



ALSC and LEGO® DUPLO® Present Read! Build! Play! Librarian Toolkit

For developing early literacy in young children

Hello Ambassador of Storytime!

This toolkit is designed to help you develop storytime programs for young children (under the age of five) at your local library. It is the product of a partnership between the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) and LEGO® DUPLO®. It is chock full of cutting edge ideas related to early literacy programming that combine preschool books with creative play in the form of a versatile collection of LEGO DUPLO bricks.

Adding play to storytime has been shown to help develop and reinforce early literacy skills. By encouraging children to build and play during storytime at your library, you can heighten their level of engagement with the story while encouraging them to use their creativity, imagination, and dexterity. The combination also increases a child's physical, cognitive, and emotional development. What's more, children will be more likely to start developing and telling their own stories.

As a librarian, you are also very much a teacher. By adding play to storytime and increasing interactivity, you can make a big difference in helping to build the early literacy foundations needed for reading success.

Note: This toolkit is mostly for use with children under the age of five. But there are some activities for school-age children in the appendix.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY AND ITS CONNECTION TO EARLY LITERACY

Play is what children do, right? Let them loose in any environment and they will figure out a way to turn it into jungle, an airport, a grocery store, or a rocket ship. As librarians, you know that there's much more going on than the mere alleviation of boredom. In fact, play is essential for early learning. It's THE way young children learn about the world.

Unfortunately, the amount of time that children are spending on free play has gone down dramatically in recent years, as many are choosing instead to spend more time with passive activities (e.g. electronics)¹. As a result, children miss out on important opportunities to develop critical skills and abilities, including early literacy skills.

Play has a direct link to early literacy experiences, especially sociodramatic play. Children can act out stories and rhymes or retell stories through play. And as we know from the ALSC/PLA (Public Library Association) early literacy Initiative [Every Child Ready to Read®](#) (2nd Edition) play allows children to express themselves verbally and make a stronger connection to letters, words, language, and story - thus paving the way for future reading skills. Public libraries are very well suited to address the early literacy needs of young children.

Four Fun Facts

1. Play is a timeless feature of human societies, and when combined with 21st Century learning it provides children and adults with opportunities to experiment with their surroundings as a form of problem solving.
2. Through play, children explore and develop their multiple senses, which creates more brain synapses. This in turn contributes to a child's overall intelligence.
3. While playing, children can stretch and bend reality. All rules can be broken and all kinds of new rules can be invented.
4. When children play with adult family members, it creates a stronger bond between them.

¹ Sources include Outdoor Foundation, LEGO Learning Institute and the Kaiser Family Foundation.

At The LEGO Group we feel we have a special responsibility to respect and nurture the way children play, learn, develop their creativity and thrive. At the [LEGO Learning Institute](http://learninginstitute.lego.com/en-us/) we have unparalleled access to a wealth of experience and expertise in play, learning and creativity. Our opportunity is to bring this collective knowledge and insight to new audiences, while at the same time generating helpful feedback to the people who design and build the company's play experiences, ensuring that we at The LEGO Group remain true to our mission to “inspire and develop the builders of tomorrow” in everything we do.

For more information about the LEGO Learning Institute or to download research visit <http://learninginstitute.lego.com/en-us/>

- **[The Future of Learning:](#)** Learning is not a specialized realm of human functioning, but rather involves the entire individual – thinking, feeling, perceiving and behaving. In this report from 2011, the LEGO Learning Institute studies the Future of Learning in partnership with academic experts. The report describes creative reflective learners, who are intrinsically motivated around questions or problems linked to their own interests, and who use this interest to experiment with solutions, then implementing these solutions in new situations.
- **[The Future of Play:](#)** Defining the role and value of play in the 21st century: Play is at the heart of emotional wellbeing and mental health. Free play in particular is critical to the balanced development of children. In 2010 the LEGO Learning Institute carried out a foundational research study in partnership with academic experts to explore the benefits of play, the many ways of playing and the relevance of the different types of play for child development and the stimulation of adults.
- **[The Whole Child Development Guide:](#)** Children are Natural Born Learners: Look at a newborn baby. Few competencies are apparent when you look at that innocent little being, but their inherent capacity is enormous! Within four years this baby will have developed into a person who will run, jump and ask questions all day long.

READ! BUILD! PLAY! ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF FIVE

Adding playful interactions to your storytime programming can help smooth the way to early literacy. Invite your youngest visitors and their parents or caregivers to share in hands-on, minds-on fun. The following are suggestions for activities:

Read! Build! Play! @ Your Library Experience Facilitation Guide

The appendix includes an entire 45-minute program that incorporates LEGO DUPLO bricks and books.

Building Storytimes - Brick by Brick

Research shows that it's best to let children experience the story uninterrupted by questions the first time through so that they don't lose the flow (and enjoyment of the story). After they've heard it once and know the story, they're ready for questions. Incidentally, there's also new research highlighting the importance of telling the story in different ways. By building animals, buildings, etc. you are essentially creating props to do just that.

Select a book and follow a similar routine to the above, coming up with your questions along the way. Whether it's a story about the moon, a cat or a bird on the beach, there are a thousand ways children can build and bring a story to life in their own imaginations.

"Things that Go" Storytime

Pick a favorite storytime book about vehicles or choose several books such as:

- Lewis, Kevin. *Chugga-Chugga Choo-Choo*. Hyperion, 2001.
- Lewis, Kevin. *My Truck is Stuck*. Hyperion, 2002.
- Lord, Cynthia. *Hot Rod Hamster*. Scholastic, 2010.
- McMullan, Kate. *I Stink*. HarperCollins, 2002. (Garbage Truck)
- Rinker, Sherri Duskey. *Goodnight, Goodnight Construction Site*. Chronicle, 2011.
- Stein, Peter. *Cars Galore*. Candlewick, 2011.
- Willems, Mo. *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus*. Hyperion, 2003.

Have the children build one of their favorite vehicles they would like to drive (just like the pigeon!). After they have built it, ask them about their vehicles:

- What type of noise/sound does your vehicle make?
- What would you use your vehicle for?
- Where would you go in your vehicle?
- How does your vehicle move/function?
- Where is your vehicle going to go next? Why?

Moo! Neigh! Bark! Bah! Storytime

Pick a favorite storytime book about farm animals such as:

- Beaumont, Karen. *No Sleep for the Sheep*. Harcourt 2011.
- Craig, Lindsey. *Farmyard Beat*. Knopf, 2010.
- Kutner, Merrily. *Down on the Farm*. Holiday House, 2004.

Have children build their favorite farm animal. It does not need to be an animal in the story. Let the children choose their favorite. Once the children have time to build it, ask them:

- What sound does your farm animal make?
- How many legs does it have?
- Does your animal fly, swim or walk?
- What color is your animal?
- What sounds does your animal make?
- What is your animal's name?
- What is its favorite thing to eat?
- Where do you think your animal would like to go next?

The possibilities are endless as you browse your collection of children's books for themes and ideas to create a different activity every time you run the program. With DUPLO bricks, children can build along to any type of story theme you choose!

EVERY PLAYTIME CAN USE A GOOD SOUNDTRACK

A little background music can help children sing along, build and play while they learn simple things like colors, stacking, letters and role play. A 2011 study of parents with children age 1-5 years reveals that among children that listen to music during playtime: 55% of children are happier when music is coupled with play; 50% are more excited to play when they hear music and 43% act sillier when music is coupled with play.

Download more than 12 free musical play starters at www.ReadBuildPlay.com; Written and performed by a preschool dad, DUPLO Jams is a free music experience that offers fun, upbeat and inspirational tunes for your storytime.

Vrooooooooooooooooooom!! Create a storytime with a vehicle theme; download and play LEGO DUPLO Jams Brick Racer song to rev the engines. Children love to build race cars. Create a mini autobahn using masking tape. Make it a straight freeway or a winding country highway. After storytime, let children build their own cars and race around, using their imaginations to tell you where they are headed.

No DUPLO bricks available? Consider using toy vehicles and/or have children draw and color their own favorite vehicle to add the playful story interaction.

OUTREACH PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION

When visiting early childhood centers, or doing presentations for early childhood educators, mention the importance of play for young children and how teachers can incorporate brick play along with their circle time activities. When visiting centers, take along LEGO DUPLO bricks or check to see if the center might already have them. If you are presenting to early childhood educators, share a book and then let them build their own creation, so they will feel comfortable doing this activity with their children.

Make the link between books and the creative playtime activities as suggested with the book activities above. Explain how this type of activity relates to early literacy skills such as language acquisition and narrative skills, while children are describing their actions or telling a story about their creation. Many early childhood centers may already have block or brick areas, and teachers might already know the importance of this play for math and science skills. Librarians can help them make the connections to literacy and books.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is **LEGO® DUPLO® Read! Build! Play!?**

In partnership with ALSC, LEGO DUPLO invites young children to build their way to early literacy development through combined story and playtime. A combination of reading-focused activities, events, downloadable resources and a contest to celebrate local libraries— the [LEGO DUPLO Read! Build! Play! Project](#) encourages children to build along as their parents read simple, age-appropriate board books to them.

What is the target age for Read! Build! Play!?

LEGO DUPLO Read! Build! Play! is designed for children under the age of five.

What if a family can't attend an in-person event?

For families who cannot join the in-person activities, LEGO Systems offers a downloadable toolkit of the same activities to inspire at-home read and build play. To download the toolkit, visit www.readbuildplay.com.

Why and how do I nominate my library?

LEGO DUPLO and ALSC are asking people to nominate their hometown library for recognition and reward for their amazing, tireless work. Go to www.readbuildplay.com to nominate your library. Nominations close on October 1, 2012.

What will my library win?

The most nominated library will receive \$5,000 for books and supplies. The top 200 libraries will receive a special LEGO DUPLO Read! Build! Play! toolkit of early literacy programming that combines preschool books with a versatile collection of DUPLO bricks.

How will I know if my library wins?

Standings are populated and on display at www.readbuildplay.com. Final confirmations will be sent after October 1st, 2012.

How do I facilitate the Read! Build! Play! project at my library?

A downloadable librarian toolkit can be found on www.readbuildplay.com to help you facilitate the program at your library. The toolkit includes information on the program, proposed activities and more!

Is there a developmental link between playing with LEGO DUPLO bricks and reading?

ALSC and PLA's (Public Library Association) early literacy initiative [Every Child Ready to Read \(2nd Edition\)](#) is based on the current research. Parents or caregivers engaging daily in the five early literacy practices of reading, singing, talking, writing, and playing with their children may increase children's early literacy skills. Further research indicates that construction play benefits toddlers and preschoolers on multiple dimensions and contributes to every stage of learning.

Are there toys and books that go along with the Read! Build! Play! experience?

Yes, the LEGO® DUPLO® Read and Build sets blend early reading with construction play. The series is comprised of three books: Grow Caterpillar Grow!, Busy Farm and Let's Go! Vroom!; each includes DUPLO bricks that can be used to build the main characters and objects in the story. Visit <http://shop.lego.com/en-US/preschool> for more information.

May I use the LEGO logo to advertise my LEGO-themed activities and programs?

Unfortunately, we are not able to grant you permission to use the LEGO red square logo to publicize your activities. The LEGO DUPLO Read, Build, Play logo may be used in the formatted and provided materials.

APPENDIX

1. LEGO® Ideas for Children 5+ Years of Age
2. The Importance of Brick Play in Relation to STEM
3. 45-Minute Activity Guide for programs that incorporates LEGO DUPLO bricks and books

LEGO® IDEAS FOR CHILDREN 5+ YEARS OF AGE

Here are a few suggested activities to engage older children with LEGO bricks you may have as part of your resources and programming.

Bridging the Gap

Horizontal building is a challenge for even the best builders! Gather your LEGO Construction Crew and as many LEGO pieces as you can for the Bridging the Gap challenge. Start piecing together your design and see just how far you can build the bridge. Think about the number of supports you'll need and what kind of design will hold the most weight. When you are finished, start stacking books on your creation and see just how sturdy it is.

Blind-Fold Building

Start with a bucket of assorted LEGO pieces and blindfolds, scarves or bandanas for everyone playing. Challenge your group to all build their own version of the same idea, blindfolded. Great ideas for this challenge are small and simple creations like cars, simple houses, rockets, planes and small creatures. Or get creative with your ideas. Have each child tell a story about their model – creativity will help them convince the crowd that it looks just like she imagined.

Explain This!

Gather the children around a central pile of LEGO bricks and elements. Ask them to spend no more than 5 minutes building a model of something important to them. If they appear overwhelmed, encourage them to just let their hands start building and not to worry. When they are finished, you announce that now they need to make their model represent one of the following:

- Recess
- Homework
- Ice cream
- Favorite sport

Invite each child to spend a minute making any model tweaks and changes and then to share a story about how what they have in front of them best illustrates recess/homework/ice cream or favorite sport.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BRICK PLAY IN RELATION TO STEM

In 2007, President Bush signed into law the “America Competes Act” (America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science) which was later reauthorized in 2010. Because of this, the U.S. government and public schools have put much emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) education. Libraries are increasingly asking what their role is in STEM education, particularly since there is much grant funding related to programming that has a connection to STEM subjects.

This partnership between ALSC and LEGO® DUPLO® provides a perfect opportunity for libraries to introduce brick play into their programming for both young children and school age children to help children with math, physics and engineering skills. Libraries may want to apply for grants to secure bricks and also more books on subjects related to STEM.

Three interesting resources libraries could consult for research when applying for grants (in addition to the LEGO Learning Institute research mentioned above) are listed here. Please note that for all three resources blocks are mentioned, though within the article or book, LEGO bricks are mentioned as a type of “block play.”

- Park, Boyoung; Chae, Jeong-Lim; Boyd, Barbara Foulks. *Young Children’s Block Play and Mathematical Learning*. Journal of Research in Childhood Education, December 22, 2008.
- Pollman, Mary Jo. *Blocks and Beyond: Strengthening Early Math and Science Skills Through Spatial Learning*. Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2010.
- Wolfgang, C.H., Stannard, L.L., & Jones, I. (2001). *Block Play Performance Among Preschoolers as a Predictor of Later School Achievement in Mathematics*. Journal of Research in Childhood Education, (Vol. 15, Issue 2) Spring-Summer, 2001.

LEGO DUPLO Read! Build! Play! @ Your Library Experience

Overview

- The Read! Build! Play! @ Your Library Experience is a one-of-a kind experience that combines reading and building with LEGO DUPLO bricks.
- The Read! Build! Play! @ Your Library Program is 45-minutes in length. Designed for children under the age of five (accompanied by their parent/s!) the fun, hands-on program will spark children's creativity, develop fine motor skills, provide recognition of shapes/colors and lay the foundation for future readers by increasing children's early literacy skills.
 - Libraries are encouraged since Every Child Ready to Read Project to have parents attend storytimes/programs as librarians are modeling how to read to their child and how to play with their child. With a parent present, there are more opportunities for these experiences to be replicated at home.
- The program is designed for 50 children or less and is broken up into three sections: a) reading and building b) free time/play c) music, reading and building.
- Materials:
 - The LEGO DUPLO Read and Build Books: Busy Farm, Grow Caterpillar Grow
 - Assorted LEGO DUPLO bricks and elements
 - DUPLO JAMS Music. *Available for parents to download directly from www.readbuildplay.com.*
 - An open space for children to spread out and play

Welcome!

Approximate Length of Time: 5 minutes

- Hi Parents! This Read, Build, Play session is designed to show you how to combine reading, building and play to help your child develop their literacy skills. By adding the elements of building and play to storytime, you can heighten your child's level of engagement while encouraging them to use their creativity, imagination, dexterity and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength.
- For approximately 45 minutes we are going to work on valuable skills such as building (using fine motor skills), recognizing shapes/colors, fostering your child's creativity and reading.

- For children to become readers themselves, it is important for parents to read to, talk with and play with their children. This program is unique in that it combines reading, question asking and building.
 - Internal Note: These activities incorporate 3 of the 5 practices that are part of ALSC's 2nd edition of the Every Child Ready to Read project, familiar to many of our librarians. These five practices are important for early literacy.
- Start your program with a song such as "If You Want to Hear a Story" sung to the tune "If You're Happy and You Know It."

If you want to hear a story clap your hands (clap twice)
 If you want to hear a story clap your hands (clap twice)
 If you want to hear a story, if you want to hear a story,
 If you want to hear a story clap your hands (clap twice)

If want to play with bricks, nod your head (nod twice)
 If want to play with bricks, nod your head (nod twice)
 If you want to play with bricks, if you want to play with bricks,
 If want to play with bricks, nod your head (nod twice)

If you want to hear some music stamp your feet (stamp twice)
 If you want to hear some music stamp your feet (stamp twice)
 If you want to hear some music, if you want to hear some music
 If you want to hear some music stamp your feet (stamp twice)

Part 1: Reading and Building—Busy Farm!

Approximate Length of Time: 15 minutes

- Ask children – what kinds of animals do you normally see at a farm? Let them guess a few animals.
- Then, prior to reading the first book, *The Busy Farm*, ask each child/parent to collect a group of LEGO DUPLO bricks in front of them.
 - Or, depending on how many children are in your program, ask them to sit in a circle around the LEGO DUPLO bricks with you at the top of the circle.
- Read the book *Busy Farm* the whole way through one time WITHOUT reading the questions on the bottom of the page.

- Then say “I am going to read the story again, but I need your help this time.” On the second reading, ask the question and pause while children answer the question and build the respective animal.
- You may also ask them some other questions while they are building. Here is a list of other questions that you can ask to guide conversation and activity:
 - Build your favorite animal. Once the children have had time to build it ask them what sound their farm animal makes? How many legs does their animal have? Does their animal swim, fly or walk?
 - Talk to the children about the other items on the farm. For example, a barn is red. Can the children find all five red bricks? The pond is blue. Can the children find three blue bricks?
- ***WHY READ THE STORY TWICE?** Research shows that it’s best to let children experience the story uninterrupted by questions the first time through so that they don’t lose the flow (and enjoyment) of the story. Once they’ve heard it once and know the story, they’re ready for questions. Incidentally, there’s also new research highlighting the importance of telling the story in several different ways. By building the animals in *The Busy Farm* you are essentially creating props to do just that.
- **HINT:** You can add the element of play to any storybook experience. Pick your child’s favorite book and follow a similar routine to the above – coming up with your own questions along the way. Whether it’s a story about the moon, a cat or a bird on the beach, there are a thousand ways they can build and bring the story to life in their own imagination.

Part 2: Free build

Length of Time: 15 minutes

- Once the reading and building section is complete give the children 15 minutes to explore and build in free time. Encourage parents to join in the fun!
- Play the DUPLO JAMS music as inspiration.

Part 3: Reading and Music Fun—Grow Caterpillar Grow

- Once free time is finished ask the children to form a circle again for the next activity.
 - Ask them to bring a set of bricks and put it in front of them OR round up all the bricks in the middle of the circle.
- This story is about a caterpillar and is called *Grow Caterpillar Grow*.
- Read the story through first without any building.

- Then, begin to read the story a second time and ask the children questions as they build.
For example:
 - This is a story about a rainbow caterpillar. What are all the colors in a rainbow? Can you pick them out?
 - How many legs does a caterpillar have? It varies some have six legs and some have 10. How many does your caterpillar have and can you pick out the legs with LEGO DUPLO bricks?
 - Before a caterpillar turns into a butterfly where does it live (i.e. cocoon)? Can you build a cocoon for your caterpillar?
- Once you are finished reading the book (and building along) it is time to play a fun song and encourage the children to build along.
- Play the DUPLO JAMS Grow Caterpillar Grow Song and explain to the children that are going to build one long caterpillar in front of them.
 - The children can stack the bricks on top of each other or lay them flat on the ground.
 - If you have a small group of children you can make one big one together. See if they can alternate colors such as red, blue, yellow and green. Repeat.
- If you have time, close your program with one last song.
Here is a suggestion sung to “The More we Get Together”:

The more we get together, together, together,
 The more we get together, the happier we'll be.
 For storytime and playtime, and playtime and storytime,
 The more we get together, the happier we'll be.

Closing

We want to thank XX Librarian and the YY Library for letting us share this special time with you. Thank you parents and kids for being such good listeners and builders.

We invite you to visit www.readBUILDplay.com to download a home appropriate version of this experience and to nominate this library to win \$5,000 towards programming.