# Essential Experiences to Undergird the Early Development of Literacy

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***Abstract:***This study identified a repertoire of essential early life experiences to which young children with visual impairments need to be exposed to undergird their development of literacy. The authors analyzed 254 stories from three published basal literacy series to identify the experiences necessary to bring meaning to each story. Through analysis and categorization of the data, they then identified 22 global areas of experience as essential. Guidelines for providing these experiences are suggested, including ways to link experiences to early literacy events.

**22 essential experiences which undergird early development of literacy**

**Experiences typically gained through daily activities:**

1. Doing or making things (crafts, physical activity, cleaning up)
2. Experiences with friends --- pretending (friends, games, competition, playing, party)
3. Working together, sharing, helping (helping, teams, sharing)
4. Looking for or finding something (mystery, treasure, finding something or someone)
5. Experiences in the community (community, cities, occupations, places in the community, parade, circus)
6. Experiences at home (parts of and things in houses, clothes, cleaning up, sleeping)
7. Experiences with living creatures (animals, pets, birds, frogs, penguins, bears, buffalo, whales)
8. Experiencing emotions and a sense of well being (feelings, sick, growing, freedom, imagination, jealous)
9. Exploring nature, plants, insects (things in the sky, outdoors, insects, water bodies, flowers, plants, forest)
10. Traveling or visiting others (traveling to visit relatives, friends, or places)
11. Experiences with books (fairy tales, legends, reading, writing, books)
12. Getting into trouble (breaking things, fighting, teasing, tricks)
13. Experiences with family and family traditions (family members, birthday, presents, special days)
14. Experiences with weather (weather, flooding, climate, storms)
15. Experiences with eating (food, meals, cooking, eating, fruit and vegetables)
16. Going to a farm (farm, fishing, hunting)
17. Learning about people who are different (blindness, Braille, deaf, disability)
18. Exploring the arts (dancing, singing, instruments, music)
19. School experiences (school, rules practicing, alphabet, classroom, drawing)
20. Using different forms of transportation (transportation, flying, train, ships)
21. Learning and content areas (countries, common and uncommon objects, royalty, cities, Native Americans)
22. Understanding specific concepts (time concepts, sensations, colors, position, size, body parts, actions, counting, measurement)