Play is the most powerful way young children learn.

Every time you play, sing or read to young children they are learning about language.

By sharing this book and play activities with them they will have the opportunity to:

• Explore rhyme through stories and songs.
• Share their ideas and experiences of families.
• Develop their vocabulary through books and play.

We hope these activities will provide you with a starting point for fun play with young children.

Engaging With Language and Literacy

How we read to children is just as important as how often we read.

• Share the title and front cover with the children. Talk about how things can be lost and found down the backs of chairs. If possible demonstrate to the children with the chair you are sitting on. Make up an interesting story to excite the children. Has this ever happened to the children? Let the children share their experiences.
• Before you read the story to the children spend some time together looking at the illustrations on each page. Talk to the children about what is happening in the pictures. Providing children with an introduction to the book before reading it will help enhance their understanding and enjoyment of the story.
• Reading to children provides an excellent opportunity to explore new and interesting words. Discuss the meanings of three or four new words with the children and try to use them during other conversations and activities.
• After reading the story see how many things the children can recall that were down the back of the chair. Write down their ideas. Use this opportunity to model the writing process by asking the children to help you think of the initial letter for each word.

For more book suggestions, tip sheets, nursery rhymes, songs and fun things to make and do please visit:

thelittlebigbookclub.com.au
Memory Game

- Give each child a piece of paper and a pencil.
- Try and find about five objects that were found down the back of the chair.
- Place the objects on a tray and tell the children to look carefully at the objects and try to remember what is there.
- After about thirty seconds cover the tray with a cloth.
- Ask the children to draw all the objects they can remember.
- Children will enjoy comparing their pictures with what was actually on the tray.
- This game can also be played with two children working together as a team, particularly if some children are reluctant to draw.

Word Bank

- Create a word bank for children to use at the writing area.
- Cut out pictures of people and display them with labels, eg, a picture of a man could have the words daddy, father and uncle.
- Include in your display words form languages other than English that the children might be familiar with.
- Children can use the word bank in a variety of ways:
  - To make a book about families.
  - To draw a picture and label it.
  - To write a letter or make a card for someone.
  - To write a story.

Rhyme Time

- Spend some time focussing on the rhyme in the story.
- Encourage the children to draw a picture of two things that rhyme from the story, eg, twin and pin, cap and treasure map.
- Help the children label their picture and display them under the title Rhyme Time.
Explore the ‘ch’ digraph

- Have a brainstorming session with the children and make a list of all the words they can think of that begin with the ‘ch’ sound.
- You may need to give them some clues, eg, “I am thinking of an animal that lives on a farm and hatches out of an egg”.

Make a ‘ch’ book

Take photos of the children in different poses and use ‘ch’ words for the story, eg,

Photo: The children smiling
Text: Cheerful children.

Photo: Children showing their muscles.
Text: Champion children.

Photo: Children showing silly faces.
Text: Cheeky children.

Exploring Our World

Family Home

- Collect an assortment of old boxes, eg, cereal or biscuit boxes.
- Carefully open up the boxes so you have a flat piece of cardboard.
- Remake the box inside out so the children can decorate the plain cardboard side as the shiny side often resists paint, texta etc...
- Look at the picture of the home in the book.
- Encourage the children to add detail to their homes, eg, bricks, curtains, door handles etc.
- Folding a piece of card in half and then opening it up to make a tent shape is an easy way to make a roof.
- On the back of the house have the children draw the people who live inside it.

Encourage children to build houses when they are playing with the blocks, Duplo etc.

- Add cars, statue dolls (see Dramatic Play ideas) etc… to extend their play.

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Gingerbread Twins

- Talk about twins and how they sometimes look and dress the same. Give the children the opportunity to share their own experiences. Look at and talk about the twins in the story.
- Make gingerbread twins with the children. Encourage them to decorate their twins so that they look the same.
- Instead of gingerbread you could make twins using play dough.

Enjoying Dramatic Play

By carefully watching and listening to children as they play we can find out

Make Statue Dolls

- Give the children a piece of A5 paper and some textas to draw with.
- Ask them to draw a picture of themselves and each of their family members.
- Use a new piece of paper for each person.
- Mount the pictures on strong card and then cut around the outline of the body.
- Laminate or cover the pictures in contact to strengthen them.
- Attach each picture to the front of a small block so that it is able to stand up by itself.
- The dolls can be used in a variety of imaginary play situations:
  - In a dolls house.
  - In the block corner.
  - With cars and trucks.
  - Spread out some green material to represent grass and add some pinecones, small stones, interesting leaves and twigs so the children can pretend to be at the park with the dolls.
  - Use white or yellow material for sand, blue cellophane for water and add some shells to make a beach scene for the dolls to play in.
Paper Plate Puppets
- Let the children draw a face on the paper plate.
- You may like to use wool, crepe paper or strips of paper for hair.
- Attach a pop stick to the back of the plate.
- Make your own puppet and play ‘families’ with the children.

Having Fun With Music and Movement

Finger plays are a fun way to encourage listening, speaking and fine motor control.

- Sing the following finger plays to the toddlers, encouraging them to join in with the words and actions.
  - Family Finger Play
  - Five Little Ducks
- Use a washable pen to draw faces on the children’s fingers.
- Adapt familiar nursery rhymes so that they include the names of family members, eg,
  - Baa baa mummy sheep
    Have you any wool…
  - Hickory dickory dock
    Grandpa ran up the clock…
- Play a variation of Duck, Duck, Goose.
  Substitute the names to give the children the opportunity to use family names in context, eg, Uncle, uncle, aunt.

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Notes: List any other books, rhymes or activities the children have enjoyed.

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**Being Creative Through Play**

**Create a Cheerful Chair**
- Help the children to draw a large outline of a chair.
- Provide a variety of materials for children to print patterns with, eg, cotton reels, blocks, lids, pegs etc… and lots of bright paint.
- This activity can be done by individuals or as a group.

**Play Dough Families**
- Encourage the children to create their families out of play dough.
- Provide materials that can be used to add another dimension to the play dough, eg, wool can be used for hair, pieces of material can make clothes, sequins can make sparkling eyes etc…

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**Other books to try:**

- *The Family Book* by Todd Parr
- *Whose Family* by Jeanette Rowe
- *Whose Baby* by Jeanette Rowe
- *Shoes From Grandpa* by Mem Fox

**Other books by Margaret Mahy:**
- *A Lion In The Meadow*
- *Simply Delicious!*
- *Dashing Dog*
- *Down The Dragon’s Tongue*
- *The Seven Chinese Brothers*
- *17 Kings And 42 Elephants*
- *The Man Whose Mother Was A Pirate*

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Songs & Rhymes:

**Family Finger Play**
*Sing to the tune of “Frere Jacques”.*
Start with your hands hidden behind your back.

Where is father?
Where is father?

Show one hand with thumb out.

Here I am.
Here I am.

Wiggle your fingers to make it look like they are talking.

How are you today, dear?
Very well, I thank you.

Put hands behind back.

Say good-bye.
Say good-bye.

Where is mother? (Index finger)
Where is brother? (Middle finger)
Where is sister? (Ring finger)
Where is baby? (Pinkie finger)

**Baa Baa Mummy Sheep**
Baa baa mummy sheep
Have you any wool?
Yes sir, yes sir,
Three bags full.
One for the master
And one for the dame
And one for the little boy
Who lives down the lane.

*Encourage the children to choose the next family member to be in the song.*

**Five Little Ducks**
*Hold up five fingers and move to look like walking.*

Five little ducks went out one day
Over the hills and far away

Open and close hand to look like a beak quacking.

Mother duck said quack, quack, quack, quack

Hold up four fingers.

But only four little ducks came back.

Four little ducks…
Three little ducks…
Two little ducks…

One little duck went out one day
Over the hills and far away
Mother duck said quack, quack, quack, quack
But none of those five little ducks came back.

Sad mother duck went out one day
Over the hills and far away
Mother duck said quack, quack, quack, quack
And all of the five little ducks came back.

**Hickory Dickory Dock**
*Hickory dickory dock
Grandpa ran up the clock.*

The clock struck one…
Grandpa ran down….
Hickory dickory dock.

*Encourage the children to choose the next family member to be in the song.*