

## LEARNING TO READ BY PLAYING WITH BLOCKS 2

You know that when your child plays with his blocks, he's practicing skills that will help him later when he learns to read. He's looking at *how the blocks are the same and how they're different*. He's noticing their *spatial relationship* to one another. And he's looking for *patterns*. These are skills he'll use to learn to read, too.

You can enrich your child's play by *adding words* to it. First, of course, you can *talk about* what you heard her saying while she was building or what you see she's built. Whether she made a *castle* or built a *cluster of skyscrapers*, you could ask who lives there. By adding language to your child's play and asking open-ended questions that invite her to talk, you're *helping her to build her own vocabulary* while she builds with blocks.

You might want to write down some of the words that match what your child builds with his blocks. Could he use a *sign* to go with the *free-way* he's making or one to go with his *parking garage* for all his match-box cars? Maybe he would like to see what these words look like when they're written. Possibly these will be words he learns to recognize when he plays with his signs again and again. They might be the words he learns first to read.

And is there a story that goes with what your child built with her blocks? What about that royal family who live in the castle that she made? What are they like? Do they get along or is there a wicked witch that lives among them? A fairy godmother? A beautiful princess; a handsome prince?

Maybe you could photograph what your child's built and write his story down. If you print the words your child uses to tell you about his building, he might be interested in hearing you read them and then he might be interested in pretending to read them himself. Show him the letters in the words he likes best. Help him know that every word he says can be written and when his words are written, the story they tell can be read over and over again.

*What a wonderful way to invite your child to begin to read—through reading her very own stories that come from playing with blocks!*