

# Early Literacy Apps

Certain technology and devices can enhance the learning experience for pre-readers. Here are a few guidelines for choosing apps for your 2 – 5 year old.

A good early literacy app should:

- Be easy and intuitive for your pre-reader to navigate. Buttons and pagination should flow without confusion. The content can be challenging, but using the app should not be a challenge.
- Have a clean, uncluttered display – not too busy or distracting.
- Encourage the development of multiple literacy's (print, visual, digital, etc.).
- Inspire active, rather than passive, participation.
- Book-based apps should strike a balance between interactive features and opportunities for children to simply get lost in the story. Thoughtfully selected apps can supplement, not replace, the non-digital ways to read, write, sing, play and talk together. Explore apps with your pre-reader, as you would explore a book together.



## [Screen Sense: Setting the Record Straight](#) – Research-Based Guidelines for Screen Use for Children Under 3 Years Old

*This free resource is a tool for guiding parents and professionals in making informed decisions about screen media use.*

**These sites contain reviews and can provide a start for finding new apps to share with your kids.**

[Common Sense Media](#)

[Tech Finder](#)

*This list of apps was specially selected for their early literacy skill-building qualities. These apps are geared towards children ages 2 – 5 and their parents or caregivers.*



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# Early Literacy Apps

## READ

Reading aloud to children is the single most important activity for building all early literacy skills and preparing kids to read on their own. Read eBook apps aloud with your child instead of defaulting to the prerecorded option.



### [Learn with Homer](#)

Develops confident readers by progressively building over 50+ skills, including: letter sound recognition, phonics, sight Words, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension and more. Homer guides kids through a program aligned to the Common Core Standards. The app includes stories, poems, fables, non-fiction, and reading-related games and exercises, all with comprehension questions at the end. Store options: [iTunes](#). Price: One month FREE & \$7.99/month after free trial



### [Nina and Peanut](#)

Nina is visiting her grandparents' ranch where everyone speaks Spanish, even the animals. Read with your child; help her recognize the animals on a ranch and how to make their sounds in Spanish. Kids can record and play their own animal sounds to call the animals! Learning about sounds in different languages introduces children to bilingual language learning. Developed by [Fred Rogers Center at Saint Vincent College](#). Store options: [Google Play](#). Price: FREE



### [Not Without Bear by Anna Grossnickle Hines](#)

Audrey loves to play and never without her best friend, Bear. When bedtime comes Bear is nowhere to be found! Help Audrey search the house for the missing Bear, before being tucked in for the night. Silly sound effects, bouncing and movable objects, and a kitty hiding on every page add to the fun. English, Spanish and German. Includes multiple interactions on each page. Store Options: [iTunes](#), [Amazon App Store](#) & [Google Play](#). Price: \$2.99



### [Reading Rainbow](#)

Ages 3-9 explore worlds of reading to discover storybooks and learn about such topics as animals, family, science, music, and more. Each book comes alive as children read-along with audio storytelling by LeVar Burton, and his hand selected group of actors. Exclusive video field trips take children on adventures to visit fascinating people and places. Store options: [iTunes](#) & [Amazon App Store](#). Price: FREE trial with membership options



### [Goldilocks and Little Bear](#)

Little Bear now has a plot of his own, parallel to Goldilocks's: he wanders off, finds himself at Goldilocks's house & samples her family's pancakes, wardrobes, & reading material. Hold the device one way for a scene in Goldilocks's tale, then flip it upside down for a complementary scene in Little Bear's. Help the characters complete tasks: play hide-&-seek with the bears, collect berries with Goldilocks' family, tilt your device to rock Goldilocks on Little Bear's chair & more. Ages 3 - 6. Store options: [iTunes](#). Price: \$4.99

Review Source: [Horn Book](#)



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### **Steam Train Dream Train**

Digital book app edition of the picture book *Steam Train, Dream Train* by Sherri Duskey Rinker & Tom Lichtenheld. Includes soothing narration that can be turned on or off; you can also record your own. There's some dynamic motion & zooming in and out of the scenes, but it's all fairly subdued. It's a fun fantasy that ends safely back in the bedroom of a sleeping (and dreaming) boy with a train set on the floor below him. Ages 3 - 6. Store Options: [iTunes](#). Price: \$2.99

Review Source: [Horn Book](#)



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# Early Literacy Apps

## WRITE

Writing skills develop in tandem with reading skills and help children build on the key insight that print has meaning. Scribbling and drawing – with a crayon, with chalk, with a stick in sand, or on a touch screen are all forms of writing. Writing on a tablet with a finger is easy for children who have not yet mastered grasping a crayon.



### ChromaKids

Develop a story by creating a picture with the drawing tools and stickers. Children can record themselves telling a story that goes with the illustration. Share the story with buddies who can add to it and record their own part of the story and send it back to the original creator. For children ages three and older. Developed by [Fred Rogers Center at Saint Vincent College](#). Store options: [iTunes](#). Price: FREE



### Lazoo Art Box

A coloring book app from PBS Kids. Color a page, press the play button, and watch drawings come to life. Prompts get kids thinking, and animations delight. Tutorials provided for each drawing activity and prompts are read aloud. Includes 26 “living” animated drawing pages; a drawing palette with stickers, chalk, colors and more; animated Free Play page & camera page to draw whatever you imagine. Store options: [iTunes](#). Price: \$1.99



### Finger Paint With Sounds

Explore touch with color, sounds or music. Fun alternative to help kids with special needs and others to practice their first interactions with a touch screen. Choose a color and draw with music, sound effects or no sound at all. Single-touch to encourages finger pointing skills, multi-touch for maximum cause and effect, bright feedback for children with visual impairments. Choice of music or sound-FX auditory feedback or none. Store options: [iTunes](#) & [Google Play](#). Price: FREE



### Little Writer – The Tracing App for Kids

Includes: uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers 1 to 10, 20 basic shapes, dozens of 3 and 4 letter words to make practice more enjoyable and interesting, ability to add an unlimited number of your own words and pictures for maximum enjoyment and variety, additional letters for foreign language characters. Just go to settings to turn additional characters on and record their sound. Store options: [iTunes](#). Price: FREE



### Gappy Learns Writing by Spinlight

Unlike other writing apps, this one shows the shaky, scratchy, not-quite-right lines that children have drawn. This gives kids a better sense of their progress & a greater sense of accomplishment as they see their own improvement over time. Includes a 52 coloring pages that allows users to color shapes in with scribbling, just like a crayon or marker on paper. Customize your experience by choosing between upper or lower case & three different font options. Narration walks children through the app, step-by-step with gentle prompts. Ages 3 - 6. Store options: [iTunes](#). Price: \$2.99

Review Source: [Madison Public Library](#)



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# Early Literacy Apps

## SING

Singing supports children's oral language development of language structures, vocabulary, and phonological awareness. Sing songs while you have an app open, and sing them again together later when you're not using your tablet.



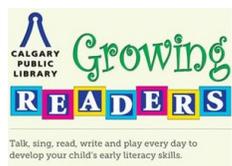
### Everyday Grooves

Set up musical prompts throughout the day to help children transition to new activities such as, reading, brushing teeth & getting dressed. When the alarm goes off, turn the volume up so your child can hear & sing along. Or, just play the songs when it is convenient for you. 12 songs are included for everyday routines. Developed by [Fred Rogers Center at Saint Vincent College](#). Store options: [iTunes](#). Price: FREE



### Baby Karaoke

Animated karaoke styled game that enables the user to sing along with their child to well-known songs & nursery rhymes. Store options: [iTunes](#) & [Google Play](#). Price: FREE



### Grow a Reader

Watch the videos to learn rhymes and songs, and then perform them with your child to help develop their early literacy skills, and get them ready for reading. Take your child's learning further with tips and book suggestions based on five key practices that help develop early literacy skills. Store options: [iTunes](#). Price: FREE



### Caspar Babypants Music Time by Catnap Apps

Caspar Babypants' indie kids' music is high quality & fun for all ages. Sing & play along to songs with a xylophone, guitar or rhythm instruments (all tuned to the song as it progresses). View lyrics & chords to create your own music with physical instruments. The app purchase includes two songs from each of his published albums & the option to add Caspar Babypants albums into the app from your personal collection. Helps develop creativity, collaboration & rhythm skills while tapping & strumming along to songs. Ages 2 - 4. Store options: [iTunes](#). Price: \$1.99

*Review Source: [Madison Public Library](#)*



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# Early Literacy Apps TALK

Talking is a foundational early literacy practice, providing ongoing experience with oral language, and allowing children to develop the background knowledge about the world that leads to greater comprehension of the texts they encounter. Talk back and forth with your child as you explore apps together. Introduce new words frequently and repeat them often so your child will develop a larger vocabulary.



## **Touch and Learn - Emotions**

Helps kids identify and name emotions, facial expressions and body language. Four images of real people appear on the screen and a voice says an emotion such as “frustrated”. Kids tap on the image of the person they think is frustrated. Adults can customize the images using their own voices and photos they add to the app. Store options: [iTunes](#). Price: \$1.99



## **Axel Scheffler's Flip Flap Farm**

Word play and rhyming is fun to do and a great way to build vocabulary and phonological awareness. Swipe any part of the screen to create 121 different combinations of animal halves, rhymes, and silly, hybrid animal names. After creating an animal, children can read or listen to the verses. What do you get when you cross a dog and a squirrel? That would be a dirrel, of course! Store options: [iTunes](#). Price: \$0.99

*Review Source: [School Library Journal](#)*



## **Lingo Zoo**

After completing jigsaw puzzles the child is able to hear the name of the animal in English or Spanish, or they can listen to the noise the animal makes! The language learning is purposefully subtle, so the child can focus on having fun with the puzzles. Store options: iTunes. Price: \$0.99



## **Metamorphabet**

Poke, prod, drag, and spin letters to reveal surprising and luminous transformations. Tap the featured letter to make it transform into a block-like 3-D sculptural form. With a few more taps, the letter begins morphing into images representing words beginning with that same letter. Letters transform into over 90 words to explore. Play with each interactive word. Store Options: [iTunes](#) & [Google Play](#). Price: \$3.99



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# Early Literacy Apps

## TALK

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### **Sesame Street Big Bird's Words**

Big Bird guides children to search for and find new words in their environment, making vocabulary building a fun and interactive experience. Using a smartphone, kids take pictures of labels to identify, and learn about words in their own environment, which creates a deeper understanding of what these words actually mean. Ages 5+. Store Options: [Google Play](#). Price: \$0.99



### **My A-Z**

Help your child create their own, individual alphabet cards. Take a photo of your dog—and record its bark—for the letter D. Photograph and record Grandma saying “I love you!” during her visit for the letter G. Empower your child to explore and document their world, then review and talk about their selections. Find more ideas for using this app when you download it to your device. Store options: [iTunes](#). Price: \$0.99



### **Endless Alphabet by Originator, Inc.**

Kids will have a blast learning their ABC's & building vocabulary with adorable monsters. Each word features an interactive puzzle game with talking letters & a short animation illustrating the definition. Skill building includes letter/sound recognition, listening comprehension, matching & self-direction. Over 70 words to learn & play with. Ages 3 - 5. Store options: [iTunes](#), [Google Play](#), [Amazon App Store](#), [Windows Store](#). Price: \$6.99

*Review Source: [Beanstack](#)*



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# Early Literacy Apps

## PLAY

Playing encourages children to use their growing vocabularies to think about their world, to experiment with how stories work, and to understand relationships. Exploring interactive apps together can supplement (but not replace) other forms of play.



### Go NiNi

A game for ages 3 to 5 that shows the importance of healthy food choices and active play. Help NiNi run, jump, and stay active by choosing from a range of available foods. Become familiar with different foods along a Go!-Slow!-Whoa! Continuum. GO foods are good to eat anytime, SLOW Foods are only good to eat sometimes and WHOA foods are only good to eat once in a while. Developed by [Fred Rogers Center at Saint Vincent College](#). Store options: [iTunes](#). Price: FREE



### Museum Mix Up

Game for ages 4 and older and their caregivers to play together to re-create and discover great works of art. Help sort a mixed-up delivery to the museum by following clues to take photos, make videos and record silly sounds, unlocking beautiful paintings and sculptures from museums in the United States. Developed by [Fred Rogers Center at Saint Vincent College](#). Store options: [Google Play](#). Price: FREE



### Toontastic Jr. Pirates

A playful storytelling tool for swashbucklers and scallywags to create their own pirate cartoons. Pick a beginning, middle, and ending - then animate your story just like a puppet show, recording your voice while you move the characters onscreen! Ages: 3+. Store options: [iTunes](#). Price: FREE



### LumiKids Park

Explore this giggle-filled neighborhood park, with opportunities to use skills. Practice sorting by shape, color & size rules; challenge fine motor control & planning; use attention to play hide & seek; adaptive & intuitive play for kids with useful parent insights. LumiKids aims to be a pioneer of research that advances the study of child development and the power of digital play. Ages: 2 - 5. Store options: [iTunes](#) & [Google Play](#). Price: FREE



### Fiete Farm

Children help sailor Fiete & his farmer friends throughout their busy day. Wake the snoring men, then assist them as they gather eggs, shear sheep, pick apples, milk a cow & load each item into a delivery truck before settling in around a campfire. The app is low-key & low-stress; the sound effects are quiet nature noises, & background movement is generally of the gentle swaying-in-the-breeze variety. Through free-play exploration, kids learn about responsibility, the passage of time, typical farm tasks, & cooperation. Ages: 4 - 6. Store options: [iTunes](#) & [Google Play](#). Price: \$2.99

*Review Source: [Horn Book](#)*



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# Apps for Parents & Caregivers



## Everyday Grooves

Set up musical prompts throughout the day to help children transition to new activities such as, reading, brushing teeth and getting dressed. When the alarm goes off, turn the volume up so your child can hear and sing along. Or, just play the songs when it is convenient for you. 12 songs are included for everyday routines. Developed by [Fred Rogers Center at Saint Vincent College](#). Store options: [iTunes](#). Price: FREE



## Babies on the Homefront

Designed specifically for military and veteran parents of young children. The app, made possible by the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, offers an array of written and video information to share with families, including behavior tips, parent-child activities, and parental self-care strategies. Available in both English and Spanish. Store options: [iTunes](#) and [Google Play](#). Price: FREE



## PBS Parents Play & Learn

13 interactive games, parents notes with each game, 52 easy hands-on activities, a free-play sticker area, weekly push notifications with more ideas for parents. Store options: [iTunes](#), [Amazon App Store](#) & [Google Play](#). Price: FREE



## Zero to Three

Provides fun ideas for keeping babies and toddlers entertained and learning, especially during daily routines like commuting time, bedtime, mealtime and shopping. Includes "boredom busters" for any time. Search activities by age (0-18 months, 18-36 months, 3-5 years). Developed by ZERO TO THREE, a national nonprofit organization focused specifically on the healthy development of babies and toddlers. Store options: [iTunes](#) & [Google Play](#). Price: FREE



## CO Play & Learn

Quick learning tips accompanied by colorful graphics for parents and caregivers to help children develop pre-reading skills, and simple games and activities to do together in both English and Spanish. Activities are leveled for babies, toddlers, and preschoolers, and focus on reading, talking, singing, writing and playing. With this app, early literacy tips and activities can now be easily accessed from a mobile device. Created by Colorado Libraries. Store options: [iTunes](#) & [Google Play](#). Price: FREE



## ReadyRosie

Equips parents of 0 to 6 year old children with the tools they need to turn everyday activities into learning opportunities. Create a FREE account with your Mamie Doud Eisenhower Public Library card. Login for free access to the entire ReadyRosie and ReadyBaby library of videos in English and Spanish. Set push notifications to remind you to watch the daily videos, easily search our entire catalog, and quickly toggle between different languages. Store options: [iTunes](#) & [Google Play](#). Price: FREE



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