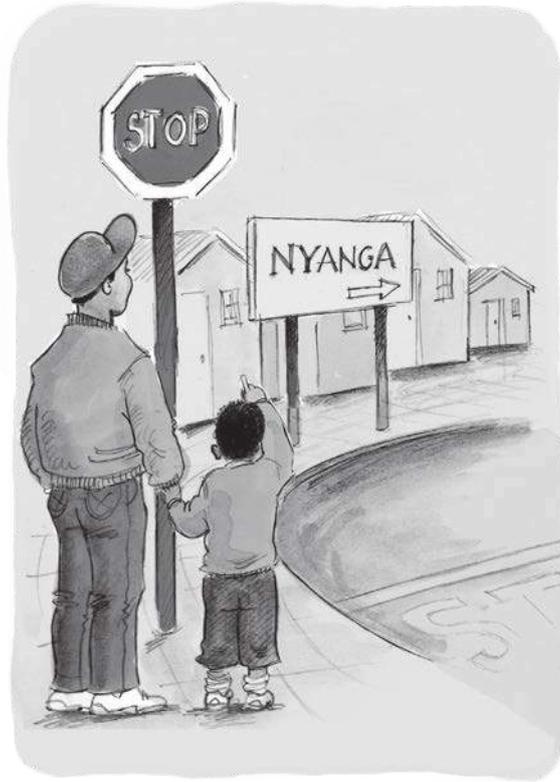
Children love to draw pictures and make their own little books. You can start very simply by encouraging children to draw 3 or 4 pictures. You can staple or sew the pages together to make a little book. Ask your child about the pictures and what he/she wants to write. Write together under the pictures and read the sentences together. These books can be made together and can be illustrated and written by your child. They can be on any topic, such as: My Family; Getting up in the morning; Foods I like the best; My Granny; An alphabet book. Children love to make books about the stories they have heard.

Make books in your mother tongue/home language and in the school language (if it is different). Remind your children to give their books a title, author and page numbers. Use speech bubbles too.



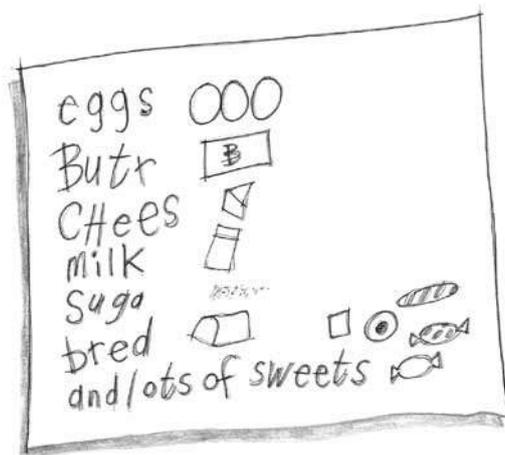
7 Print around you

Children love to read the print around them. You can point out different words to them. Examples are the road signs such as STOP; packaging on food boxes or tins such as MILK or FISH; names of shops or the garage; newspapers or leaflets.



Play word games together and save leaflets and empty food boxes to make a pretend shop with your child.

Before you go to the shop encourage your child to write and draw a shopping list. Do not worry about spelling.



8

Letters and words

Children learn a lot about words and letters when they play. You could write your child's name in the sand. In this way your child sees and feels how the letters are formed. You can make words using beans, match sticks or clay.



Play games using newspapers or magazines: choose a letter or a word and then see how many times you can find it on a page. Circle the letter or the word.

Play games with your alphabet chart too: choose a letter and find objects or cut out pictures starting with that letter.

9

Rhymes and songs

Sing and say all your favourite rhymes and songs together. Share them with your friends and family. Together you can make little rhyme and song books. Rhyming helps children with spelling by making it easier to build "word families" later on at school.





10 Listening games

Ask your child to close his or her eyes and listen for different sounds. Ask your child to name the sounds and then ask: was that sound far away or near; was it loud or soft; do you know what made that sound?

Games to play with sounds in words:

- Choose a letter sound and see how many words you can think of starting with that letter sound.
- Choose a letter sound and a category – such as foods / girls or boys names and see how many words you can think of starting with that letter.
- Play “I Spy” together: One person starts by choosing something in the room or in the picture. The other players have to guess the word. The only clue is the first letter of the word. You must say the sound of the first letter of the word. You can also point out the letter on the alphabet chart.
- Clap words into parts or syllables e.g. po-ta-to (potato). Start by clapping names of all the family members e.g. Za-ne-la, Ash-raf, Pe-ter.



11 Good hearing – Suggestions

As you know good hearing is important for learning. Be vigilant – if you suspect your child isn't hearing well, have his/her ears checked at your local clinic. (Please get a report from the nurse or the doctor so you can inform the teacher.)



12 Maths is fun – the world is our classroom

a. Numbers – knowing the order of number names:

Start with very easy counting from 1 to 5 (e.g. count fingers on one hand) then count to 10 and upwards; sing number songs and rhymes together; clap and march and dance too; look for numbers around you, such as house numbers, car number plates, telephone numbers or numbers on coins.

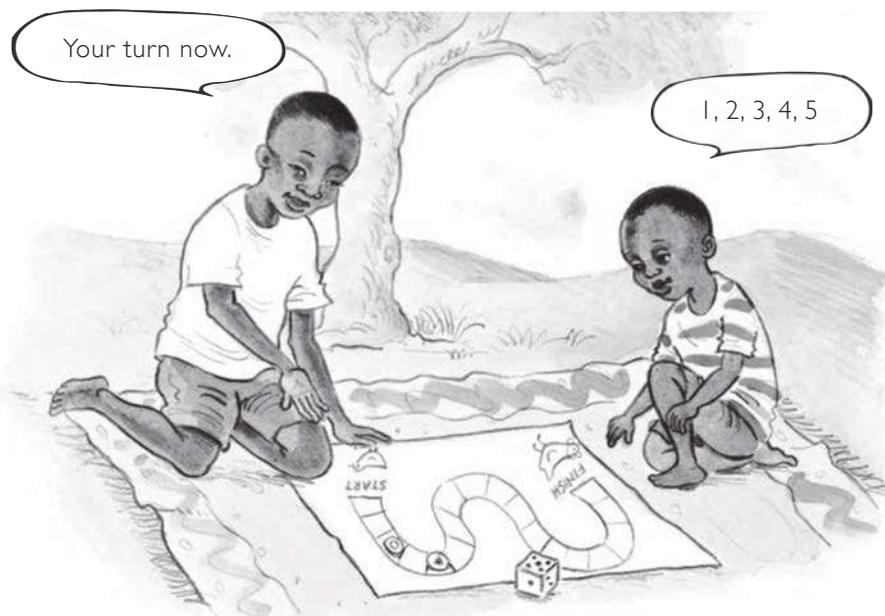
b. **What we DO with numbers: using numbers and number words; matching numbers to the amount of objects:**

Count everyday objects, first to 10 and then up to 30 and on; Notice your child's understanding of the numbers and number words. For example: There are 6 of us, can you count out 6 spoons; Lets share these 12 sweets equally among the 4 of you – how many will you each get? Half – cut an apple in half, fold a table cloth in half, show half the number of sweets. When you go shopping ask your child to help you. You can also make a pretend shop at home with pretend money and shopping lists.



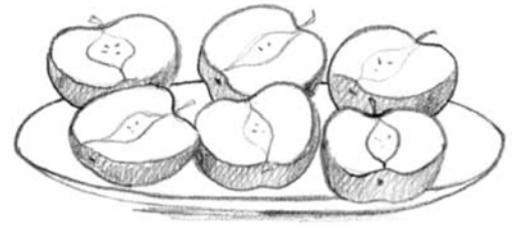
c. **Play games together:**

Play dice games together and make your own games. Adapting the games for different age groups – can you make the game more challenging for older children? Play games together – FUN and not competitions.



d. Solving problems:

Encourage your child to help solve simple everyday problems and find logical solutions. For example: "There are 6 of us and I've only got 3 apples – how shall we divide them equally?"



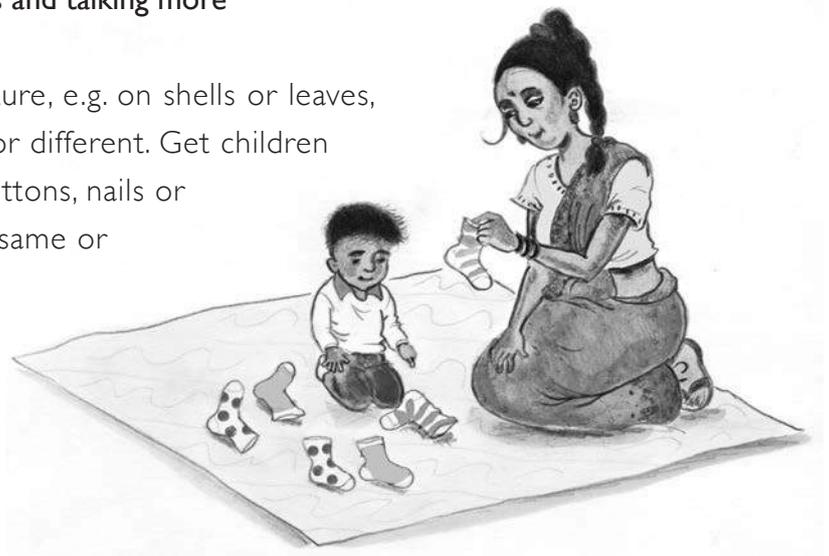
"I'm going to the shop to buy milk. It costs R5.00 but I've only got R3.00. How much more money will I need?"

e. Estimating:

Encourage children to think and look for logical answers to simple problems or questions. "I wonder how many potatoes are in this packet? What do you think? Let's check."

f. Matching, sorting, looking for patterns and talking more about colours:

You can start by looking at patterns in nature, e.g. on shells or leaves, and talking about how they are the same or different. Get children to sort things at home such as washing, buttons, nails or screws, and talk about how things are the same or different. All these activities help children NOTICE more. They are the building blocks for maths and science and help with early reading and writing.



g. Puzzles – create your own very simple jigsaw puzzles:

Cut out a picture and stick it onto a piece of cardboard, cover it with clear plastic if possible. Then cut the picture into 4 or 6 pieces to make a puzzle.

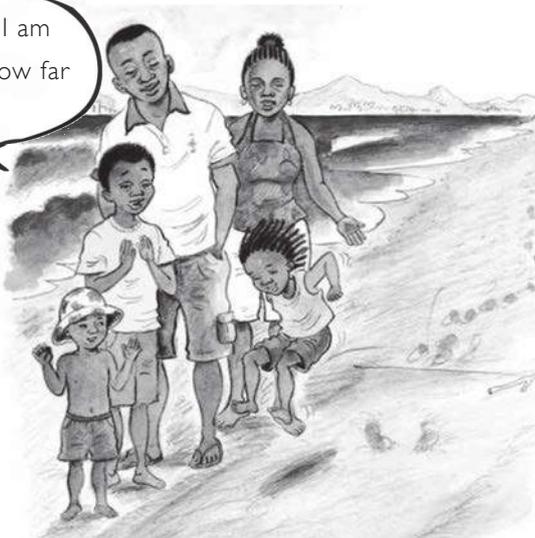


h. Understanding and talking about measurement:

Measure together at home. For example: measure the height of family members, using your hand or the child's hand, as a measure to start with then later using a ruler. Cook together and measure how much you use of the different ingredients. Play long jump and measure how far you jump. Talk about longer and shorter; taller and shorter. Measure the shoes in your family and arrange them in a row from smallest to biggest.

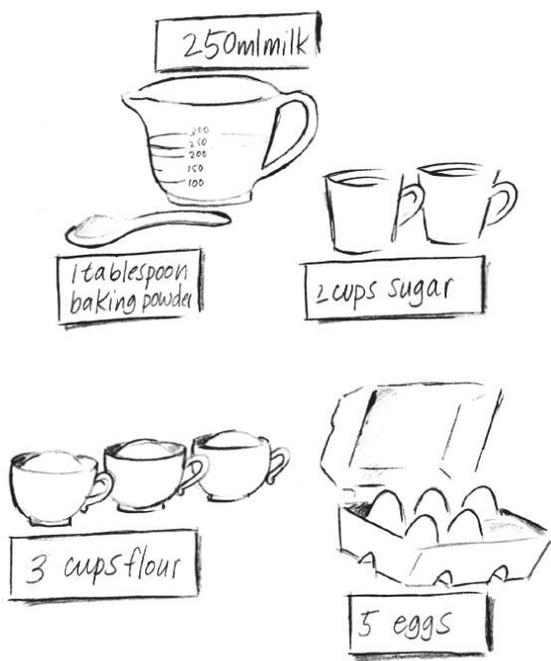


Wow, she's good! I am going to measure how far she jumped.



Make the dough a bit thinner. If it's too thick the biscuits won't bake properly. But if it is too thin, they will break.

Is this alright now, Ma?



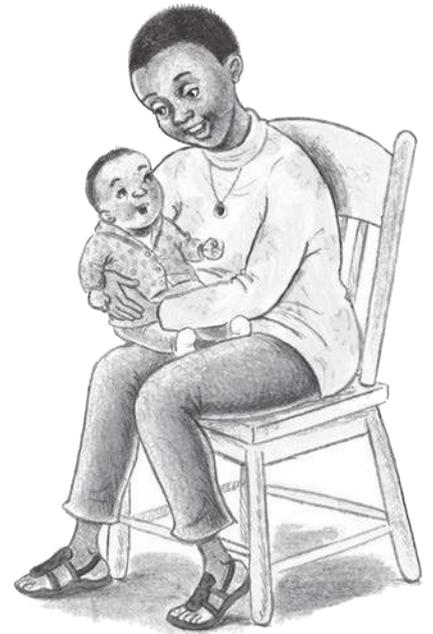
i. **Knowing about space and shape:**

Talk about boxes and balls – what's different? Yes, a box has corners and a ball doesn't have corners. Why can we roll the ball? (Because there are no corners on the ball – it's round and the box has corners – it's a cube.) Now talk about the side of the box – what shape is it? A square or rectangle. Look for rectangles and squares around the room. Then look for circles and triangles. Keep asking questions such as: which are big/small? How many corners does a triangle have? Find examples of food in the shape of a triangle such as sandwiches, samosas or different sweets. Cut out shapes together and create a picture together. Construct towers and "castles" together using wooden blocks or off-cuts.





IT ONLY
TAKES A FEW
MINUTES TO
MAKE A BIG
DIFFERENCE!





Special thanks to the teachers, principals, parents and caregivers from all the schools who have participated in this programme and helped it to grow.

This work would not have been possible without the generous support of the DG Murray Trust.

Illustrations by: Helga Hoveka

Translations by: Masihlangane

Communications, Xoli Guzula and Magdel Janse van Rensburg

Design by: Jacqui Botha and Orli Setton