



# Froebelian Approach to Literacy and Language

Friedrich Froebel was a German educator and founder of the kindergarten movement. A Froebelian approach to literacy emphasizes the importance of play and creative activities in the development of literacy skills. In this approach, children are encouraged to explore their environment, engage in hands-on learning experiences, and express themselves through storytelling, drawing, and other forms of artistic expression. The goal of the Froebelian approach is to promote the holistic development of the child, including their intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being, in order to help them become confident, creative, and lifelong learners.



'I wanted to educate a man to be free, to think, to take action for themselves.'

Friedrich Froebel



# Understanding the Basics of Language Development

Language development involves the process by which children learn to understand and produce language. At Linden Tree, we understand that it is crucial to know the nature of language and how it develops as children grow. We know that language is an essential tool for communication, learning and social interaction. Knowledge about the stages of language development and its aspects, allows us to create an environment which promotes children's language growth. Language development is a complex process that involves the acquisition of vocabulary, syntax, grammar, phonology, and pragmatic skills. Children need to know the meaning of words in order to understand the language, put the words in sentences so that they can communicate in grammatically correct sentences. Children need to learn the sound and intonation of the language so that they can be understood properly, and finally be successful in social communication. Further in this newsletter we describe each aspect of language and how we help children develop them.



Children who are able to communicate effectively are more likely to form strong bonds with peers, adults, and family members. They are also better equipped to navigate social situations and handle conflict resolution.



Language is a key factor in shaping a child's identity and culture. By learning and using language, children are able to express their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs, and connect with others who share similar experiences and values.

Language skills are closely linked to cognitive development. The ability to understand and use language helps children to think logically, solve problems, and develop critical thinking skills. It also supports their overall academic achievement, as language skills are essential for reading, writing, and understanding complex instructions.

## Stages of Speech and Language Development

Language development is a complex process that is influenced by many factors including genetics, environment and exposure to language. Children begin to develop language skills from a very young age and this process continues throughout their lives

Age range	Listening and attention	understanding	Speech sound and talk	Social skills
2-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Beginning to listen to talk with interest, but easily distracted.</li> <li>- Listens to talk addressed to him/herself, but finds it difficult if prompts are not provided, e.g. use of name, 'stop and listen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing understanding of simple concepts including in/on/under, big/little</li> <li>- Understands phrases like 'put teddy in the box'</li> <li>- Understands simple 'who', 'what', 'where' questions but not 'why'</li> <li>- Understands a simple story when supported with picture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Uses 300 words including descriptive language, time, space, function</li> <li>- Links four to five words together</li> <li>- May stutter or stammer when thinking what to say</li> <li>- Able to use pronouns (me, him, she), plurals and prepositions (in, on, under)</li> <li>- Has problems saying speech sounds: l/r/w/y, f/th, s/sh/ch/dz/j</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Holds a conversation but jumps from topic to topic</li> <li>- Interested in other's play and will join in</li> <li>- Expresses emotions towards adults and peers using words, not just actions</li> </ul>

Age range	Listening and attention	understanding	Speech sound and talk	Social skills
3-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enjoys listening to stories</li> <li>- Still finds it difficult to attend to more than one thing at a time, so can't easily listen to a speaker whilst still carrying on an activity; has to switch attention between speaker and task</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understands questions or instructions with two parts: 'get your jumper' and stand by the door'</li> <li>- Understands 'why' questions</li> <li>- Aware of time in relation to past, present and future, e.g. Today is sunny, yesterday was rainy. I wonder what the weather will be like tomorrow? (towards four year)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Uses sentences of four to six words, e.g. 'I want to play with cars' 'What's that thingy called?'</li> <li>- Uses future and past tense. May continue to have problems with irregular words, 'runned', 'swimmed'</li> <li>- Able to remember and enjoys telling long stories or singing songs</li> <li>- Has problems saying r, j, th, ch, and sh</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understands turn-taking as well as sharing with adults and peers</li> <li>- Initiates conversations</li> <li>- Enjoys playing with peers</li> <li>- Able to argue with adults or peers if they disagree – uses words, not just action</li> </ul>



Age range	Listening and attention	understanding	Speech sound and talk	Social skills
4-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attention is now more flexible – the child can understand spoken instructions related to a task without stopping the activity to look at the speaker</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Able to follow simple story without pictures</li> <li>- Understands instructions containing sequencing words; 'first... after... last'</li> <li>- Understands adjectives: soft, hard, smooth, etc.</li> <li>- Aware of more complex humour, laughs at jokes that are told</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Uses well-formed sentences, e.g. 'I played with Ben at lunch time' but there may still be some grammatical errors</li> <li>- Easily understood by adults and peers, with only a few immaturities in speech sounds, for example, 'th', 'r' and three consonant combinations 'scribble'</li> <li>- Frequently asks the meaning of unfamiliar words and may use them randomly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chooses own friends</li> <li>- Generally co-operative with playmates</li> <li>- Able to plan construction and make believe play activities</li> <li>- Takes turns in longer conversations</li> <li>- Uses language to gain information, negotiate, discuss feelings/ideas and give opinions</li> </ul>

Based on LEARNING TO TALK TALKING TO LEARN © I CAN 2007 A guide for early years practitioners  
For more information visit [I CAN](#) or [Birth to 5 matters](#)

## Developing Phonological Awareness in Early Years

Phonological awareness is a key early competency of emergent and proficient reading and spelling. It involves an explicit awareness of how words, syllables, and individual speech sounds (phonemes) are structured. Together with phonics, phonological awareness (in particular phonemic awareness) is essential for breaking the code of written language (Luke and Freebody, 1999).

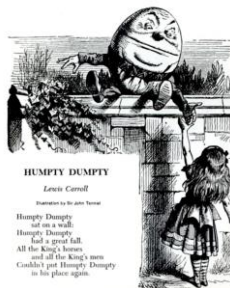
Children need to become phonologically aware if they are to move to later reading without difficulty. Phonological awareness means becoming aware of the similarities and differences in sounds in a language and their patterns, tones, tempo and beat, loudness, softness, the source of the sound as well the sounds.

Phonological awareness has a direct role in decoding and spelling. There is a link between phoneme-level awareness and decoding and encoding in alphabetic writing systems because letters represent sounds in written words. Phoneme-level awareness, in conjunction with alphabet knowledge, enables children to understand how graphemes are mapped onto phonemes and blended to form spoken words (Adams, 1990; Share, 1995).

Becoming phonologically aware helps children on their journey to literacy. It has an indirect effect on reading comprehension because decoding skill are related to reading fluency which, in turn, aids comprehension (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974; Storch & Whitehurst, 2001).



Mary, Mary quite contrary,  
How does your garden grow?  
Silver bells and cockle-shells,  
And pretty maids all of a row.

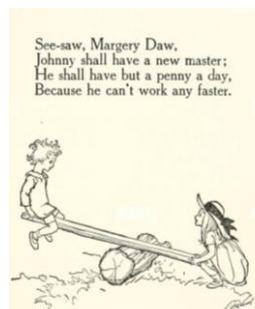


HUMPTY DUMPTY

Lewis Carroll

Humpty Dumpty

sat on a wall,  
Humpty Dumpty  
had a great fall,  
All the King's horses  
and all the King's men  
couldn't put Humpty Dumpty  
in his place again.



See-saw, Margery Daw,  
Johnny shall have a new master;  
He shall have but a penny a day,  
Because he can't work any faster.

Action songs help children to become symbol users. They use the body as a musical instrument, connect and co-ordinate parts of the brain.

Rhyme supports phonemic awareness and engages a child's attention.

In **Twigs Room** the focus is placed mostly on developing children's listening skills. This helps to improve children's awareness of the sounds around them. These are typical activities:

Environmental Sounds – listening to sounds that are around us e.g., cars, dogs barking, knocking at the door, wind sound, etc.

Instrumental Sounds – children listen and develop awareness of sounds made with instruments

Body Percussion – children use their body parts to create sounds (clapping, stamping)

Rhythm and Rhyme – through stories, songs and nursery rhymes children develop awareness of rhythm and rhyme in speech

Action songs - children integrate body movement with sight and sound

In **pre-school** we continue concentrating on hearing and recognising sounds and we introduce sound and symbol correlation. We provide a variety of multisensory activities to play with sounds which help them decode words by sounding them out.

Rhyming games – we encouraging children to identify words that rhyme and to create their own rhymes

Alliteration – we encouraging children to listen for and identify words that start with the same sound, such as "Sally sells Seashells"

Oral blending – we teach children to combine individual sounds to form words. They will start with CVC (consonant, vowel, consonant) words such as c-a-t into cat

Segmenting – we teach children to break words into individual sounds (phonemes), such as separating "cat" into c-a-t

Syllable counting – children clap hands while saying syllables in a word

Holding a steady beat is important for developing the essentials of literacy and for life as a whole.

Watch the video [Phonological awareness through music](#) and [through rhymes and stories](#)

## Developing Communication Skills in Early Years

Communication skills refer to the ability to effectively convey information and ideas, both verbally and non-verbally, to others. This includes listening, speaking, writing, and using non-verbal cues such as body language and tone of voice. Effective communication skills can help build trust, establish understanding, and resolve conflicts.

**We put a strong emphasis on developing communication skills as we understand it is crucial for children's overall development and future success. Here are some ways we support children's communication skills at Linden Tree:**

**Encouraging speaking:** We provide children with opportunities to practice speaking, such as storytelling, role-playing and asking open-ended questions, we provide small world toys or puppets for children to act out familiar stories in their play.

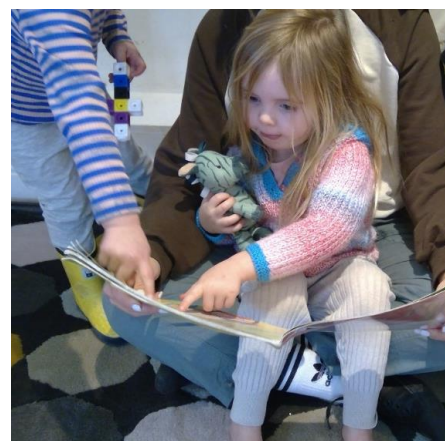
**Listening actively:** We pay attention to what children are saying, asking questions, and provide feedback to show them that their words are valued.

**Reading together:** We read books with children which helps expand their vocabulary, introduce new concepts, and foster imagination

**Playing games:** We play games that encourage conversation, such as describing, guessing, take turning games, etc.

**Being a role model:** We make sure we demonstrate good communication skills by using clear language, making eye contact, and actively listening.

**Discussions** – We give time and make spaces for children to initiate discussions from shared experiences and have conversations with peers and adults during circle time.



Read about [Literacy and communication. A response to the latest research](#) Froebel trust

*Froebel's Mother Songs emphasis "connections within whole body, limbs, hands and fingers, transition into Movement Games for children who walk, talk and pretend" (Bruce, 2021, p: 73).*

## Getting ready to read and write



*Friedrich Froebel pioneered the thinking that children can learn a huge amount about communication, language and literacy when they share songs and finger rhymes with their parents. He called these the 'Mother songs'*

Tina Bruce and Jenny Spratt  
'Essentials to Literacy from 0-7'

Before a child can learn to read pre-reading skills must be mastered in order to lay a strong foundation. We help children achieve the goals by:

- listening and joining in with stories, poems, rhymes and songs
- being interested in illustrations in fiction and non-fiction books and words in print and digital books
- participating in singing and music sessions with a range of simple musical instruments
- playing with a range of resources such as empty cereal packets, labels, signs, etc.
- making up their own rhymes and stories



- acting out stories
- using props and puppets to act out rhymes, stories and songs
- playing symbolically
- being engaged in making rhythm, pattern, voice sounds, steady beat
- Hearing sounds in words

*The development of the human brain is such that during the first five years there is major development in non-verbal communication, language and other kinds of symbol system (music, dance), made possible by the development of memory, imagination, pretending, and creating by making new connections. The best time to teach children to read comes once these processes have been well established, serving as a rich foundation. This is typically at about age six to seven.*

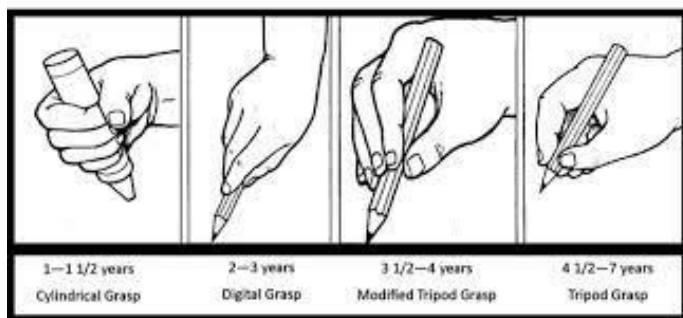
T Bruce and J Spratt 'Essentials to Literacy from 0-7'

***"Learning should be joyous, meaningful and relevant. It should inspire further learning, or it is nothing"*** (Tovey, 2017:126).



Children's arms and hands contain a series of pivotal joints which develop from biggest to smallest (shoulder, elbow, wrist, fingers). Once the pivots have worked their way down to the wrist, the journey doesn't stop there. The end of the pivot journey is when the mark making ends at the smallest set of pivots, right at the end of the fingers. If children can hold their mark making tool there, then they will have the fullest, most dextrous range of movement that their bodies can provide and be ready to write for life. This is fine motor control. However, it is important to remember that a child cannot master fine motor activities until gross motor skills are developed. <https://www.earlyyearsstaffroom.com/what-comes-before-writing/>

These involve a series of hand, arm, elbow, wrist, shoulder and finger exercises. These work together to strengthen and develop children's fine and gross motor dexterity, hand – eye co-ordination, proprioception, balance, low load control, grip and self-esteem.



There are four stages to grip development which are used when assessing the children, each of which are linked to their pivotal stage, for example a child at grip stage one is still operating from the shoulder so will need activities which work on strengthening their elbow pivots.



Pre-writing skills are essential for the child to be able to develop the ability to hold and move a pencil fluently and effectively and therefore produce legible writing

## What activities can help improve writing readiness (pre-writing) skills?

**Threading and lacing** with a variety of sized laces.

**Playdough** activities that may involve rolling with hands or a rolling pin, patting, squeezing, etc.

**Scissors**

**Tongs** to pick up objects.

**Drawing or writing**

**Every day activities** that require finger strength such as opening containers and jars.

**Finger games:** that practice specific finger movements such as *Incy wincy Spider*.

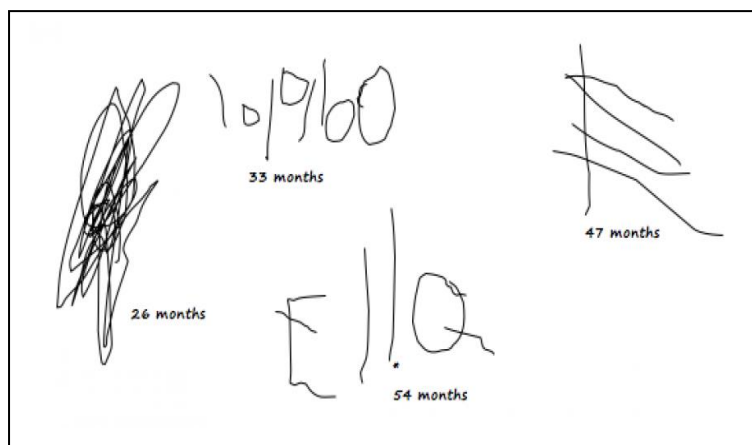
**Craft:** Make things using old boxes, egg cartons, wool, paper and sticky or masking tape.

**Construction:** Building with wooden blocks, Duplo, Lego or other construction toys.



## Stages of writing development

The marks the children make – their first scribble drawings – are the beginning of the essentials they need in order to write



Oliver 2 years old



Beatrice 3 years old



Andrew 3 years old



Aleksi 4 years old

Children will begin to give meaning to what they 'write' and to realize that there is a relationship between how the letters and words sound and look.

[EYFS – Literacy – Writing](#) Department of Education

*Individuals are diverse, complex and irregular, not fixed entities but full of surprise, possibilities and potentialities (Bakhtin, 1993).*



## The DfE's reformed early learning goals for the end of reception class

The Early Learning Goals (ELG's), are used to assess pupils at the end of reception.

<b>Communication and Language</b>	<b>Literacy</b>
<p><b><u>ELG: Listening, Attention and Understanding</u></b> Children at the expected level of development will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments and actions when being read to and during whole class discussions and small group interactions;</li> <li>- Make comments about what they have heard and ask questions to clarify their understanding;</li> <li>- Hold conversation when engaged in back-and-forth exchanges with their teacher and peers.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>ELG: Speaking</u></b> Children at the expected level of development will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participate in small group, class and one-to-one discussions, offering their own ideas, using recently introduced vocabulary;</li> <li>- Offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems when appropriate;</li> <li>- Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions, with modelling and support from their teacher.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>ELG: Comprehension</u></b> Children at the expected level of development will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demonstrate understanding of what has been read to them by retelling stories and narratives using their own words and recently introduced vocabulary;</li> <li>- Anticipate – where appropriate – key events in stories;</li> <li>- Use and understand recently introduced vocabulary during discussions about stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems and during role-play.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>ELG: Word Reading</u></b> Children at the expected level of development will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Say a sound for each letter in the alphabet and at least 10 digraphs;</li> <li>- Read words consistent with their phonic knowledge by sound-blending;</li> <li>- Read aloud simple sentences and books that are consistent with their phonic knowledge, including some common exception words.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>ELG: Writing</u></b> Children at the expected level of development will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed;</li> <li>- Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters;</li> <li>- Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.</li> </ul>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/974907/EYFS\\_framework\\_-\\_March\\_2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974907/EYFS_framework_-_March_2021.pdf)

## Storytelling in preschool

Storytelling is a huge and powerful tool which helps develop many areas of learning, skills and characteristics of effective learning including language, literacy, social skills, creativity, confidence, empathy, writing, problem solving, maths and lots more. They are interactive, fun and led by the children. They help develop abstract thinking, imagination, symbolic play.

The Froebelian approach emphasizes the importance of storytelling as a means of nurturing children's imagination and creativity, as well as their cognitive and emotional development.



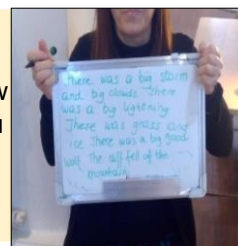
### Activities which encourage storytelling:

- **Listening to stories**
- **Acting out stories**
- **Making up their own stories**
- **Using props to support acting out stories**
- **Creating their own props**
- **Helicopter stories**



Today you had a very fruitful play in the block area. You built a home area for your animals, for them to bathe, eat and sleep. You built their home by putting blocks the one next to each other and then put all the animals in the row so they can take turns for eating. You even put some pot with food on the top of the blocks. It looked amazing and you cooperated really nicely!

After acting out some stories you decided to write your own story. I wrote down all the sentences you said to me. I was writing slowly so you could see how words formed into sentences. It was great to see you being engaged in acting it out. You showed a lot of imagination and were able to imitate to be a storm and clouds.



*The evidence showing how to develop high quality literacy and a love of literature and writing throughout life chimes with the educational framework pioneered by F. Froebel. His approach continues to be effective today in developing the kind of literary experiences which lead to a lifelong enjoyment of communication, informed discussion, reading and writing. This is different from learning to use flash cards with lists of unrelated words in isolation so as to score on a test (a phonic check).*

<https://www.froebel.org.uk/news/literacy-and-communication-a-response-to-the-latest-research>

Storytelling is a valuable tool to promote social and emotional growth. Children can explore different emotions, learn about empathy and compassion, develop their ability to understand and regulate their emotions

**Storytelling enhances oral language development and narrative skills** For more information watch the [video](#)