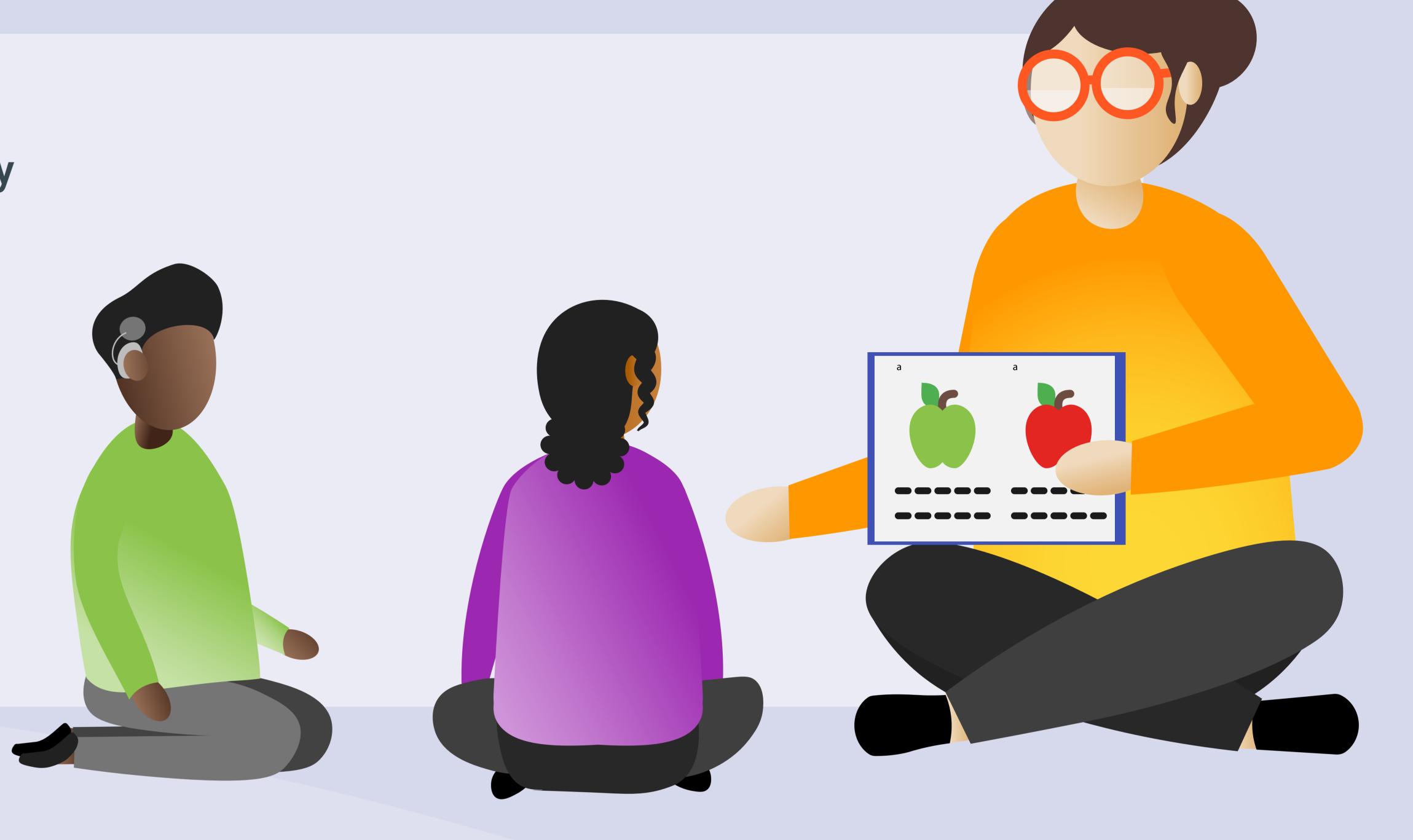
# Supporting Early Literacy



Evidence consistently shows that educators can implement approaches that benefit young children's literacy learning. The EEF's Early Years Toolkit estimates that children who take part in early literacy approaches make, on average, four months' additional progress.

Using multiple approaches together could aid children's literacy development, as different literacy approaches appear to be mutually reinforcing.

Children's communication and language are fundamental to their early literacy. Approaches for teaching early literacy should build on those that support communication and language.



Effective approaches to support Early Literacy

What is it?

Evidence summary of the approach

Putting the approach into action



01
Interactive Reading

This approach involves the educator engaging in considered actions during shared reading to encourage the child to become an active participant in 'reading' the book.

Over time the balance of who 'reads' or facilitates discussion about the book passes increasingly to the child.

Overall, evidence indicates that interactive reading is beneficial for children's literacy development. It can also positively impact children's communication and language. We recommend combining interactive reading practices here with those in the Communication and Language theme.

Research has not yet identified which practices make this approach most effective, though repeated reading of the same book, and labelling features of print and text, may be important. Educators should also consider reading in smaller groups, how much they interact with children, and the degree of parental engagement in reading at home. Print, electronic and multimedia books positively influence literacy, with educator engagement mattering more than book type.

- Thinking aloud
- Questioning
- Clarifying
- Summarising
- Predicting or recalling
- Repetition
- Co-reading

- Labelling features of print and text
- Performance and use of performance cues
- Making links

# Supporting Early Literacy



Effective approaches to support **Early Literacy** 

What is it?

Evidence summary of the approach

Putting the approach into action



**Teaching Sound** Discrimination

Teaching Sound

Manipulation

This approach involves the educator drawing children's attention to sounds and teaching them to identify these sounds and their features. They may start with environment or musical instrument sounds then smaller units like words and speech sounds.

This approach involves the educator

teaching how to change sounds by altering speed or volume, breaking down, combining or swapping sounds. They may start with environment or instrument sounds, then smaller units like words and speech sounds.

This approach involves teaching children to remember the sounds (phonemes) that go with specific written letters (graphemes). The adult helps children identify, label, and associate sounds to symbols (letters) and may use objects or visual aids, to assist in remembering and understanding.

When educators teach sound discrimination, sound manipulation, and letter-sound mapping together, these combined approaches can positively influence children's literacy outcomes.

Some evidence indicates that it is beneficial for children to have a good foundation in sound discrimination and manipulation before they are taught to link letters with sounds and decode words. Once letter-sound pairings are introduced, educators could continue to teach sound discrimination and sound manipulation as the approaches appear mutually reinforcing.

Research has not yet identified which practices influence children's outcomes. These are the typical ways the approaches were described:

Teaching Sound Discrimination: educators encourage children to listen to and identify a variety of sounds during games. Generally, educators start with non-word sounds such as musical instruments before speech sounds. The research we found did not explore sound discrimination with non-word sounds.

Teaching Sound Manipulation: educators use clapping or counters to emphasise or break down words into syllables and phonemes. Songs and rhymes were often used but it wasn't clear if they encouraged children to practise rhyming and aliterate themselves.

Mapping Sounds and Letters: educators introduce and remind children of letters by using visual aids (such as alphabet cards) and encourage children to listen to sounds and correctly match them to letters.

- Naming and labelling sounds
- Classifying sounds
- Mimicking or generating sounds
- Identifying patterns in sounds
- Completion

- Experimenting with sound
- Commenting
- Emphasis
- Repetition
- Decomposing
- Sparking or tempting

- Labelling letter-sounds and letters
- Memory prompts
- Discussing position, form, and shape
- Discussing spelling patterns
- Recapping



Mapping Sounds and Letters

# Supporting Early Literacy



Effective approaches to support Early Literacy

#### What is it?

### Evidence summary of the approach

### Putting the approach into action



05
Teaching Mark-Making and Letter Formation

The educator supports children with the physical skills needed for markmaking, before focusing on the more formal formation of letters and numbers.

Alongside this, educators help children to recognise writing as a purposeful form of communication with different audiences, distinct from illustration.

A small body of evidence suggests this approach can improve children's literacy outcomes. Teaching markmaking and letter formation alongside other literacy approaches is more likely to be impactful than focusing on one skill in isolation.

In the research, children's outcomes improved when educators demonstrated mark-making and letter formation, helped children set goals, and provided encouragement and feedback.

For younger children, educators may first focus on providing appropriate tools and resources for mark-making, then gradually build up to teaching letter formation. We recommend reviewing the 'Teaching Mark-Making and Letter Formation' approach in the Physical Development theme.

- Preparing
- Explaining and showing
- Providing opportunities
- Feedback
- Rehearsing
- Memory prompts
- Discussing



06
Interactive Writing

This approach begins with a backand-forth conversation between an educator and child, to co-construct a 'message' (such as a name, caption or list). Then, the educator and the child write the message together.

The educator may help to clarify and sequence the child's ideas and record the content. As children develop confidence and proficiency, they take on a larger role in the process.

Where appropriate and relevant, educators may support children to form letters and identify their corresponding sounds.

This approach looks promising. However, this summary is based on just nine studies, and these were not implemented in England.

This small amount of evidence suggests that the approach may benefit some early literacy outcomes, including children's print awareness, composition, and transcription. Research has not yet identified which practices make interactive writing effective. Explaining and modelling the writing process, thinking aloud while composing, and discussing books and writing with children may be important.

- Thinking aloud
- Rehearsing
- Co-writing
- Modelling
- Commenting
- Structuring
- Memory prompts
- Extending and revising
- Reflecting





Explore the Early Years Evidence Store to find out more about Early Literacy and related themes, including Communication and Language, Physical Development, and Self-Regulation.

Scan the QR code for detailed examples and videos of the approaches in action.