



TALK & EARLY LITERACY

How local churches & individuals can support opportunities for early learning

Making every word count – right from the start of life

Language development starts at the beginning of life, during pregnancy and from birth all the way through the early years. Too often we think that learning to read and write only starts in formal education settings, but it is quite the opposite. A range of research shows that “children who have lacked opportunities to build a strong language foundation between birth and six years will struggle to keep up.”¹

Critically, the number of words children hear matters. The more words they are exposed to early in life, the better their vocabulary and reading comprehension is at school. We need to encourage and create language-rich environments and homes for our children.

Babies and toddlers learn language best when the significant adult in their life is responsive, making lots of eye contact, and engage with their young child through reading, telling stories, singing songs, babbling, coo-ing, vocalising, talking about things around them, making sounds, and taking their young baby to the library. These loving, everyday interactions build the baby's brain and lay strong foundations for future reading and learning in life. This is language-rich environment is referred to in short as **TALK**. [Read this blog](#) to learn more about why creating a language-rich environment is so important for babies.

Did you know: The brain architecture is peaking in its language development at **6 months of age!**



Did you know that parents and primary caregivers are the child's first teachers!



¹ S. O'Carroll, & R. Hickman (May 2012). *Narrowing the literacy gap: Making a case for the importance of early language and literacy development in South Africa*. Hands-on, Learning Brief 17. The DG Murray Trust. Retrieved: <https://dgmt.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Wordworks.pdf>

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS OF WHAT YOU CAN DO TO ENCOURAGE A LANGUAGE - RICH ENVIRONMENT IN THE FIRST THOUSAND DAYS:

We need to “**celebrate the role of parents as the first teachers.**” There are very few opportunities for parents and caregivers to learn how best to support their children's learning at home right from pregnancy.²

AS A CHURCH, YOU CAN:

- **Speak up and raise awareness** about the importance of TALK in the first thousand days. Help parents to understand and value their role in building their baby's brain.
- **Create opportunities to equip parents** with practical information that will grow their skills and confidence to regularly read and talk to their children.
- **Create opportunities and safe spaces** in moms' groups, on Sundays and in other gathering to encourage moms and dads to play peek-a-boo, sing a song, talk through a picture book.
- **Equip parents** through running or host trainings with one of the below organisations. It is extremely important to equip young parents with the knowledge that positive engagements like making lots of eye contact, cooing, singing, cuddling, following the cues of baby, reading, talking, gazing, mirroring, pointing – right from the very start of life is critical to help their children thrive.
- **Start reading group** in your church or **create a book corner** where people can donate books or share books or go to the library together.
- **Affirm and encourage** moms and dads when you see them TALKing with their baby. Highlight what they did well and encourage them to keep TALKing and responding to babies' cues. “Well done mom! I love seeing you making eye contact and talking with your baby. You are doing such a great job!”
- **Collaborate and refer** to local organizations that are equipping parents to read like [Word Works](#), [Nal'ibali](#), [Book Dash](#), [Mikhulu Trust](#), Local Library, and [SmartStart](#).
- **Share quality information and helpful tips**, online resources, free digital books, and more to equip and help parents as they practice TALK at home. Consider using WhatsApp groups



² S. O'Carroll. (April 2022). *Emergent Language and Literacy*. Thrive by five index, Action Brief. Innovation Edge Retrieved: <https://www.thrivebyfive.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/ActionBriefEmergentLanguageAndLiteracy.pdf>

or parent groups or on Sundays. You can share one new idea a week. Below are some suggested websites for practical ideas to share.

Pick up the **Nal'ibali Supplement** - available at your nearest **Post Office** in all South African languages

EDITION 184
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English
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NALIBALI

Tell us a story!
How often have your children said, "Tell us a story please?" You may remember what it feels like to be completely wrapped up in a story - it's like everything around you disappears and you are part of the story. Children love hearing stories, and they are a great way to stimulate their imagination and their use of language. Here are some tips to help you be a magical storyteller for your children.

Sibaisele ibali!
Kungakanani apno abantwana bakho bathi, "Nobusobolele bud, wabizisa ibali!" Ukungabizala ukuba kufuneka ngu ukufundisa ngokufundisa abantwana - kuba ngathi ukuba nto to ejoye ukungabizala ngokufundisa kufuneka wena ubizisele yeali! Abantwana bayafundisa kakhulu ukumamela amabali kwaye amabali angagqibela ukuba abantwana bithabathekelele imiboniso ngokufundisa kwaye nokufundisa abantwana ukuba kufuneka. Nazi ezinye izengcebiso zokufundisa ukuba abe ngabantwana abantwana imingcebiso abantwana bakho.

Which stories should I tell?

- Get going. It's always easiest to start with what you know, so start by telling stories that you know well.
- Start with stories that are close to the reader or listener. You can tell the things you know. Look at books and on the internet. Find stories that are only available in one language into the language you are comfortable telling stories in.
- Match with your audience. Choose a story to tell that you think will interest your listener and is appropriate for their age. For example, most children enjoy stories that have animals in them, but stories with old people in them may scare very young children.

How do I tell a story?

- Choose your words. Try to choose interesting and expressive words that help your listener to build pictures in their heads as they listen to the story.
- Use expression. Tell the story with expression in your voice, and give the characters different sounding voices. Use a steady pace for a little while and then speed things up for a bit.
- Use your whole body. Use your face to show the expressions of different characters in the story. For example, when a character is shouting and crying about something. Use body gestures. Be sweeping your arms to show how tall that tower is or how big those feet are. Use bigger movements to show how fast that car is moving.

What do good storytellers do?

- Practice. If you are telling a story to a group of children, practice it out loud so that you know the story well.
- Enjoy yourself! If you enjoy telling a story, then it is likely that your children will enjoy listening to it too. So, relax and have fun!

Oonobalisa abaphume izandla benza ntoni?

- Zigxhulwa. Ukuba uyo kubizala ngabo abantwana bud, ngaphandle kweyigqibela ukuba abantwana bakho.
- Zoncedisa. Ukuba uyo kubizala ngabo abantwana bud, ngaphandle kweyigqibela ukuba abantwana bakho.

IT STARTS WITH A STORY
SIBISELE IBALI
ISIXHOSA

Drive your imagination

UTemo namasela ezityalo

Libali likaKgos! Kgos! Imifanekiso izolywe nguMagriel Brink noLeo Dary Liguqelwe esiXhoseni nguSindiswa Mbokodi

Utemo wayeyintombazana encinane ekrekelele eyayihlala kwilali yaseQunu. Wayekuthanda ukuya ekoilweni nokufunda izinto ezintsha.

Ngenye imini ekoilweni, ikhosi yakhe yafunda ngokuyala nokukhulisa imifundo. Utemo wayethabathekele ngabo aboona langugqibela wayengumsele ukugqibela ukukhulisa abantwana bakhe ngale nto.

NIQENIQENIQE! Yakhala intsimbi yokugqibela yokuphuma kweinkolo baza bonke abantwana bagqibela ukuphuma kumagumbi abo okufundela begoduka.

Xa efika ekhaya uTemo, umama notata wakhe babekhithini bephanga in.

"Molo, Mama, Molo, Tata," watsho njengoko engena ekhithini.

"Molo, Temo," baphendula bathi abantwana bakhe "Behlanjani unduku lwakho ekoilweni namhlanje?" wabusa umama wakhe.

"Behlululi!" Ndufunde into enomdla kakhulu," waphendula uTemo enomameli loqama eyaya ngasegumbini lakhe lokulala.

Abantwana bakaTemo bathi ngu ukuba intombi yabo ithatha ngantoni, kodwa phambi kokuba bamcele ukuba ahlaze, wayesele ethe ihluka.

Kwigumbi lakhe lokulala, uTemo wakhulisa iyunifom yenkolo wabusa ezinye imiphahla zakhe. Kodwa eni yayingezizo ezi azimabha malha yonke. Wabusa isovroli, ngamhlanje kunye nononqwan.

Utemo wabuyela ekhithini. "Ndum-lo! Mama no Tata, joozani!" watsho.

Abantwana bakhe babemngqibanele kakhulu. Utemo wayekoloko engafuni kwenza unoyemama ekhaya, ngoko ke kwakufuneka ngesiqophe wawocho imiphahla zakhebenza?

"Kutheni umsho ngoko libalo, Temo?" wabusa tata wakhe.

"Kubi ndifuna ukugqibela ukuyala eyam imifundo, Tata," watsho enomameli.

"Ngoko ke, ufuna ukuba pesitrya enisekako semifundo ngaba ekhaya?" wabusa umama wakhe.

"Ewe, Mama," waphendula watsho uTemo.

Abantwana bakaTemo bayongama bekhawukuswe ukuba uTemo wayese kulawazi njani ukubondolosa intyaba xa wayekhulisa ukwenzisa unoyemama ekhaya engengokubenza in. Kodwa bagqiba kwelokuba banthembe noko kunjalo.

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ISIXHOSA

Beka amabali phambili esikolweni sakho

IT STARTS WITH A STORY
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Visit the **Nal'ibali data free website** <https://nalibali.org/> To download stories and much more

You can now enjoy Nal'ibali's websites FOR FREE on all major mobile networks!

Our web and mobi sites are now ZERO-RATED and can be accessed for FREE without any data.

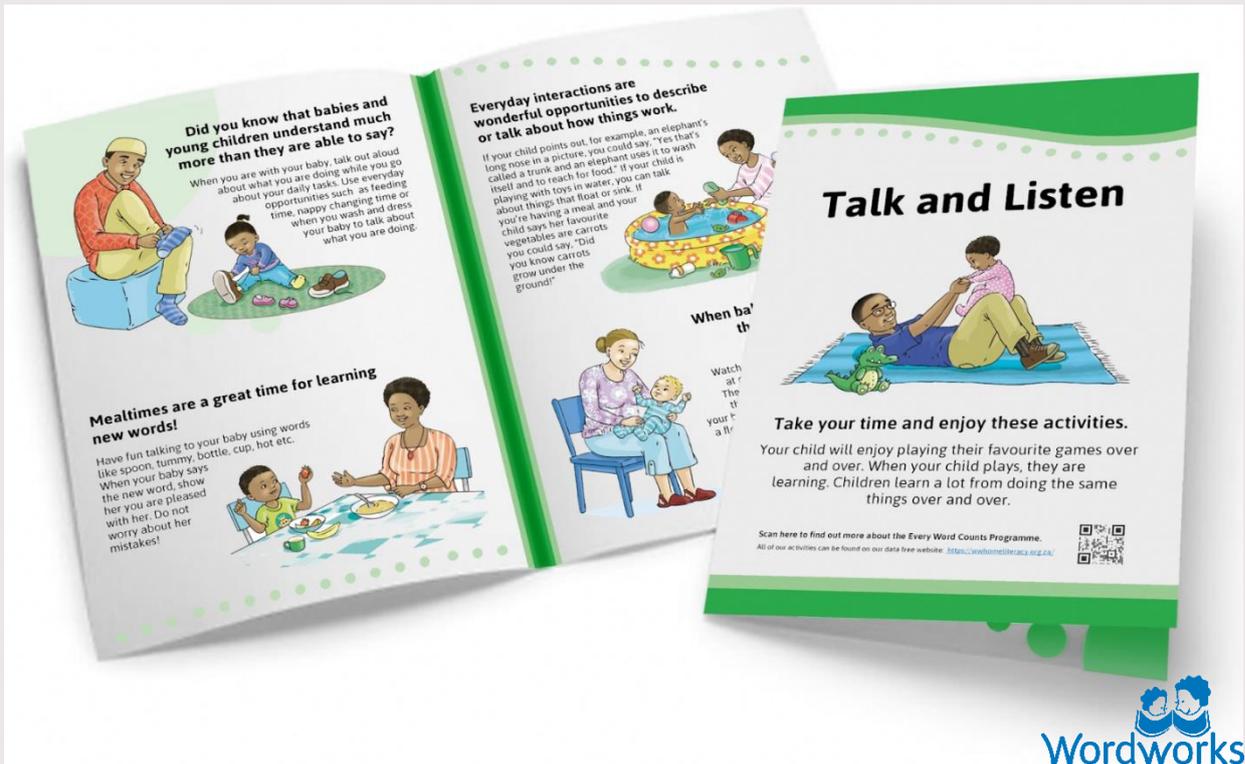
Visit www.nalibali.org or www.nalibali.mobi to get started!

Free reading resources

- Multilingual Stories** - Read more
- Audio Stories** - Read more
- Multilingual Newspaper Supplement Stories** - Read more

nalibali IT STARTS WITH A STORY

Wordworks: Every Word Counts programme resources



Talk and Listen leaflet – [click here](#)

Play and Learn leaflet available in English, Afrikaans, Xhosa, and Zulu – [click here](#)

Start a 'Every Word Counts' parent workshop group



An example of what you can share with parents:

Read Early and Read Often!

Find a regular time in your daily routine read with your baby. To access free books and much more, here are a range of wonderful resources to help you to read and talk with your children and many are on data-free websites or mobi apps:



- [Book Dash](#)
- [Nal'ibali](#)
- [WordWorks](#) Play & Learn Activities
- [African Storybooks](#)
- [Smartstart](#) parent space
- [Thanda](#)
- [Mikhulu Trust](#) wordless picture books
- [Local Library](#) 1st 1000 stories before school

for more ideas go to [Do More Foundation Parenting Resources](#) or [Moya Messenger](#) or [Vroom app](#) as practical activities that are specific to the age of baby.

Here are some [tips for reading with young children](#). These tips from [Book Dash](#) are available in [all 11 languages](#) to share with parents.



English

Tips for reading with young children

You can photocopy this page and hand it out

How do you read with your child?

- ✓ You don't have to be a good reader to read with your child: just do it!
- ✓ Choose the same time each day to read with your child (e.g. bedtime). Snuggle up close and enjoy the experience.
- ✓ Make it fun: use different voices and get your child to participate.
- ✓ Let your child be the leader, and you follow: talk about the pictures that interest your child and ask questions.
- ✓ It's never too early to start reading with a child, so you can read with your baby too.



Why should you read with your child?

- ✓ Reading is a wonderful tool to help your young child's brain develop and get ready for school. Children who often read books with their parents perform well at school.
- ✓ Reading helps your child build strong relationships with you and their friends.
- ✓ A regular bedtime routine, including reading a book, helps children sleep better.



Find more free books at bookdash.org/books

Watch these video around the topic of talk

Baby talk master class with Dr. Kalashnikova

by Unicef



Baby talking to his dad.



Make every word count – right from the start of life

The Sikunye Gathering

Watch the recording of this inspiring event

