

Word Wonders Activity 20: Words Are All Write

CHILDREN ARE LEARNING TO...

- Understand what writing utensils do and how they work (18 to 24 months)
- Use writing utensils to explore cause/effect through mark-making (18 to 24 months)
- Understand that print has meaning (24 to 48 months)
- Produce scribbles or scribble-like forms (24 to 30 months)
- Produce some letter-like shapes and familiar letters, like the letters in their own names (36 to 48 months)

ACTIVITY SUMMARY:

In this activity, children will explore the idea that the print they see in books and the world around them has meaning. They will explore how written words can be combined to make sentences and stories. Children will also have opportunities to practice fine motor skills by exploring different types of writing utensils and produce age-appropriate “writing” (from mark-making to scribbles to letters). They will also learn that their scribbles and squiggles have meaning and that they can be writers!

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Book: *The Word Collector* by Peter H. Reynolds

For Activity 1 (Engage):

- Paper—enough pages for photography images
- Cell phone or digital camera
- Color printer
- Scissors (for teacher)
- Marker (for teacher)
- Wall-safe tape (painter’s tape works well)
- Optional, for children aged 36 to 48 months: Small whiteboard, marker, and eraser

For Activity 2 (Expand):

- Large (flip-chart sized) pieces of paper, one per child—if this size is not available, then substitute the largest paper that is available
- Selected writing utensils appropriate to children’s age and stage—to include items like: chunky crayons, regular crayons, dot markers, child-safe markers, chunky/jumbo pencils (which allow a fist grip) or short/triangle-barrel pencils for older children (which invite the use of a tripod grasp), etc.
- Small tray or basket, one for every two children

PREPARATION:

For Activity 1 (Engage):

- Obtain permission to take children on a walk around the larger community. If this is not possible, a walk around the school property is a good substitute.
- Ensure that one of the participating adults knows how to take photos with the digital camera or cell phone and can transfer them to a computer for printing.
- Identify a space in your classroom (at child-height) where you can hang printed images/words that children are learning.

For Activity 2 (Expand):

- Create a selection of writing utensils for each tray or basket. These will be shared by pairs of children.
- **For children aged 36 to 48 months:**
Prepare your own project. On a piece of paper, draw something about yourself (a pet, a favorite activity, a favorite food, a favorite memory, etc.). Below the picture, write 2-3 sentences to share with children.
- Identify a space in the classroom where children can write/draw while lying on the floor (to accommodate the large pieces of paper). If there is not a large enough space to accommodate children, use smaller sheets of paper and work at a child-sized table. Ensure that children's feet are not dangling under the table while they work; this makes it harder to write because their posture is not supported. If this is the case, place a cardboard box or small stool under their feet as a support.

CONSIDERING THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AGED 18 TO 36 MONTHS

Children don't begin to draw until about 24-30 months of age. However, they will engage in the important work of mark-making and scribbling as they explore what writing utensils do and how they work. For younger children, this physical exploration should be the focus of the activity.

As you implement this activity for children in this age range, limit the utensils available to them to avoid overwhelm. Offer child-safe markers and chunky crayons. Notice how they hold the writing tools: probably with their fist. This is developmentally expected. As their fine motor skills grow, they will gradually begin the transition to a tripod (two fingers and thumb) grasp between ages 3 and 5 years.

Activity Instructions

EXPLORE

Share the following book and extension activity with children as an opportunity to help them recognize and understand the meaning of writing and print.

Book: *The Word Collector* by Peter H. Reynolds

As You Read:

- **Introduce the book and its key ideas.** Read the cover and say: *I see a boy and so many words! This is Jerome and he collects words, words that he **hears**, **sees** and **reads**. Let's listen carefully to see how he does it and what words he finds. I wonder what he can do with his words.*
- **Define new words and phrases.** For example, jumbled means "mixed up." Do children's toys ever get jumbled at home? Do their clothes or shoes sometimes get jumbled? On the page where Jerome is holding a piece of paper with the word "wonder," point at the letters and explain that those letters,

all together, spell a word: WONDER. *Wonder is when you are curious and want to know more.* Ask if the children have ever wondered about anything.

- **Support phonological awareness.** If you have already completed the unit on syllables, when the story gets to the pages that discuss two-syllable and multi-syllable words, invite children to clap or tap the syllables out with you for some of these.
- **Encourage prediction.** When Jerome takes his word collection to the top of the hill, what do the children think will happen next?
- **Use pictures and text to support observation and reasoning.** On the page that reads, "Jerome collected words he *heard*." Ask children, *What part of your body helps you hear?* Children may point to, or say, ears. On the page where Jerome collects words he *saw*, ask children which body part helps them see. (Eyes.) Ask children if they see any words in your classroom. If they point or show you, read what the words say.
- **Identify and explore emotions.** When Jerome slips, and his words go flying, what do the children think Jerome is feeling? Perhaps upset, disappointed, surprised, or worried? We see that Jerome also uses words to be kind to others. For older children, ask: *What kind words do you know? What is something kind that someone has said to them?*
- **Adjust the story sharing to children's development.** Younger children may not be able to maintain attention for the whole story. It's okay to pause and go back to the book later or another day. You can also summarize pages, rather than read every word. Feel free to adjust the experience based on the engagement of the children in your group.

ENGAGE – ACTIVITY 1

Introduce the activity: *We are going on a Word Walk to collect some words for our class. I can't wait to see what words we discover!*

Explain: *We are going on a walk today in our community (or playground). Every time you see something that you think is interesting, let me know! I will tell you the word for it and take a picture so we can collect all of the words you find!*

Take children on a short walk: Move through the community (either just your property or on child-safe sidewalks in your greater community).

Model how to be a word collector: *Oooh, I see something interesting here! The word for this is: Flower. I'll take a picture for our word collection.*

Optional for children aged 36 to 48 months: Take the small whiteboard and marker with you. Write the word for each object children point out: *Let me write the word "flower" on the whiteboard so you can see it.*

Encourage children to point or say when they see or find something interesting. Use the phrase, **"the word for that is..."** and snap a photo. Have the child repeat the word for the object they found. Young children (18 to 36 months) may request a word through pointing or even gazing, so be a careful observer of their body language.

At the end of the walk: Notice for children: *We collected SO many words today, like (example) and (example)! I can't wait to see these words on our walls!"*

MAKING MATH CONNECTIONS

Explore the concept of measurement by doing comparisons of word length with children. Choose a variety of words (4-6) from the book or your word walk. Make sure you choose both long and short words. Print each of these words onto paper. Have some ribbon and scissors (teacher use only) handy. Ask children to notice if they think each word is "long" or "short." Then ask one child to hold the ribbon at the beginning of each word, while you snip the ribbon at the end of the word. Tape the ribbons onto the paper. Compare the length of the ribbons. With the children's help, put the words in order from shortest to longest. Use measurement language like: long, longer, longest and short, shorter, shortest.

Next Step for Teacher Only: Print the photos you took onto paper, leaving space at the bottom to print the word for each picture in large, simple writing. You can continue this activity on subsequent days, if you wish.

Explain the next step to children: *What did we do on our word collection walk? Did we collect a lot of words? We did! Does anyone remember any of the words we found? Today, we are going to look at all of the words we collected and make a word wall in our classroom! We will have a chance to post all of the words right here, and I need your help.*

Let each child choose a picture/word from your pile of printed pages: Repeat the word as you point to the picture. Have the child/group repeat the word after you say it. Place some tape on the back and let them post the word on the wall at child height. (It's okay if they are crooked or not perfectly spaced. If you'd like, you can adjust them later during naptime.)

Continue until all words have been posted. Take some time to admire the word wall with children. Point to some of the different words and say them aloud. Encourage children to tell you which words they like or want you to say. Point to the words as you read them.

Add words over time: Let the word wall be a "living document" as you snap photos/add words across the next month or beyond in response to children's interests. The more you engage in this routine, the more children will ask and seek out new vocabulary to describe the world around them.

Summarize: *This week we collected words on a Word Walk. Then we built our own word wall in our classroom. It's going to be so fun to visit our word collection, just like the one Jerome had in the story, whenever we want!*

EXPAND – ACTIVITY 2

For children 18 to 36 months old:

Introduce: *You will have a chance to touch and explore lots of different ways to write and draw. (Show and demonstrate each one.)*

- *This is a crayon. I hold it in my hand and make a mark like this.*
- *This is a marker. I hold it like this...can you see my line?*
- *This is a dot marker. I can hold it in my hand and leave dots on the paper: Dot, dot, dot! Who sees them?*
- *This is a pencil. I hold it with my fingers and can make a mark.*

Note: The goal for this activity is about exploration and giving children the chance to grasp different writing utensils and perhaps make a mark.

Position pairs of children on the floor (if space allows, or at a table).

Place trays of writing and drawing utensils between every two children.

Note: **Young toddlers will not be able to consistently share or use writing utensils appropriately and need your supervision to be safe.** Remember that children need lots of experience to learn how and where to use these new tools!

As children explore—Describe and notice their work, including their choice of utensil, their grasp, and their marks:

- *You are holding the crayon so carefully!*
- *You made so many dots!*

- *That is a loooooong red line.*
- *Wow, you used the crayon to make 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 marks on the paper.*
- *That is a HUGE scribble. You made a really BIG mark on the paper!*

Add each child's name to their page. Show the child their name as you say it. Point to each letter, name the letter, and explain: *This is what your name looks like when we write it.*

Tape each child's project to the wall; snap a photo to share with parents via email or your school's mobile app.

For children 36 to 48 months old:

Introduce: *We're going to do a project together where you can draw a picture and then tell us about it!*

Distribute materials: As you give each child a large piece of paper, fold it in half. Explain:

- *On the top part of your paper, you can draw a picture. You can draw something from your imagination, or you can draw your family, your pet, your favorite food, or something else you want to share."*
- *I can't wait to see your work!*

Position pairs of children on the floor if space allows, or at a table.

Place trays of writing and drawing utensils between every two children. If needed, model or introduce how to use each one (see scripting above for younger children.)

Supervise to ensure they are using these appropriately. Remember that children need to learn how and where to use these new tools! It is a part of becoming a writer to learn the *norms* of how to treat and use writing materials.

When children are done drawing, explain:

- *When you're done drawing, I will come around and you can tell me about your picture. I will write your words at the bottom of your page.*
- *If you want to try writing your words first, you can!*
- *You can also sign your name at the bottom.*

Ask each child if they would like you to tell you something to write on their paper. If they do, use the space on the bottom half of the page to write down what the child tells you. After you write what they say, point to each word and read it aloud for the child.

Offer each child tape so they can hang their work on the wall. Snap a picture of each child's project to share with parents via email or your school's mobile app.

Share your own work to begin closing the activity. For example: *Here is my picture and my words. I drew a picture of my dog. And down here I wrote, "My dog is named Louie. He likes to run. He likes to bark. He really loves cheese."*

Review each piece of work to close this activity. Invite each creator to stand next to their work and share something about it. If they wish, they or you can read their writing out loud (point to their words as you read).

REFLECT

Return to a gathering area with the children.

Say: *Today we learned that we can write words, and we can learn new words for every single thing in the world around us. We collected words to make a word wall and then did some of our own writing and drawing.*

Ask: *Would anyone like to share a word they know?* (Go around the circle, inviting each child to share a word or point to word. Be sure to share your own word: appreciate, care, enjoy, etc. to describe your time with the children.)

SUMMARIZE: *Today we learned that words are all around us. We can write words, we can sing words, and we can read words!*

Individualizing the Activity

Make it more challenging:

- In Activity 1, during the word collection, you can ask children to tell you the word first, and then if they don't know, you can name the object. You can also use more complicated words for objects children point out—instead of flower, you might say *lilac* or *honeysuckle*. Instead of truck, you might say *car transporter* or *tractor trailer*.
- In Activity 1, once the word wall is created, you can help children group the words into “long” words and “short” words. This introduces a basic math concept (length) and the practice of making comparisons. Use blocks to line up under each letter. Count the blocks to see which words have the largest quantity of blocks (and the smallest). Do any words have the same, or equal, numbers of blocks/letters?
- In Activity 1, you can prompt children to clap or tap out the syllables for the words you've collected. This makes a good connection to Unit 15 (Dig Into Syllables) if you have already completed it. Notice that longer words usually have more syllables too!
- In Activity 2, for children who are writing their name or some simple words, you can write some key words from their dictation on scrap paper and encourage them to copy the words independently onto their creation.

Make it less challenging:

- In Activity 1, keep the walk to the school grounds. Decide ahead of time which words you want to “find” and be sure to point these out to children. If you'd like, stick a word label (on brightly colored paper or index cards) on each of these items so children can literally find and collect the words as you walk. Try to choose words (perhaps “dumpster” or “mailbox”) that may be new to most children.
- Keep the new words for the word wall to 5-7 maximum. Review these new words each day and use them throughout the day. As children master these, continue to add new words (2-3 at a time).
- In Activity 2, use the suggested adaptation for younger children.

MAKING CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE DAY:

- Keep the word wall up as a “living document” that grows over time. Add new words as you introduce new projects or themes to children, or as children have new experiences themselves.
- Intentionally use and reference words from the word wall during everyday conversations and routines. This helps children hear, practice, remember, and master new vocabulary.
- Create a Writing Area in the classroom that children can choose during free play. This area should have writing materials appropriate to children's age and stage of development—for example: crayons, child-safe markers, pencils, ballpoint pens, watercolors and brushes, etc. Different types of paper (writing paper, construction paper) should also be available. Envelopes and stickers are a fun addition. Alphabet stamps and stamp pads also encourage alphabetic knowledge and fine motor skills. Children should be able to choose and explore materials freely in this area.

- As you go about the day, notice interesting objects and label them out loud for children. Add these words to the word wall.
- Add labels to your classroom—label toys, rooms, activity areas, etc. Make children part of this activity by telling them the word and letting them stick the label on. Partner with families to add labels in children’s home language(s) as well. Consider color coding labels—such as using blue labels for English, red for Spanish, purple for Arabic, etc. Over time, children will learn which color labels show “their” language(s).
- Notice and point out text in stories. Choose books that use repetitive phrasing and/or dramatic fonts (like the wavy “Whooo! Whoooo!” in *Chugga Chugga Choo Choo* by Kevin Lewis) that, with familiarity, children will be able to predict and “read” themselves.
- Create name plates for each child’s chair, carpet space, backpack, and/or cot. Point to the names and read them. Recognizing one’s own and peers’ names is an early form of “reading.” Writing (or approximating) the letters in one’s own name is often the first writing a child attempts.
- Institute a “check-in” process where children can make a mark or approximate/write their name on a piece of paper when they arrive in the morning to “check in.” Regular practice with writing utensils builds hand/finger strength and coordination. This activity also emphasizes that writing is a form of communication and text has meaning.

Song: *Into the Forest*

Directions: This song is intended to be a “quiet time” song – where children can lie down on the floor and relax, take deep breaths, close eyes, and just listen and recenter themselves after more vigorous activity. Alternatively, teachers could collect pictures of the items described in the song and show them to children as they sit and listen to spark their imaginations about words we could collect if we went for a walk in the forest.

Into a beautiful forest one day
I stepped inside, wanting to play
I made lots of pictures inside of my mind
Of amazing and wonderful things I did find.

As I walked through, what did I see?
Hundreds and hundreds of wonderful things
I collected some words along the way
And I’m bringing them back here for you today.

Chorus:
I meander / Round the hills and sing with the birds.
I listen and observe, collecting up words!

Words like soft, dappled sunlight that streams through the trees
And lush the green ferns that tickle my knees.
Hushed is the word for my steps on the moss
And bubbly the word for the brook that I cross.

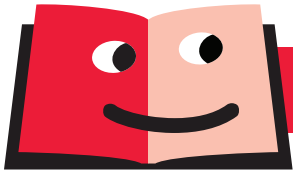
Words like chipmunks all skittering ‘cross crackling twigs
I sit on a rock, watching squirrels gently dig
To find hidden food that they’ve buried below
Words like acorns and walnuts just under the snow.

Chorus:
I meander round the hills and sing with the birds.
I listen and observe, collecting up words!

Words like mushrooms all clustered like stools made for ants,
who march in a line as if off to a dance.
Words like frogs in a pond, hopping over and over
And mice playing games in a soft patch of clover.

Last, I collect words like clear waterfall
And shimmering secret; the best words of all!
I smile at the woods as I go on my way
Grateful for words I’ve collected today!

Chorus:
I collected some words along the way
And I’ve brought them back here to share with you today.
And I’ve brought them back here to share with you today.



Just for Families

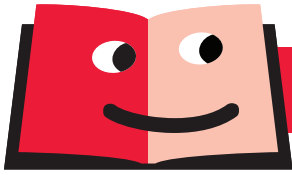
We Know About Writing Words!

This week, children explored the words they see in books and the world around them. We learned that print has meaning and written words are used to communicate information. Children had a chance to try writing themselves, even if they are not forming letters yet! This early experience with markers and crayons helps them build the finger skills they need to write later on.

Here's how you can help children build writing and print awareness skills at home:

- **Show your child print.** Talk about what it means. When you get a text message from, for example, a grandparent, show it to your child. Point to each word as you read it. Ask them how you should respond and enter their response into a return text. Together, point to the words in the reply as you read it out loud.
- **Show your child how writing is useful.** Together with your child, write a grocery list or task list. Work on this list together and as you complete each item, read it and then ask your child to help cross that item off the list.
- **Write together.** Give your child a piece of scrap paper and some child-safe writing utensils—a crayon, short pencil, or washable marker. Ask them if they want to write a note to you or another person they love. Writing, even if it looks like scribbling, helps children learn how to hold and use writing utensils. They are also learning that writing is a powerful way to communicate!





Solo para familias

¡Sabemos escribir palabras!

Esta semana, los niños exploraron las palabras que ven en los libros y en el mundo que les rodea. Aprendimos que los materiales impresos tienen significado y que las palabras escritas se utilizan para comunicar información. Los niños tuvieron la oportunidad de tratar de escribir solos, ¡aunque aún no sean capaces de formar letras! Esta experiencia temprana con marcadores y lápices de colores les ayuda a adquirir las habilidades manuales que necesitarán más adelante para escribir.

Aquí le explicamos cómo puede ayudar a los niños a adquirir habilidades de escritura y conciencia de lo impreso en casa:

- **Muéstrele a su hijo materiales impresos.** Hable sobre lo que significan. Cuando reciba un mensaje de texto, por ejemplo, de un abuelo, muéstrelo a su hijo. Señale cada palabra mientras la lee. Pregúntele cómo debería contestar y escriba su respuesta en un mensaje de texto de respuesta. Juntos, señalen las palabras de la respuesta mientras la leen en voz alta.
- **Muéstrele a su hijo la utilidad de la escritura.** Junto con su hijo, escriba una lista de la compra o una lista de tareas. Trabajen juntos en esta lista y, a medida que terminen cada tarea, léala y pídale a su hijo que le ayude a tacharla de la lista.
- **Escriban juntos.** Dele a su hijo un trozo de papel y algunos útiles de escritura seguros para niños: un creyón, un lápiz grueso o un marcador lavable. Pregúntele si quiere escribirle una nota a usted o a otra persona querida. Escribir, aunque parezca garabatear, ayuda a que los niños aprendan a sostener y usar los útiles de escritura. ¡También aprenden que escribir es una forma poderosa de comunicarse!

