

Ed Extras

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Environmental Print

Environmental print is the print of everyday life. It's the name given to the print that appears in signs, labels, and logos. Street signs, candy wrappers, labels on peanut butter and the K in Kmart are other examples of environmental print. For many emergent readers, environmental print helps bridge the connection between letters and first efforts to read.

Adults can take advantage of all this print by using it in ways to talk about letters, words, and print. Like playing the license plate game during a long car ride, (everyone find an A, now a B) playing with environmental print can be quick and easy. Here are a few ideas:

- Cereal boxes are colorful and interesting to look at. Ask your child to find the first letter of his name somewhere on the box. See if he can find other letters from his name, too.
- Choose a simple sign to focus on during one car trip (example: stop sign, pedestrian crossing, one way). Have your child count the number of signs seen along the way. Have your child read the sign, noticing that the same sign says the same message each time. Talk about the sounds of the letters you can hear ("The S makes the /sssssss/ sound.")
- Use a digital camera to take pictures of different signs: speed limit, stop, do not enter, exit. Use these pictures to make a small book for your child to "read."
- Cut out familiar words from cereal boxes, labels from soup cans and from yogurt containers. Use these individual words ("Cheerios," "tomato," "Dannon") to talk about capital and lower case letters. Talk about the sounds of letters ("The letter T says 'tuh'"). Encourage your child to read the words you've cut out.

After you've gathered lots of pictures of signs and words from items within the house, you can sort these items by beginning letter. Identify the sounds made by the letters in logos. Sort logos and words by category (foods, drinks, snacks, signs). A simple alphabet book can be created using all your cutouts by organizing all the A words, B words, C words, etc.

Your child can have fun learning to read even when books are not available. Environmental print provides lots of opportunities for kids to interact with letters, sounds, and words.

For more information, watch "Roots of Reading" online, from our PBS series, *Launching Young Readers*: www.ReadingRockets.org/shows/launching/roots

