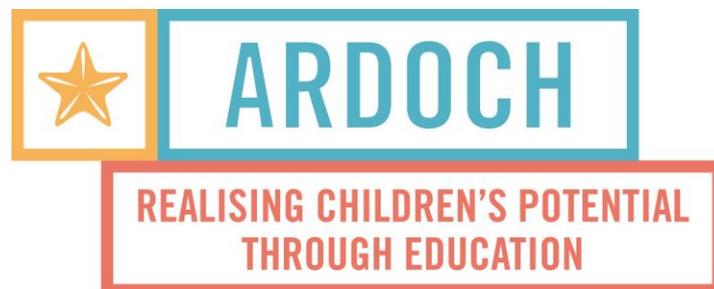




www.shutterstock.com 223929754



Early Language & Literacy (ELL) Program VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY GUIDE

Contents

Introduction	3
Getting Started	6
<i>Gaining attention & eye contact</i>	
<i>Listening</i>	
Talking Together	8
Reading Together	10
<i>Sharing a picture storybook</i>	
<i>Dialogic reading</i>	
<i>Print referencing</i>	
<i>Singing songs and nursery rhymes</i>	
<i>Environmental print</i>	
Writing Together	16
<i>Name writing</i>	
<i>Writing to communicate</i>	
<i>Conventions and concepts about printed language</i>	
<i>Fine motor development</i>	
Volunteering in Playgroup Settings	20
References	21
Appendix 1: End Notes	23
Appendix 2: Interactive Reading Tips	26
Appendix 3: 10 Ways to Practice Writing Your Name	28

Introduction

Ardoch's **Early Language and Literacy (ELL)** program focuses on children aged birth to five years due to the importance of this life phase and the significant impact early intervention can have on the learning trajectory of young children¹. Therefore, Ardoch programs take place in disadvantaged communities because there is a strong link between disadvantage and educationally vulnerable children². Ardoch uses the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data to inform the delivery of the *Early Language and Literacy* program and the areas in which this work takes place. This program targets both oral language **and** early literacy, recognising that language is the base for literacy development³. In all of the areas where this work is conducted, schools report that children are arriving in the Foundation Year already falling behind. We know from the research that children who are experiencing vulnerability are five times more likely to struggle with literacy at school, "perpetuating a cycle of low educational attainment and poverty"⁴. The *Early Language and Literacy* program aims to address this and, in the long term, it aims to improve children's transition to school.

Ardoch's Early Years Volunteers will be in communities where children will benefit from participation in the **Early Language and Literacy program** because the children may:

- have limited vocabularies and oral language development;
- not come from an English speaking home;
- have limited English or limited opportunity to immerse themselves in language;
- have little or no experience of either reading and writing, or literacy practices in general;
- come from different cultures with different expectations of young children as learners, and
- have experienced trauma which has impacted on their learning.

The **Early Language and Literacy program** focuses on three development continua (Language, Reading and Writing) as they complement each other and give a more holistic overview of childhood communicative and literacy development during these early years. The program, delivered by volunteers interacting with individual or small groups of children in playgroups (children aged birth to four years), and early childhood settings (children aged birth to five years), aims to:

- provide targeted programs for children aged birth to 5 years to support and enhance the development of oral language and early literacy using trained Volunteers;
- create partnerships with organisations and implement the program to enhance parent engagement in children's learning; and
- embed Ardoch's *Early Language and Literacy* program into kindergarten, playgroups and early childhood centres.

More specifically, the *Early Language and Literacy* program aims to impact on children, parents/caregivers, early years services, and volunteers in the following ways:

For children to:

- increase the amount of time they spend in conversation;
- increase the amount of time they are engaged in reading and writing activities;

¹Justice et al., 2003

² Cox, 2003

³ Dickinson & Tabors, 2000

⁴ Hempenstall, 2016

- increase their sense of well-being and self-esteem;
- increase their social skills through relationship building;
- increase their early listening skills (e.g., concentration, sitting still, turn taking); and
- increase their spoken language through use and exposure to conversations with a range of partners.

For parents/caregivers to:

- increase their involvement in their children's learning; and
- increase their confidence in supporting their child's early language and literacy development.

For early years services to:

- increase their staff's capacity to support the identified children in their early language and literacy development.

For volunteers to:

- support young children's language and literacy learning;
- be comfortable in their role, capable, well-trained, and feel supported;
- have a sense of achievement and be recognised for their work in supporting young children's early language and literacy development.

Important points to remember:

- You are a volunteer, not a teacher/educator. Your role is to support children and notice what they do, not teach them how to do it.
- It takes time to form a relationship with a child so don't be discouraged if a child does not immediately begin interacting with you – we are all wary of people we meet for the first time;
- Children may come and go during your time working with them, this is not a reflection of you but rather gives an indication of their attention spans and their interests at that point in time;
- Children might not talk which means you will have to do all the talking but with an air of expectation that they will join in when they feel ready to do so;
- Children might not like the books you've chosen or the activities you have prepared, so be flexible and ask them to help select what they would like to do;
- Children will have different strengths, life experiences and capabilities which means that you will have to employ different approaches to engage them at a level they can understand;
- Your identified child(ren) may not attend regularly so use the opportunity to work with other children;
- Your identified child(ren) may leave the centre.

Above all, have fun as there is no doubt that if you are enjoying the experience then the child/ren you are working with are also having a fun time. There is no right or wrong way in your approach; personal style and skills differ; each session will be different; and there will be lots of things outside your control. Don't be disheartened, just go with the flow, remain flexible and remember - your volunteering is making a difference to these children's lives.

How to run these activities in the early years centre:

These activities have been grouped into three categories;

1. Talking
2. Reading
3. Writing Together.

This guide is designed so that you will be able to choose an activity from each of these three categories each time you visit the child, OR you will be able to expand one activity to incorporate two or three of the categories.

Building a rapport:

You will, at first, take time to discover the child's strengths and capabilities, before engaging the child in more challenging activities.

Throughout your time at the setting, as you spend time with the child or a small group of children, other activities may well be suggested by the educator in charge of the setting or you may think of other activities yourself.

When you want the child to complete an activity, sometimes use "We will..." not "You will...", so the child does not feel like they are being interrogated or pressured to perform the task. Make it clear it is an activity you share and do together and that it is a fun way of spending time with each other.

Resource box:

The activities that are outlined in this booklet utilize the resources that are available to you at each setting, but don't feel you are restricted to only using these. Let the interest of the child/ren, your imagination, and the knowledge you have acquired by undergoing the ELL training, guide you.

Enjoy your time working with the child!

Getting Started

Gaining Attention and Eye Contact

Some children may find it difficult to focus their attention on the activity you wish to do together. For these children you can begin with one or two of the following activities that focus on gaining and maintaining attention and eye contact. Once a child is paying attention to you and making eye contact you can move on to language, reading and writing activities.

Suggested activities to promote attention and eye contact:

Skill	Activity	Materials
Listening for changes in sound	Musical Statues: Play musical statues with a doll. Both you and the child each hold a small doll. When the music starts (or you sing) the dolls dance around the table or floor area. When the music (or your singing) stops the dolls have to be still.	Doll Music (you can make music yourself)
Eye Contact	Look at Me: Use a selection of different toy pieces. Say the child's name and hold one of the toy pieces in front of your eyes. When the child looks at you, say "Good looking" and give the child the toy piece to hold. Note: Throughout the session, make sure the child is looking at you before you give him/her an item.	Toy with a selection of pieces
Attention to task	Puzzles: Complete one or two puzzles together. Start with a 3 piece puzzle and gradually increase the number of pieces as the child gains confidence.	Puzzle

Getting Started

Listening

It is important for the child to develop good listening skills for their language, reading and writing development. To assist the child to be a good listener you might like to begin your time with the child playing one of the following games before you move on to language, reading and writing activities.

Skill	Activity	Materials
Listening to rhythm	Beat a Rhythm: Beat a rhythm on the table or floor with your hands and encourage the child to imitate you. Keep changing the rhythm as the child is able to match your rhythm.	
Listen for target word	Let's Go: Encourage the child to listen for the action word 'Go' when said by you with a combination of 3 or 4 other words. The child has to wait to hear the target word "Go" before performing an action such as jump, or clap.	
Listening to instructions	Simon Says: Play the game Simon Says where the child and you can only do the actions when 'Simon Says' you can. Initially perform the actions with the child to ensure that he/she is familiar with the actions and verbal labels. Once the child is familiar with them, just give the verbal instructions. "Simon Says touch your toes. Simon Says clap your hands. Now jump."	
Listening for several items at a time	Can You Find It? Ask for objects. Check first that the child is familiar with the verbal labels. Gradually increase the number of items displayed and requested. "Can you find the cup, spoon and banana?"	Toy with several pieces Eg: Pretend food and kitchen set

Category 1: Talking Together

There are many activities that you can engage the child in to support their oral language development. Reading aloud to children is an excellent context for developing children's receptive and expressive vocabulary. This activity provides excellent opportunities to listen to the language that they would not usually hear in everyday conversations. Other excellent activities for enhancing children's oral language include storytelling, providing times for discussions and conversations with a variety of partners, picture talks, action rhymes, news telling, and drama/role play activities.

Skill	Activity	Materials
Understand verbal labels for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Objects - Verbs - actions and their labels - the functions of objects - Identify emotions - Understand Prepositions - concepts/ attributes - Answering 'wh' questions - Participating in story time - Naming objects 	<p>Storytelling: Storytelling involves the verbal telling of a story. The adult may tell stories or can support children to tell their own stories. These stories can be related to something that the children saw or experienced, or could be imaginary.</p> <p>You can use a set of props to help the child make up their own story. Props may include finger puppets, felt boards, magnetic boards or toys. You also might like to use a set of pictures that show things that happened in a sequence. This will help children to develop the language of sequencing such as first, second, later, after, then finally etc.</p> <p>Adults can also support children's storytelling by providing beginnings to the story e.g., "On the way home an exciting thing happened..." You could help build the story with the child. Provide some interesting and new vocabulary for the child to hear and use. Encourage the use of different voices, props, gestures and facial expressions to help tell the story.</p>	Different options: Finger puppets Felt boards Magnetic boards Toys Set of pictures
Identify categories Sorting into categories	<p>Sorting and classifying: Talk with children as they sort items into particular categories. You can provide them with alternative categories such as size, colour, purposes, feelings etc. Build their vocabulary to include words that describe the objects, what they can do, opposites, how they feel.</p>	Jar of Teddies (different colours/sizes)
Understand verbal labels for objects Answering 'wh' questions	<p>Picture Talks: Ask the child to talk about the things they see in the picture. What might be happening? Why? What is this person doing? Where do you think they are going? Why? What might happen when they get there? Make up a story about the picture.</p>	Book

<p>Using expressive language</p> <p>Using longer sentences</p> <p>Using longer sentences with descriptive words</p> <p>Answering 'wh' questions</p> <p>Retell sequence of events</p> <p>Use joining words 'and, because'</p> <p>Use pronouns</p> <p>Use possessive words</p> <p>Use plurals</p> <p>Use '-ing' words, eg 'running, going'</p> <p>Use prepositions eg 'on, under, in'</p> <p>Naming objects</p>	<p>Conversations:</p> <p>It is important to regularly engage in conversation with children to enhance their oral language and conversational skills. The length of these conversations will vary according to the child's command of the English language and their previous experience of being included in conversations.</p> <p>Take a genuine interest in what they are doing. Rather than asking the child "What are you doing?" sit alongside them and remark "I see you're playing in the sand. I think I'll play as well – I am going to make a castle, I have to heap up the sand like this," etc. This way you are modelling language.</p> <p>Invite the child to tell you about their favorite food, games, TV program etc., and things they like doing, places they like to visit. You could also introduce new topics or topics discussed in the preschool or playgroup setting and provide them with some of the vocabulary they need in order to talk about this topic.</p> <p>Model the behaviours used during conversation such as nodding, smiling to show interest, asking questions, contributing with your own experiences.</p> <p>You may want to invite two of the child's friends to participate in a small group conversation where they take turns, initiate different topics, use language related to how they feel, and engage in the role of being the listener and the speaker.</p>	
<p>Identify objects</p> <p>Using expressive language</p> <p>Using longer sentences with descriptive words</p>	<p>Mystery Bag:</p> <p>Using a bag with a drawstring at the top, choose objects from the Resources Box e.g. Plastic fish, foam-shaped animal, soft toy. Ask the child to feel one of the objects and to describe what they feel without looking at it, and then ask them to guess what it might be. Encourage the child to ask as many questions as possible to identify the item in the mystery bag.</p>	<p>Mystery bag</p>
<p>Play</p>	<p>Drama and dramatic play:</p> <p>Set up a dramatic play corner that may include both real life props such as cash registers, cups, saucers, dress-ups etc. and abstract objects such as sticks, blocks, leaves, material etc.</p> <p>Encourage children to tell a story using the props. Play with the child or let the child lead the play and you become a character that they nominate. Encourage other children to join in the play scene.</p>	<p>Props</p>

Category 2: Reading Together

Section 1: Sharing a picture storybook

When you first meet with the child, sharing a story is an important activity to build a relationship of trust, pleasure and enjoyment. Below is a list of activities that will build over several weeks and months, depending on a particular child's strengths and capabilities.

It is important that you are familiar with the storybooks before you share them with the child. You can use post-it notes to mark pages where a particularly interesting picture occurs, or a part of the story can be anticipated, or you can draw their attention to a punctuation mark, the rhyming words, and letters and words etc.

Skill	Instructions	Materials
Story book reading	<p>Before reading the story:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce the story,• Talk about the title, cover, and title page.• It is a good time to engage the child in what they see in the cover picture, and what they think it tells them about the story to be read.• Look at the back cover of the book, as it often provides an interesting picture clue to what will happen in the story.• Take the child on a 'picture walk' through the book, briefly pointing out specific character actions or events, asking probing questions like "Have you ever...?" "What do we think is happening here?" "Do we think they are enjoying themselves?", questions that will engage the child in thinking about the pictures and story, but not telling the story. <p>While reading the story:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The very first reading is generally for enjoyment. You point to each word as it is read. The child is asked to follow along 'with their eyes'. You can ask them to point their finger with you later.• Read the print as naturally as possible, phrased and fluent, though you may choose to slow the pace just a little when you invite the child to join in.• Model realistic reactions to the text and use appropriate voice intonation.• You may pause from time to time asking the child to predict a word, phrase or to make	Picture story book

	<p>predictions about what is happening next before you turn the page.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the read, you may ask the child to confirm their predictions by asking, “Were we right/correct?” <p>After reading the story:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After reading, you can take the child back to the point of making predictions, whether at the word or story level, and ask how they knew they were right or how they knew if their prediction wasn’t quite correct. • You ask open-ended questions (requiring more than a yes/no response) and help to be from memory. 	
--	--	--

Section 2: Dialogic Reading

Children learn most about books and stories when they are actively involved. You can involve the child in the story reading through prompting them in several ways. You may find it useful to remember these prompts with the word CROWD

Skill	Instructions	Materials
Story book reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion prompts - You say a sentence that relates to the book you are sharing but leave a blank at the end of the sentence and get the child to fill it in. Eg. While looking at the cover “This book is about going _____” • Recall prompts - These are questions about what happened in a book you and the child have already read. Recall prompts can be used not only at the end of a book, but also at the beginning of a book when a child has been read that book before. Eg. “What was this book about?” “What happened in this book?” • Open-ended prompts These prompts focus on the pictures in books. Eg. “Which picture did we like best in the book? Why?” • Wh- prompts 	Picture story book

	<p>These prompts usually begin with what, where, when, why, and how questions. Eg. “Why do we think the boy wanted to share his cookies?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distancing prompts These ask the child to relate the pictures or words in the book they are reading to their own experiences outside the book. Eg. “Tell me about what you do in your back yard.” 	
--	--	--

Section 3: Print Referencing

You can use any printed resources to draw the child’s attention to various features of print. It includes the following aspects:

Skill	Instructions	Materials
Story book reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page order: “We read this page first, and then we read the next one...” • Point out the title of the book: “This is the title of the book. It tells us...” • Point out text direction-top to bottom, left to right: “We begin reading this word, and then we move...” • Talk about the author/illustrator: “The author wrote the story...” • Discuss the names and concepts of letters: “I see the same letter in two words” or “Can you find a letter ‘M’ or ‘T’ for instance?” • Concepts of word: “Let’s count the words on this page...” • Short/Long words: “Which word is longer/shorter...” • Read captions/subtitles: “The words here tell us about the photo, let’s read them together...” • Point out words in illustrations: “Here it says ‘mail’ or the ‘mailbox’” <p>Please note: While the example about relates to a book, this can easily be modified for other printed material.</p>	Book

Let's point to the Print	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You point to a word first and then ask the child to point to another word • You can help the child find the same letter in two words • You point to a sentence, running your finger along the words from capital letter to full stop, pointing out these markers as you go. Then ask the child to show you another sentence by pointing • "This tells us ----?" pointing to a full stop, exclamation mark or question mark. "Can we find another one?" • Point to and count the words on a page together, ask the child to do this again on their own (choose a small amount of print to start with) • You show the child a long word and a short word, then invite the child to show you a long word and a short word • Together count the letters in a word • "I can see the same letter in these two words" pointing. Can the child find two letters the same? 	Book
Matching Games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin a matching game with magnetic letters. You choose a magnetic letter and invite the child to find a matching magnetic letter. Repeat. • Have a group of capital letters and another group of the matching lower case letters. You choose a capital letter and invite the child to find the lower case letter to match. Start with easy matches eg. S, W, C, P, K etc. 	Magnetic letters

Section 3: Singing songs and nursery rhymes

Check with the educator of the group which songs and nursery rhymes the children are familiar with as some children have little experience of nursery rhyme. There may be CD's or other audio resources that can help you remind the child of some of these. Ask the child to choose one they enjoy most.

Skill	Instructions	Materials
Guess the Missing Word	Make a note of the words for your reference, and when you sing the song together you leave off the	Nursery Rhymes in Ardoch Box

last word, like with *Baa Baa Black Sheep*:
"Baa baa black sheep have you any wool,
Yes sir, yes sir, three bags _____." (full)

You will need to give many examples and getting the word right is less important than getting a word that fits in with the sound patterns of the piece.

Other examples:

Twinkle Twinkle Little Star
Twinkly, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the ____! (sky)

Mary Had a Little Lamb
Mary had a little lamb,
Its fleece was white as snow,
And everywhere that Mary went,
The lamb was sure to ____! (go)

Pussy Cat, Pussy Cat
Pussy cat, pussy cat, where have you been?
I've been to London to visit the queen.
Pussy cat, pussy cat, what did you do there?
I frightened a little mouse under her __? (chair)

Hickery Dickery Dock
Hickery, dickery, dock!
The mouse ran up the __. (clock)
The clock struck one
And down he ran
Hickery, dickery, dock!

Humpty-Dumpty
Humpty-Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty-Dumpty had a great __? (fall)
All the king's horses and
All the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together __? (again)

Read more at:

http://www.kidsgen.com/rhymes_and_poems/

Section 4: Environmental Print

Environmental Print provides you with words, letters, and symbols found in everyday life, with which the child might be familiar.

Skill	Instructions	Materials
Environmental Signs	Use Images of Environmental signs EXIT, NO PARKING, CLOSED, OPEN, TOILETS etc. to play matching games or discuss with the child what each one means.	Signs in Ardoch box
Junk Mail	Bring in junk mail catalogues of children's clothes, toys or food. Talk with the child about each of the objects and what the description of the product says and the price. Can the child identify these different sources of information?	Catalogues

Category 3: Writing together

Composing is the first and final purpose of writing. It is also very difficult. In making their messages, children move from making random marks through stages of scribble in straight lines and on to individual capital letters (because these are easier to write). Children know their writing is not like adult form, and they can be reluctant to have a go – it takes time. However, make sure that some writing activity from below is shared on each of your visits.

It is suggested that you have a writing book of blank pages (no lines) for each child you work with. Date each page and this will help you keep a record of the child’s writing development. During these writing activities, you will do most of the writing, but what is written down by you is always decided with the child. The final piece can be shared with other children too.

Many of the language and reading activities lend themselves to being extended by adding a writing component. Also note that other activities noted below can begin with writing and also incorporate involvement of language and reading. The following ideas might get you started.

Holding a pencil for successful writing takes time to master. Large muscle movements of the arms and hands need to develop before fine muscle movements of fingers are sufficiently developed for pencil control. Your child will have experienced many activities to help with this development. For instance, throwing a ball into a basket, circling ribbons in time to a favorite song, all help to strengthen the arms while squeezing a sponge and wringing out the doll’s clothes after washing will all help to strengthen hand muscles.

Skill	Activity	Materials
Name Writing	<p>Name Cards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the child ‘read’ their name card? Have three name cards with a child’s name on each card – names of children in the group that the child knows. These cards can be in capital letters and another set in lower case letters with a Capital letter at the start of each name. Show the child all the cards and read the names on the cards. Then lay the cards out on the table and ask the child to pick out their name card. If the child has difficulties, take away the cards that do not match their name and just focus on the cards with their name on. Play the game on each visit until they are confident in choosing their own name card. • Can the child write their name? Can they trace their name? Have the child write their name on a page of their book each time you meet. They may find it easier to trace over your writing of the letters in their name or they may want to copy from their name card until they build up confidence and skill to 	Name cards (you will need to make these – find a template in Ardoch box)

	<p>write their name from memory. Tell the child this is for you to know what has happened when you are not with them. It will remind you of the games you played together and what worked best for both of you. This will provide you with a record over time and show evidence of progress. Make sure you write your name as well to model writing and its purpose.</p> <p>*Really important to remember that some children may not have the same opportunities as others. For instance, some of the children we work with may not go on holiday. Please remember to ask relevant and sensitive questions.</p>	
Writing to Communicate	<p>Writing Things Down to Remember:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why do we write? Talk with the child about remembering things and how we use writing to help us not forget. For instance, making a shopping list before we visit the supermarket, emailing Nana about our holiday, making a note in the diary about something that is going to happen, like when the man is coming to clean out the gutters. What are all the reasons why you write? Share this with the child. 	
Writing to Communicate	<p>Sharing Things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “What are we going to write about today?” Always have paper, pencils and textas with you and make it a routine that you will write together each time you visit. First talk about something that interests the child and encourage them to draw what they have talked about and then together compose a sentence you can write for the child. When you write for the child, write exactly what they say. Start at the left hand side of the page, show how you leave spaces between words and progress left to right. When you have finished, invite the child to read what you have written as you point to each word in turn. Your child may want to ‘write’ about one of their play activities by drawing something appropriate. Ask them what they have 	<p>Paper Pencils Textas</p>

	<p>enjoyed playing and engage them in recording this activity through drawing something of significance they remember.</p>	
<p>Conventions and Concepts about Printed Language</p>	<p>After reading a story together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your discussion might include a focus on similar experiences the child has had and they can draw this for you. Talking about their drawing with them, invite the child to tell you what to write about their drawing. Write exactly what the child tells you. Read together what you have written, pointing to each word. <p>Sharing an Alphabet Book:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find out if the child can say the word and then isolate the beginning sound of the word. For instance, there may be a picture of a dog on the "Dd" page. Ask the child to say the word dog after you, and then make the first sound of the word 'duh' while pointing to the letter. If the child is capable, you could write the letter together. 	<p>Picture book or Alphabet book Paper Pencils Texas</p>
<p>Story Writing</p>	<p>Story writing and story telling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the child to make up a story, again this story can be written down by you and read together. For instance; Choose two animal finger puppets who can talk to each other about what they like to eat most of all. There are 8 teddy bears, 2 are blue, 2 are red, 2 are green and 2 are yellow. Make these into two matching teams, (the green and red bears against the yellow and blue ones) who meet to play a game - Who wins? What is the prize? What are the rules? Use the building blocks to make a building together. Talk about who might live there. Where do they go to work? Do they have a dog? The doll's furniture gives an opportunity to talk about how your living room sits and where the TV is placed and how many chairs you have in your lounge room. You can both move the furniture around to make a space to have a birthday party. The pretend food can be used to stimulate the idea of making a shopping list together. 	<p>Resources in Ardoch box</p>

<p>Fine motor development</p>	<p>Developing Fine Motor Control:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using pegs to hang out the dolls clothes Sorting buttons or beads by colour, size and shape. Picking up small objects with tweezers or tongs Re-sorting muddled collections of objects A collection of little padlocks and keys (from luggage suitcases) can be another opportunity to develop fine motor control. 	<p>Pegs and dolls clothes Buttons Beads Tweezers Tongs Padlocks Keys</p>
<p>Fine motor development</p>	<p>Helping with Handgrip:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progressively, through child-drawing and you-writing activities, you will notice the child's handgrip on the texta, pencil or crayons. Show them how you hold the pencil when they write their name and use supports, like triangular pencils (or triangular shaped slip-ons). 	<p>Texta Pencil Crayons Paper</p>
<p>Fine motor development</p>	<p>Gaining Control:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some children will benefit from lots of pattern activities across the page, show them how to zig zag /\/\/\/\/\ also, lines of linked OOOOOOOs will help to strengthen their wrist and finger muscles. When handwriting letters children need to know two pieces of information: Where do I start? Where do I put my pencil? and Which way do I go? Some letters are more complicated than others to write. Find some of the easier ones and show the child how they are formed, eg. l, i, l, o, v, w x, they can copy you or trace over the letters you have written on the page. Holding your hand over their hand helps them 'feel' the movement better. Capital letters are easier to write than lower case. Find out which letters the child can write by looking through an alphabet book together. Say "Show me a letter that is easy for you to write." Have the child write these letters in their book. "Show me a letter you think you would find difficult to write?" You write these letters and talk about the movements you make each time. 	<p>Texta Pencil Crayons Paper Alphabet book</p>

References

Dickinson, D.K. & Tabors, P.O. (2001) *Beginning Literacy with Language: Young children learning ay home and school*. Baltimore, MD: Paul Brookes Publishing.

Makin, L.L. (2013) *Live, Love and Learn; How young children learn to speak, read and write through everyday life*. Camberwell, VIC: ACER Press.

Palmer, S., Bayley, R. & Raban, B. (2014) *Foundations of Early Literacy: A balanced approach to language, listening and literacy skills in the early years*. Albert Park, VIC: Teaching Solutions.

Roskos, K.A., Tabors, P.O, & Lenhart, L.A. (2009) *Oral Language and Early Literacy in the Preschool: Talking, Reading and Writing*. (2nd. Edition) Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Stevens, J., Raban, B. & Nolan, A. (2014) *Storytelling and Story Making in the Early Years*. Albert Park, VIC: Teaching Solutions.

Volunteering in Playgroup Settings

Volunteering in a playgroup setting is very different to volunteering in a preschool or early years classroom in a school. As in other early years settings, you will support children from a diverse range of cultures but in playgroups, the age range is greater - from birth to five years old. Don't expect a formal routine or set structure, as often playgroups have a more relaxed atmosphere about them so they appear welcoming of all children and parents, and are flexible enough to respond to the necessities of families, or what arises during the session. Your role in the playgroup setting is to engage with the children facilitating their language and literacy development and STEM literacy, using the simple activities provided. However, what this engagement looks like in a playgroup setting is very different to a preschool setting, for example, where all the children are of a similar age.

Parent involvement

Playgroup is a place where children and their parents or carers can just 'be'. Playgroup is a neutral space where there are no judgements made about children and families. This means there are no expectations surrounding their involvement in the activities on offer for the children to engage with. As a Volunteer you will need to respect each parent's decision as to whether they involve themselves with their child and other children, or sit and watch or talk with other parents. This is totally their own choice and each decision has merit. Their involvement in the activities on offer is not an expected part of attending the playgroup session. For example, for some parents the playgroup provides an opportunity to connect with other families, it can also act to give them a sense of belonging to a community. Whichever way parents choose to involve themselves in the playgroup setting, the important fact is that they feel welcome and so will keep attending. As Dani, an Ardoch Volunteer who assists in a playgroup, suggests you want parents to feel a sense of ownership of the playgroup and that they belong.

Some parents will at times watch what you are doing with the children to engage them in language, reading, writing and STEM literacy activities. They may try some of your techniques and activity ideas at home but you may never know this. Your focus is on each child and taking any opportunity you can to interact with them to support their language and literacy development. An Education Partnership Co-ordinator for Ardoch, recommends that it may be easier for some Volunteers to think of playgroup as a type of 'Drop In' experience where parents want to come and the environment is educational in a broad sense.

Reflecting on your own beliefs and values

Volunteers need to be sensitive to parents - remember you are part of a community in a playgroup. The community is comprised of many different families often from diverse cultures different to your own. Each family is different and each parent will parent their child in their own way. You may find some of the ways parents interact with their child/ren different to what you believe is the 'right way' to parent a child. This is your own belief and these should not be transferred to others. We can all make judgements but your role is to facilitate their children's early language and literacy growth. It's important that you're aware of your own beliefs and values and don't impose them on the families you're with. Remember that at all times your role is to role model rather than dictate to parents what they should or shouldn't be doing in relation to their children's learning. A parent may become involved in your activity but remember, that's not your responsibility. For example, Dani, an Ardoch Volunteer, begins by sharing a book with a child and may include the parent in this experience if the parent is sitting close by or looks interested.

Dani gives these words of encouragement “Come with an open mind and open heart, and tread gently but with confidence.”

Looking for early language, reading, writing and STEM literacy opportunities

Due to the more relaxed structure of most playgroups and the broad age range of the children, you may need to look for more informal ways to work with the children on their early language and literacy and STEM literacy skills. This means being flexible in how, when and where you work with a child or children. For example, you might approach a child to see if they are interested in listening to a story or taking part in a STEM activity only for the child to run off to another activity after a few minutes. This behaviour is a combination of the child’s age and the interesting environment that playgroups offer. At one playgroup reading stories happens in many places within the setting such as under the large play equipment on a sunny day, inside on a couch, or under a table where there are some cushions to sit on. STEM activities can be undertaken anywhere within the setting and you should take advantage of the variety of spaces offered to you. You might find yourself having a conversation with a child while they are digging in the sand or jumping on a trampoline. You need to be aware of potential opportunities to interact with the child/ren wherever they are and whatever they are doing. If you become familiar with the activities in the program, you will find yourself able to adapt them readily in most settings. Also due to the diverse age range of the children who attend playgroups (infants through to preschool aged children) how you interact will also differ and your expectation about how long the child/ren will stay working with you at any activity will vary greatly. An Education Partnership Co-ordinator for Ardoch, advises that you “Trust that every interaction has value for the child”. This means that while you may have planned to introduce specific activities with certain children, these plans might have to be abandoned due to the children’s interest in something different on the day. Therefore you will need to be able to adapt and use what is at hand in the playgroup setting that the child/ren is more interested in at that time. At these times remember that capitalising on a child’s interest is the best way to work with them as they are usually more focused and may concentrate for longer time periods. This means being attentive to what is going on around you and looking for possibilities for your interaction with the child/ren. Ursula, an Ardoch volunteer who volunteers in playgroup settings, sees this as “being flexible both physically and mentally”.

Other things to consider

- You may find that sometimes the playgroup setting has many adults in attendance. These adults may not only be the children’s parents or carers but could be workers from other affiliated organisations such as the local preschool teacher, the Maternal Child Health nurse.
- Staff may change over time which could alter how the playgroup feels and runs. In these cases you need to be flexible and ‘go with the flow’. Your ongoing presence in the setting will provide some point of continuity for the children and their families.
- It is advisable to speak with the Playgroup Leader about the vision he/she has for the playgroup and what they wish to achieve. This is called their philosophy for the playgroup. You will find that this underpins how a playgroup functions, and this knowledge will help you understand how best you can fit into this setting.
- It is important for you to feedback your observations of the children and engagement with the parents to the Playgroup Leader. Also share with the Playgroup Leader anything that you feel ‘uncomfortable’ about so you can feel supported in your volunteer work.
- Be prepared to engage in a lot of listening when in playgroups as children and their parents / carers choose to talk with you. You need to listen to what they say rather than giving advice. Remember that your role is to support the children, however, you also need to be mindful that you will be role modelling positive interactions with children around language and literacy and STEM literacy development that parents and carers may watch.

Appendix 1: End Notes

ELL Program in Practice

Volunteers will work in different settings (family centre, kindergarten, playgroups etc.), so details will vary according to where you are located.

Volunteers will be asked to complete **Early Years Progression Surveys** four times a year for two children or a group of children (depending on the program) that they spent time with, the activities and their responses.

1. Post EY Training / before placement

- Placement should be within 3 to 4 weeks during which time you must obtain your WWC Check (Working With Children Check) and Police Check. WWC This information is available from this website: <http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au>
- Ardoch Coordinator will make email contact once your checks have been done
- Your Ardoch lanyard will be sent to you, once these checks are through
- Ardoch will send you information about the Centre; contact details, location, how to get there etc.
- Ardoch notifies the Centre staff that Volunteers are available and they then identify a child or children in need of support

2. Orientation and Induction at your placement – Weeks 1 and 2

Phase 1 – Arriving at the Centre:

- Wear the Ardoch lanyard with your name and WWC Check card at all times
- You will be introduced to the Centre Director and/or Centre staff, who will help you complete any documentation required by the Centre administration
- You may also be given copies of any relevant Policy and Procedures documents, as well as a copy of the Centre's Philosophy (different for each Centre)
- You will need to sign in at the Centre as a visitor upon arrival
- The Director and/or other Centre staff will give you an Orientation and Introduction to the Centre (each Centre will be different)
- During this Orientation and Introduction session you will meet other Centre staff, Educators and children
- The Centre staff will show you where the Ardoch *Resources Boxes* and where any other documents that you may need are kept
- In regards to '**Track it forward**', after a day of volunteering you are simply required to log the hours online you have done for the day (**mandatory*).

Phase 2 – Introduction to the room and the child(ren)

- After this Orientation and Introduction session, you will spend the rest of your time in the room where you will be located, during this time as a 'general' Volunteer
- Ask the Educator the best time for you both to talk about each child:
 - 1) How does the Educator support the child(ren)?
 - 2) How could you best support the work they are already doing?
 - 3) Does the Educator have goals for each child that you could build on?

Information from the Educator can be added to your volunteer/ teacher agreement form, such as:

- Does the child have a short attention span?

- Are they easily distracted?
- Do they readily join in conversations?
- Additional information considered relevant
- The Educator will introduce you to the **EY program** child(ren), telling them your name, when you will be visiting the Centre and what you will be doing together



ANY INFORMATION GIVEN TO YOU ABOUT THE CHILD(REN) IS CONFIDENTIAL

Phase 3 – Getting to know the room and the child(ren)

- Use these first two weeks to get used to the Centre, the room, the facilities, who you will be working with – both staff and the child(ren)
- Spend some 'getting to know you' time with the child(ren) you will be working with

3. Time with the children – Week 3 and beyond

Phase 1 – Before entering the room

- Wear your lanyard with name and WWC Check card
- Sign in to Centre Visitors' Book
- Make sure the Educator knows you have arrived and that you will be seeking out the child(ren) during the next two hours

PREPARE FOR YOUR SESSION

- Decide which Program you would like to run that week either ELL or Curious Young Minds (in time your choice will be determined by previous sessions, children's interests, other activities and themes around the room – check with the Educator etc.)
- If you decide to do Shared book reading, please read through the chosen books first (so you know the storyline) and use 'post-it' notes on pages you want to explore further with the child(ren)
- Otherwise select related resources / props / complementary songs for your activities
- Refresh your memory about the child(ren) from your previous notes



REMEMBER THAT YOU CANNOT BE ALONE WITH A CHILD – EITHER INSIDE OR OUTSIDE

Phase 2 – In the room

- If the child(ren) for the **EY program** doesn't approach you, go to them with an activity in hand, showing you are going to share with them
- If there is no designated area, find a quiet spot
- You may spend 5 minutes or 20 mins with the child(ren) at this early stage. A second approach to the child(ren) who disappears after 5 mins may work or may not!
- Specifically, for **ELL program** please see below:
 - What you might try when you are surrounded by 3 or 4 children and the Educator is busy elsewhere – read with the group first and then tell them that you are going to read with 'A' (your child) now. You may say to the group that you will read to them again after you have read with children 'A', 'B' and 'C'. From time to time you may need to ask for help from the Educator with this if you become too popular. There are advantages and losses in reading with a group:
 - *Advantages* – modelling from other children, cooperating, more diverse conversation;
 - *Losses* – reduction of the one to one focus, distraction, less attentive

Phase 3 – Leaving the Centre and after

- When you sign out from the Centre, log the hours you have done on '**Track it forward**'

- Return resources to the *Resources Boxes*
- If possible, make contact with the Educator each week about your observations. If you had difficulties with numbers of children joining in, ask the teacher for suggestions as how to handle this. You may need to ask her for direct help
- If there is a specific issue(s) of concern about a child, definitely speak with the Educator before you leave the Centre, e.g., a disclosure that concerns you. If the Educator is unavailable speak with the Centre Director or Ardoch Coordinator

4. General Notes

WHAT YOU MAY ENCOUNTER

- You may not be 'welcomed' by staff on your arrival because they may be busy welcoming families and settling children into the room
- The room could be loud and it may appear chaotic
- You may have to seek out 'identified' child(ren)
- It takes time to form a relationship with the child(ren)
- Children may come and go during your time with them
- Children might not speak at first because they have been told not to speak to strangers
- Children might not like the activities you've chosen
- Each child will be different so different approaches will be needed
- Your identified child(ren) may not attend the Centre regularly
- Your identified child(ren) may leave the Centre
- And more (refer to current Volunteers)

OTHER THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

- In the event of you being ill and unable to attend for your session, please phone the Centre
- You may choose not to attend the session if there have been cases of children with contagious illnesses. A phone call before you leave home will help you decide what to do
- Talk to, phone, email Ardoch if –
 - a) you continue to be unable to find a 'quiet' space to work with the child(ren)
 - b) you have too many extra children
 - c) there is anything you are not comfortable talking to Centre staff about
 - d) there is an ongoing unresolved issue
- Your feedback, observations and suggestions contribute to the ongoing development of the **EY program**
- Participate in at least one Professional Development opportunities offered by Ardoch
- There is no right and wrong in your approach;
 - a) personal style and skills differ;
 - b) each session will be different;
 - c) lots of things are outside of your control;
- 'The less satisfactory days' – don't be disheartened; go with the flow and remain flexible and positive
- Talk with other **EY program** Volunteers with whom you trained or who are at 'your' Centre for support - phone, email, informal catch ups. Volunteer feedback tells us that "talking to each other" is both supportive and educational.
- You may also choose to talk with
 - a) your Ardoch **EY program** contact person;
 - b) the Centre room Educator or
 - c) Centre Director

Appendix 2: Interactive Reading Tips

Core Values

- Child centred
- Relationship
- Interaction
- Respect
- Positive role model

Interactive reading:

Read *with* children, not *to* children

"It is the talking that surrounds the story book reading that gives it power, helping children to bridge what is in the story and their own lives." (Hanan, NAEYC & IRA, 998)

- Engage the children and develop relationships that support their participation
- Use resources to assist children to develop their oral language and early literacy skills
- Create opportunities for children to express their own thoughts and imagination
- Encourage and foster the love of books and the joy of reading
- Expose children to different kinds of books (eg pictures, stories, rhyming, non fiction)
- Enrich the stories with singing, play and related "props"

Let the child lead by:

- Eliciting and responding to the child's interest
- Extending the child's interest
- Reading non fiction with the child
- Offering choices of books to the child (from your selection of 3-5)
- Showing your enthusiasm for book, author, illustrations etc
- Using pictures – could go through the book looking and talking about pictures first

Go beyond what is on the page – have an ongoing conversation

- talk about the here and now
- expand the child's responses
- relate the book to the child's life
- talk about the past and future
- encourage imaging and pretending
- talk about feelings
- encourage problem solving
- use thinking-out-loud statements - "I'm wondering", "I'm thinking", "I'm trying to understand"

Other things about reading

- how to hold a book
- knowing where to start reading
- knowing about 'authors'
- knowing about 'illustrators'
- looking at the cover, and the spine (is the title written there too?)

Remember

- Reading multiple times reinforces skills
- Wait expectantly
- Make eye contact
- Use gestures, facial expressions, body language, voice

Interactive Reading Tips #2

1. We ask questions, we leave space to allow the child to think and respond, we guide and prompt but try not to be too directive.
2. Think about what would we like them to notice as we were reading? Think about what encourages us to read a book as an adult? Subject matter, cover, blurb etc.- what might encourage a child to read a book with you?
3. Describe the make up of book; author, illustrator, title etc. Modelling reading behavior; how to hold book, explain how we read- the mechanics of reading; where do we start? Where do we finish? What do we do when we get to the end of the page? Turning the page etc.
4. Importance of using re-reading and repetition in reading – it is often a good idea to recap on a well received book which may have been read in the previous session. Familiar books increase a child's sense of the known.
5. Tones of voice we can use as readers- making the story interesting by using different voices, actions asking children to show you how the character's face might look and to anticipate what might happen next in the story etc.
6. Use of props, songs, actions etc.- this helps to gain and hold a child's attention, engages them and promotes reading as an enjoyable activity for them and for the adult reading with them.
7. Responding to children's interest levels- don't persist with a book that children are clearly not enjoying, encourage them to look through your books and choose another, ask them to tell you why they would like to read the book, what do they think the book's about and what might happen in the story?
8. Respond to a child's interests-find out what they are interested in and find books in book box and in kinder library that correspond- contact Ardoch if there other topics need to be covered (non fiction etc) or further resources needed.

Appendix 3: 10 Ways to Practice Writing Your Name

1. **Gel Bags.** These are brilliant. Fill a giant ziplock bag with about half a bottle of hair gel and some food coloring. To use, write their name on a page. Lay the gel bag over the paper. Your kids trace the letters to make their name.
2. **Sandpaper letters.** Kids love sensory experiences. This one helps your kids recognize that letters need to be formed in a particular order. Write their name on sandpaper. Your child needs to use yarn to form the letters of their name.
3. **Dot-to-Dot.** This is an especially useful technique for older kids who have learned all the wrong habits. Create a series of dots and number from where they start. Your kids need to follow the dots in order. Start with lots of dots and as your child gets more practice, remove dots.
4. **Glittery Letters.** Review their name multiple days in a row. Using a stiff piece of paper or cardboard, write their names. Your child traces letters of their name with glue. Cover the glue with glitter. When it has dried you can trace the letters with your fingers.
5. **Scramble and Unscramble the Letters.** One of the precursors to writing their name is recognizing it – and deciphering the order of the letters in their name. Practice putting letters in order from left to right with this fun name activity.
6. **Rainbow letters.** Give your child a handful of crayons. They get to trace their name over and over again. Each time using a different crayon. You will be surprised at how fast your kids will become experts at writing letters with this technique.
7. **Chalk-Board Swabs.** If you have a chalk board this is super handy and fun! Write their name on the board with chalk. Give your kids a handful of cotton swabs and a capful of water. Your kids need to erase the letters using the swabs.
8. **Highlighter Letters.** Write the letters of their name with thick lines using a bright highlighter marker. Your kids trace the letters – their goal is to stay inside the “line” of the highlighter markings. As they become a more confident writer, make the letters thinner and smaller.
9. **Street letters.** Form the letters of their name in tape on the floor. Grab the bin of cars. Your kids get to drive around the letters of their name. Encourage them to move their vehicles along the roads the way they would write the letters.
10. **Play Dough Etching.** Etch your child’s name into play dough using a pencil. Your child can trace the lines. Then roll it flat and trace their name very softly. Your kids need to etch their name deeply following the lines you made. The tension of the dough will help develop the muscle motor control needed to write.