

## Eyes on Experience Books

### How to make and use experience books with young deaf or hard of hearing children

Families foster the love of stories and books by reading to children early and often. Young children with hearing loss benefit from being read to because it encourages language. Parents can make reading pertinent and personal for preschoolers by creating simple “experience books.”

Pictures are powerful. They hold a child’s attention and give information. Pictures can help a child gain a better understanding of what is said or what will happen. Pictures can be used to depict schedules, describe feelings, demonstrate activities, define meaning and retell experiences.

What makes picture experience books very interesting to young children is that they often contain photos of them or relate to their very own memorable activities. Your youngster can be the “star” of his own **experience books** and those books may become favorites!

Experience books are a useful tool to encourage many early school skills including pre-literacy. Pre-literacy means language learning, phonological awareness, knowledge of the alphabet and the understanding of how print is used (in English: left to right and up to down on a page).

With a baby or toddler, you might use a single “experience picture” to review a recent event. You might put up a drawing of a knee with a bandage. You can talk about it. “Olivia went for a walk. Uh-oh! Olivia fell down! Daddy put the bandage on your knee. All better!”

Young children can benefit from “experience charts” that outline behavioral expectations. A basic chart can include pictures, written words and small objects. You might make a chart of three boxes to show how to play nicely at the park or what to remember in morning routines.

The first box might have a photo of holding hands while walking. The second box could show using playground equipment correctly. The third box can emphasize sharing toys. Experience charts can be placed where your child can reach or see them easily and refer to them often!

Preschoolers enjoy experience books with several pages of pictures, sketches or “items” that tell a story. The topics are their interests such as the neighbor’s motorcycle, Daddy coming to the school carnival, visiting Grandma, helping Mommy go grocery shopping or getting new shoes.

Everyday routines such as bedtime are good for short experience books. A brief sentence on each page will tell the story: It’s bedtime for Juanita. Here are Juanita’s pajamas and bunny. Time to brush your teeth! Mama reads a story. Good night, Juanita! Mama loves you!

Longer books might consist of several pages with one or two sentences for each picture: Ravi and Grandfather are digging in the garden. They planted many seeds. Pat, pat, pat the dirt. Ravi helps water the seeds. The plants begin to bloom. Soon we had vegetables to pick! Yum!

When you read you can embellish the story as your child’s language skills increase. The story can be expanded with simple questions like, “What were you doing?” or “Then what happened?” You can add descriptions and discussions to make stories grow with your child.

Personalized stories will motivate your child’s interest in print and help him associate the printed word with the spoken language. He will want to look at some books over and over. He may eventually want to “read” them by himself or “read” them to you or others.

When you give your child the chance to read or re-tell a favorite story, he is acquiring the pre-literacy skill of narration. Eventually after a special day such as a trip to the zoo, your child may tell that story – with a beginning, a middle and an ending. He is communicating his experiences!

Use experience books to build a personal library for your child. As you both enjoy reading these books over and over, your child will build memories, language and communication skills. As your child keeps his eyes on experience books you build the foundation for literacy, too!

## Choosing Topics

Discussing anything:

- Preparing your child for an upcoming event
- Recalling special moments and good times
- Explaining a change that will happen soon

Daily routines

- Getting dressed
- Sharing with siblings
- Helping a parent

Special events or outings:

- Going to an audiology appointment
- Traveling (bus, car, plane)
- Touring a special place ( zoo, beach)

Your child's interests:

- Toys and pets
- Your family
- The neighborhood

## Making Books

Experience books can be sturdy and simple and be made from construction paper, brown paper bags, file folders or be electronic. They may contain hand drawn pictures or computer graphics. Books might have photos cut and pasted from magazines, family albums or online collections.

A good page size is one easily handled by your child. Books can bound with string, metal page rings or glue. Include an electronic page turner for online stories. Another version is a small photo album with captioned pictures inserted in plastic pages. Length is often 6-12 pages.

You can even involve your child in making some books! Gather materials ahead of time and discuss the topic together. Perhaps your child can help pick or paste the pictures and suggest some words. He will be practicing preliteracy skills from all the reading you have done together!

## Photo Book: I like school



I like to play outside



I like to paint pictures.



I like to read books

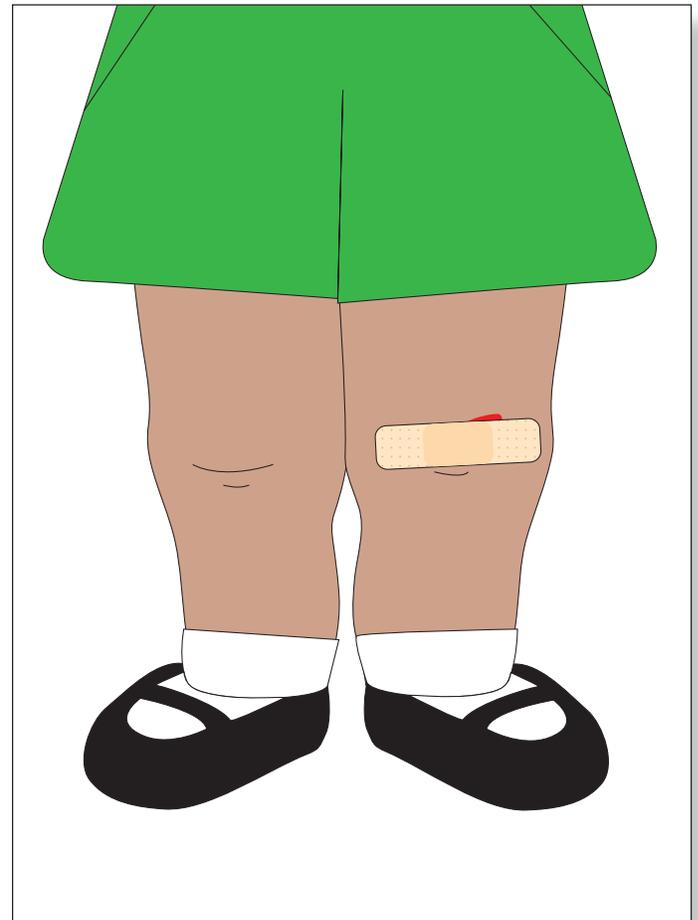


I like all my friends.

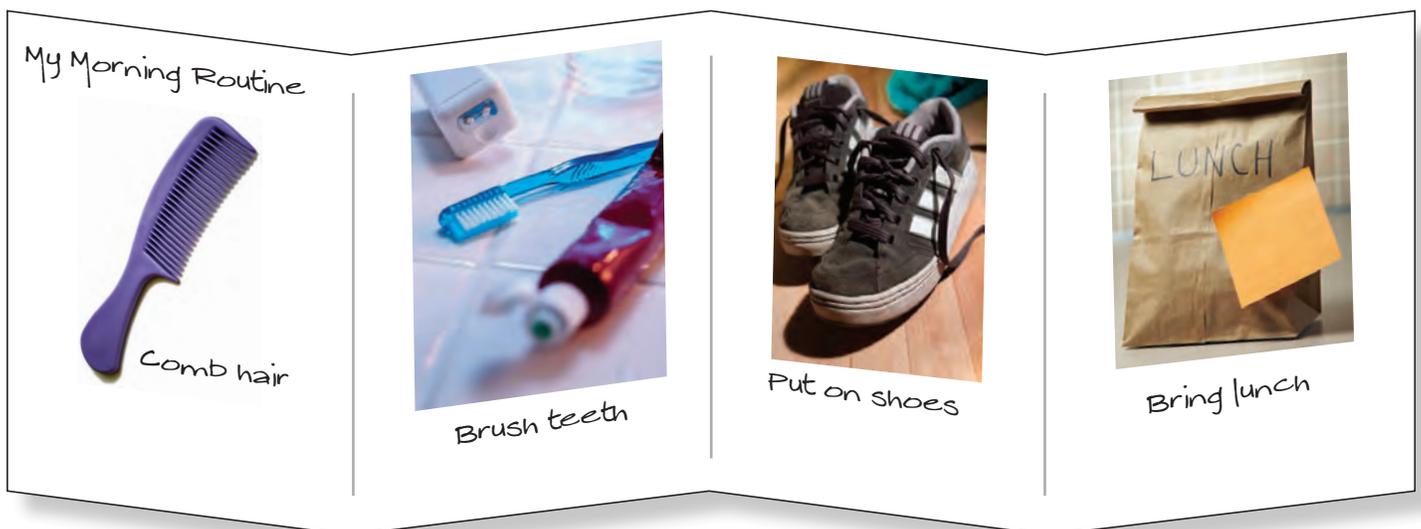
Experience Chart:  
I remember the outside rules



Experience Picture:  
Uh Oh! I fell down. I got a bandaid



Folding Book: I can do it by myself



# Going to the store



Let's check our list. What will we buy?



I picked a big bunch of bananas.



Oh my! The bananas are heavy!



I put the bananas in the bag.



We need to pay. Push the buttons!



I carried the cereal and the bananas.



Snack time! Peel the yummy banana.