

## **Using an Experience Book**

Hello and welcome to the Friends of Tennessee's Babies with Special Needs website. We're delighted that you have joined us. My name is Robin.

Today I want to talk with you about a simple, but effective communication-boosting tool that is also excellent for early literacy, a language experience book. This kind of book is homemade and can contain drawings, pictures, or real objects that represent an event that the family and child have shared. It is the perfect tool to help toddlers share their memories with the important people in their lives. Rather than just having the child sit passively while the adult reads, we might say something like, "Sammy, did you tell Daddy about our trip to the farm?" and hand her the book to share. The child takes the lead, flipping through the pictures and using them as a visual reference to point to while telling the story. Meanwhile, the pictures and words help the adult have enough contextual information to understand what the child is saying, even if their speech isn't perfectly clear yet. It makes for a much more successful and satisfying communication experience for both parties and provides great language practice for the little ones!

What a great language and literacy tool, as well as a fun way to remember special activities and outings. Of course, the pictures can also be used like a typical book and read throughout the day. Pairing words with the pictures is great for early literacy, and kids love to point to the print as the book is read together. When writing the text for these books, try to use simple sentences with repetitive text, and use a lot of auditory completion, which means pausing in your reading to encourage the child to finish the sentence. This helps the child become an active participant in read-aloud time, which is very important for language development and later reading skills.

Creating the book is easy! For a photo book, just take pictures of an event, like a trip to the zoo, print them out and glue them onto a piece of construction or card stock paper. If you can laminate them they will be more durable. To hold them all together, use a hole punch to clip a corner of each picture and then thread the pictures onto a metal ring. The metal ring is easy for an adult to open up, so the pictures could be used in sequencing activities later on if desired, or you could add several mini-books to one ring. The books last a long time and can be tossed into a purse or bag to occupy little ones on outings. You can also just stick the pictures into small photo albums from the dollar store. The books themselves don't need to look "pretty" as long as they get the child and family talking together!

If you don't have access to a camera, simple drawings work just as well. You don't have to be an accomplished artist to draw a picture of the child swinging at the park.

Real objects can also be used and can be very effective. For example, if the child has had a birthday you can glue a birthday napkin, a candle, and a balloon to the page to get the conversation started. As you can see, there is no right or wrong way to make an experience book. Just use your imagination and be creative!

Let's take a look at a few simple examples of Language Experience books. This first one, we just took pages from a coloring book about a trip to the zoo, and then we personalized it by adding some text here at the bottom. It's a very simple text so that the child can help tell the story. We will read through these real quickly. It says, "We went to the zoo. The lion loves her baby. The elephant drinks water. We saw the monkeys eat a banana. The giraffe is really tall. I had a camel ride! Now this one we did not color ahead of time, but this could certainly be an activity that the parents could do with their child to personalize it and make it a little bit more interesting-to color it together. Then we just placed it in a simple three ring binder that can be purchased at any store.

The second one that we are going to talk about is uses real objects. This is about our birthday party. We just took a banner that says Happy Birthday; one of the napkins we used for it; and then some of the balloons that we used. And this will help give-using the real objects helps remind the child of what happened at their party, so that they can be able to talk about that.

The third one is using very simple drawings because I definitely am not an artist. Some parents will be a whole lot more creative and can so a whole lot better job. This one's about going to the park. We just used stick figures of a mommy and a child going to the park; swinging on the swing, and going down the slide. This is done on card stock and then we did a hole punch right in the corner and used a simple clip that could be attached to their diaper bag or whatever. These are really great to take when you're going to doctors' appointments and things like that because waiting time in the waiting room a lot of times becomes difficult. These are things that can help occupy the child during that time. These can be colored too. Children enjoy looking at those.

The last one is personally my favorite because it uses real pictures of a child actually doing an activity. This one is a little boy playing with a parachute and some balls. These were actually taken at Respite Day. This little boy is sticking his head up through the hole. Here he's looking up at the parachute in the air. His friend's looking up. They're all in a circle-and then him throwing the ball under the parachute. And again, as I said before, these can also be glued to a piece of card stock to make them a little more durable, but we just did a hole punch in the corner and put a ring on it. These can also be put in a simple photo album that's got the little sleeves so the pictures can be put down into the sleeves that will protect them a little better and those are fairly inexpensive. You can get them at the Dollar Store. These are really nice. I like these a lot because you can add to and have several simple little books that you can take along. So I hope that this has sparked some creativity and that you can encourage your parents to use their imagination and help create some rich language experiences for their child.

Thank you for joining us today. We hope that we have inspired you to help a child create his or her very own book so they can share their experiences in a fun way. Don't delay because remember.....babies can't wait!