



Early Learning: Environmental Print

Environmental print is printed letters or symbols that surround children in their daily lives. Examples are street signs, labels on food, and billboards. Environmental print is usually the first print that children recognize. It helps children make the connection in their brains that letters and symbols *mean* something. The value of using environmental print activities is that it:

1. Helps children grasp that letters and symbols mean something. This can encourage children to want to discover that meaning.
2. Encourages children to "pretend read", which is a component of emergent literacy. This helps develop an understanding of word meaning and context.
3. Helps children view themselves as capable readers. This happens because you demonstrate to the children that there are already words they can recognize! In turn, this stimulates young children to want to read more. They feel successful, and that is encouraging to them.

Here are two "environmental print" activities that you can play with your young child.

Street Signs

1. Show children pictures of street signs. You can find lots of signs in magazines.
2. For each picture, children can explain about the sign. You can ask, "Do you know what this sign says?" "Where do you see this sign?" "What do you do when you see this sign?" It's important to use pictures in color, as that is a big part of the way children recognize the sign.

Matching Game

1. Cut out duplicate pictures of signs and glue them to cardboard backing.
2. Mix them up, turn them face down.
3. Flip them over two at a time, trying to find the matching pair.
4. The player should say out loud what is the word or picture on the match card.

You can find terrific sign templates at Northwest Territories Literacy Council website:

<http://www.nwt.literacy.ca/familit/howtokit/enviro/contents.htm>

And, <http://www.manythings.org/signs/driving8.htm> has colored street signs too.

For more tips, or if you need more information or would like to talk to someone:

In Washington State: Call the Family Help Line at 1-800-932-HOPE

Outside of Washington State: contact your local Circle of Parents agency at

www.circleofparents.org