Play is the most powerful way babies learn.

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

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

- Engage in joyful reading experiences.
- Hear language and discover how it works.
- Interact with language through meaningful stories, songs and play.

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

Engaging with Language and Literacy

Remind yourself of Mem Fox’s Ten Read Aloud Commandments before you next read with children. Share them with staff, parents and carers.

Mem Fox’s Ten Read Aloud Commandments

1. Spend at least ten wildly happy minutes every single day reading aloud.

2. Read at least three stories a day: it may be the same story three times. Children need to hear a thousand stories before they can begin to learn to read.

3. Read aloud with animation. Listen to your own voice and don’t be dull, or flat, or boring. Hang loose and be loud, have fun and laugh a lot.

4. Read with joy and enjoyment: real enjoyment for yourself and great joy for the listeners.

5. Read the stories that the kids love, over and over and over again, and always read in the same ‘tune’ for each book: i.e. with the same intonations on each page, each time.

6. Let children hear lots of language by talking to them constantly about the pictures, or anything else connected to the book; or sing any old song that you can remember; or say nursery rhymes in a bouncy way; or be noisy together doing clapping games.

‘Children can learn to read easily without being taught, by being read to, by playing games with words, and by falling head over heels in love with books.’

- Mem Fox
7. Look for rhyme, rhythm or repetition in books for young children, and make sure the books are really short.

8. Play games with the things that you and the child can see on the page, such as letting kids finish rhymes, and finding the letters that start the child’s name and yours, remembering that it’s never work, it’s always a fabulous game.

9. Never ever teach reading, or get tense around books.

10. Please read aloud every day, mums and dads, because you just love being with your child, not because it’s the right thing to do.

**Have lots of fun sharing this book with babies:**

- Count the fingers and toes in the book.
- Count the babies fingers and toes.
- Talk about the illustrations in relation to the babies, eg, ‘This little baby has lots of lovely black hair just like you’.

**Book Display**

- Babies love books about babies!
- Create an inviting display that will encourage babies to explore books.
- Make a collection of sturdy books; board books and cloth books are great for babies.
- Try and find books that feature pictures of babies or make your own with photographs or pictures from magazines.
- Place the books so that they are easily accessible for the babies, eg, in a basket or on a low shelf.
- Make the area inviting for babies by adding a soft blanket or mat, an interesting mobile and a child safe mirror.

**Look In The Mirror**

- Sit on the floor with the baby in your lap or stand up and hold the baby so that they can see themselves in the mirror.
- Point to the baby in the mirror and say hello to them.
- Wave to the baby and help them to wave back.
- Talk about their body parts while you are both looking at them in the mirror.
That’s Me

• Ask each family to send in a photo of their child (or take your own photos).
• Photocopy and enlarge the photos and laminate if possible.
• Spend time with the babies looking at and talking about their photos and the photos of their friends.

Holding Hands

• When you read the story you can encourage babies to practice grasping by placing your finger gently in the baby’s palm.
• They will automatically grasp your finger by reflex.
• This activity will help babies develop their hand-eye coordination.

Blowing Kisses

• Show the baby how to blow kisses.
• Make lots of nice big exaggerated kissing and blowing sounds.
• Help guide the baby’s hands to their lips and make the sound for them.
• The babies will delight in the attention and soon will be blowing kisses back to you.

Enjoying Imaginative Play

Puppet Play

• Little babies will enjoy puppet play.
• Glove puppets work well for this age.
• Make the puppet talk to the baby.
• They will love hearing the different and funny voices the puppet can make.
• Tell the story to the baby while using a puppet.
This Little Baby...
- Show the babies how to play with a baby doll, teddy bear or other similar toy.
- Role model how to gently cuddle the baby and rock it in your arms and then let the baby have a turn.
- Use language from the book in your play. The more babies hear words, the sooner they will start to try and speak them.
- Point to the dolls arm and then gently touch the babies arm while naming it.
- Continue with other body parts for as long as the baby seems interested.

Discovering Sensory Play

First Masterpieces
- Cover a small table or individual high chairs with butcher’s paper.
- Give babies crayons and encourage them to draw and scribble with them.
- Display their drawings so that they and others can admire them.

Sensory Exploration With Hands
Babies will enjoy feeling a variety of sensations with their hands. Try:
- Feathers
- Pine cones
- Shells - smooth and rough
- Tissues
- A damp cloth
- Leaves and petals
- Ensure that none of the objects pose a choking risk and that babies don’t put the objects into their mouths.

Sensory Exploration With Feet
Give the babies opportunities to feel different surfaces under their feet. Try:
- Grass
- Sand - wet and dry
- Material
- Cushions
**Finger Painting**

- Paint a small amount of finger paint on the baby’s pointer finger and gently guide them to make a mark on a piece of paper.
- Some babies will quickly get the idea and happily make lots of finger prints.
- Other babies may need guidance and reassurance.
- Talk about the baby’s fingers, the colours they are using and the marks that they are making.
- Have fun washing your hands together at the end of the activity.

**Having Fun with Music and Movement**

Sing songs with the babies that will encourage them to explore their fingers and toes. Try:

- *This Little Piggy*
- *Round and Round the Garden*
- *Where Is Thumbkin*
- *Heads Shoulders Knees and Toes*
- *Open Shut Them*
- *If You’re Happy and You Know It*
- *This is the way……*

Try to include songs and rhymes that are in a baby’s first language.

Sing songs to the babies that reinforce the special relationship that you have with them. Try:

- *Skidamarink*
- *You Are My Sunshine*
Other books by Mem Fox to try:

Where the Giant Sleeps
A Particular Cow
Hunwick’s Egg
Where Is The Green Sheep
The Magic Hat
Harriett, You’ll Drive Me Wild!
Sleep Bears
Whoever You Are
Boo To A Goose
Wombat Divine
Time For Bed
Memories
Sophie
Shoes From Grandpa
Feathers and Fools
Night Noises
Koala Lou
Guess What?
A Bedtime Story
The Straight Line Wonder
Sail Away: The Ballad of Skip and Nell
Just Like That
Harriett And The Fox
Arabella, The Smallest Girl In The World
Zoo-Looking
A Cat Called Kite
Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge
Possum Magic
Songs & Rhymes:

**This Little Piggy**
This little piggy went to market
This little piggy stayed home
This little piggy had roast beef
This little piggy had none
And this little pig cried wee wee wee
all the way home.

**Round and Round the Garden**
Round and round the garden
Like a teddy bear
One step
Two step
Tickle you under there

**Where Is Thumbkin**
Where is Thumbkin
Where is Thumbkin
Here I am
Here I am
How are you today sir
Very well I thank you
Run away
Run away

**Heads Shoulders Knees and Toes**
Heads shoulder knees and toes
Knees and toes
Heads should have knees and toes
Knees and toes
And eyes and ears and mouth and nose
Heads shoulders knees and toes
Knees and toes

**Open Shut Them**
Open shut them
Open shut them
Give a little clap
Open shut them
Open shut them
Lay them in your lap
Creep them creep them
Right up to your chinny chin chin
Open wide your little mouth
But do not let them in

**If You’re Happy and You Know It**
If you’re happy and you now it clap your hands
If you’re happy and you know it clap your hands
If your happy and you know it and you really want to show it
If your happy and you know it
Clap your hands.

Make up your own verses using other actions, eg, stamp your feet, nod your head etc...

**You Are My Sunshine**
You are my sunshine
My only sunshine
You make me happy when skies are grey
You’ll never know dear
How much I love you
Please don’t take my sunshine away
Ten Little Fingers Ten Little Toes
Mem Fox

This is the way……
Sing to the tune of Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush
This is the way we wiggle our fingers
Wiggle our fingers
Wiggle our fingers
This is the way we wiggle our fingers
On a sunny morning.

Make up your own versions using other actions, eg, rub our tummy, pat your head etc…

Skidamarink
Skidamarink a dink a dink
Skidamarink a doo
I love you
Skidamarink a dink a dink
Skidamarink a doo
I love you
I love you in the morning
And in the afternoon
I love you in the evening
And underneath the moon
Oh skidamarink a dink a dink
Skidamarink a doo
I love you

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

For more book suggestions, information and activity sheets visit www.vegemite.com.au

The information within this resource file is provided by The Little Big Book Club. Enquiries to Fiona Lange: fiona.tbbc@optusnet.com.au
The Vegemite Little Aussie Reader is a project developed in partnership with The Little Big Book Club and Kraft Foods. The Little Big Book Club is known as The Advertiser Little Big Book Club in South Australia and The Courier-Mail Little Big Book Club in Queensland.