

# My Word Book Teacher's Guide

*My Word Book* is a classroom tool that helps kindergarten-age children focus on words and picture associations, using a format that is non-threatening and developmentally appropriate. Most 5 and 6-year-old children love to have their own books, so making this personal space available to them provides an impetus for their interest in words. And, it also allows children to direct the learning, and focus on the words that are important to them.

Most 5 and 6-year-old children are naturally drawn to and interested in the words that surround them. As children become aware that words are symbols for language, they begin to draw pleasure from “reading” the words that are a part of their environment, and they want to know what the names for familiar objects look like.

Young children who are beginning to interact with print also find a great deal of satisfaction in labeling their world. At this stage in reading development, they begin to recognize words that are connected to a picture clue. Every kindergarten teacher has seen this when presenting a familiar picture book to a group of children. The children naturally connect the language to the pictures. The use of *My Word Book* is an extension of what these emerging readers do instinctively—look for words and copy words. *My Word Book* helps children find words, and provides the young child with a personal storage place for their word collection.

We feel very strongly that *My Word Book* should be used to enhance a child's perception of the printed word based on his or her own time line of readiness. Some kindergartners may be interested in words and ready for *My Word Book* quite early in the year, while others may not indicate a readiness until later in the year. In most kindergarten classrooms, the

children who develop skills earlier in the year become models for the other children. We think November is about the right time to introduce *My Word Book* in most classrooms, but YOU must be the judge of what is appropriate for your children. When each child's interest and ability are allowed to dictate how that child uses this word book, you will find that most of your children will become interested in words and in using *My Word Book* at some time during the school year. Through using this tool, the children will become more aware of words in their environment, picture-word connections, and letter sounds, all of which will help the child grow as an emerging reader and writer.

As with any other new activity in your classroom, *My Word Book* must be carefully introduced. In preparation for the introduction, you will want to write each child's name on the cover of a book in permanent marker. You then might want to try a scenario like this:

**Teacher:** “Girls and boys, I have something new to show you this morning. It is a special kind of book. (*show book*) This special book is a word book. We use it for looking at words and pictures, and we use it for writing down words and pictures that are important to us. We have a page for each alphabet letter, and on that page are words that begin with that letter. Who can tell me the name of one of the alphabet letters?”

**Child:** “S. My name begins with an S.”

**Teacher:** “You're right, Sarah. Your name does begin with S. Lets look at the S page in this book. (*Teacher turns to S page.*) Look. Here is the letter S at the top of the page. What else do you see on this page?”

**Child:** “I see some scissors.”

**Teacher:** “You’re right, Nathan. Those are scissors just like the scissors we have in our room. Would any one like to guess what this word is right next to the picture of scissors.”

**Several Children:** “Scissors.”

**Teacher:** “You are exactly right. Here is the word ‘scissors’, and right beside that word is a picture of some scissors. What else do you see on this page?”

**Child:** “I see a snake.”

**Teacher:** “I see that snake, too. And what do you think this word right next to the picture of the snake could be?”

**Children:** “Snake.”

**Teacher:** “You are really thinking today. You have figured out that the word right beside the picture tells us what the picture is. Now you can read lots of words in this book. I am going to give each of you your very own book with your name on the front. You may look through it and read some words and pictures. Then, before you go to work, please put it in your cubby (*or other appropriate space*) so it will be safe. You may get it out to read during other work times, but always be sure to put it safely away, because we will use it again another day.”

This initial introduction simply lets the children explore the format of *My Word Book* and helps them learn the “trick” for figuring out what those words say. You will notice that no writing or drawing takes place during this introduction. This time is set aside for the children to become acquainted with *My Word Book* and its arrangement. It also gives them a chance to know where to find their book when they want to use it. Some teachers may also want to allow children to decorate the cover as another way to make the book the child’s “own.”

After the children have had opportunities to become comfortable with the format of the book, you may want to call a small group during a work time to play “Word Hunt” with *My Word Book*. In this game, several children sit in a circle on the floor or around a table with the teacher. The teacher begins with a riddle. “I’m thinking of a word that can be found in *My Word Book*. It is something that grows on a tree and it begins with the letter L.” The children search through the book until they find the leaf. The teacher then continues with another riddle. In this game, the children are “reading the pictures” and do no writing. After playing a few rounds, a child might want a turn thinking up a riddle. (This should be on a voluntary basis.)

This game will help children get used to using the book to find pictures and words, and it is also a great game for developing listening skills and letter-sound awareness. (As the year progresses, you may want to play variations of this game using unit words, school words or any other words that become important to your class.)

After several days have passed and every child has had some time to look through *My Word Book* and play Word Hunt, it is time to show the children how to enter words into the book. Most kindergarten teachers have word cards for unit of study words displayed in the room. This is a great place to start - especially if the word cards also have a corresponding picture. Try this lesson:

**Teacher:** “Boys and girls, today we are going to look at some words. We have been learning about good foods to eat, so on our chart we have lots of food words. Does anyone see a word that you know on our chart?”

**Child:** “I see a picture of a carrot. I love carrots!”

**Teacher:** “Good reading. You read the

word 'carrot'. What letter does 'carrot' start with?"

**Child:** "It starts with C."

**Teacher:** "It sure does. I'm going to look through my *My Word Book* book and see if I can find the letter C. Let's see. The first one is A. The second one is B. And here is C. Here is an empty line. I like to eat carrots too, so I want that word in *My Word Book*. I'll read the words and pictures that are here. Let's see - 'cake,' 'car,' 'cat' and 'coat.' No 'carrot.' So, I'll write the letters just like on the word card. C A R R O T. There. That spells 'carrot'. Now I can draw a picture of a carrot or paste a picture of a carrot in this empty space next to the word. (*Some children will be satisfied with their own drawing while others may want a magazine picture for this purpose.*) Now, whenever I see this picture I will remember that this word says 'carrot.' I will put all these word cards and pictures at the writing center this week. If you would like to, you may get your word book and copy a special food word and picture into your word book. I will be glad to help you get started and help you find the right spot in your book to put your word and picture."

Be sure to remember that the whole class may not begin using *My Word Book* on a regular basis immediately, but some will. As the others become ready over time, they will learn from watching their peers and from the astute teacher, who will simply suggest that a child may want to put a particular word in the book and then help the child do it. Remember - young children work best with only one idea at a time. Don't suggest that a child enter more than one word at a sitting. If a child initiates the activity and wants to enter more than one word, that's fine.

These ideas are a few effective ways to get started with *My Word Book*. We are quite sure that many more possibilities will come to you

as you and your children work with *My Word Book*. As you develop new ideas, focus on activities that are open-ended and child-directed. This book was not created for children to use as a workbook, and it was not designed for a group of 20 kindergarten children to all sit down at one time and enter the same word. Each copy of *My Word Book* should evolve into a collection of words as unique as the child who is choosing them. Some other possibilities for activities are:

- When a letter of the alphabet is introduced, make a "language experience" list of words that begin with that letter. Suggest that children may want to enter one of the words into their word book.
- When a letter of the alphabet is introduced, you might work with children in small groups to go on a hunt for words that begin with that letter in *My Word Book*. Create a word hunt center by making word cards with four or five words that you know are in *My Word Book*. Add the picture that goes with the word by drawing it directly on the word card, or by copying the picture out of *My Word Book* and pasting it on the word card beside the word. The children then take their copy of *My Word Book* to the center and search for each word and its corresponding picture.
- In the writing center, you may want to put sale ads for toys as a springboard for words. Children cut out a picture of a favorite toy to glue into *My Word Book*. The teacher then helps the child enter the word beside the picture.
- When a child asks what a classroom label says, give the answer and then suggest that he or she enter the word into their word book.
- As children become aware of one another's names, you could set up a center with children's names and photocopied

school pictures. Children may put the names of friends on the Classmates page and glue a photocopied picture into the box. (This type of activity may be done with any of the special extra pages at the back of *My Word Book*.)

- Write finger plays or songs that you use repeatedly on chart paper, and laminate them. As you do the finger plays or songs, point to the word that is being said. If a child is intrigued or interested in a particular word, suggest that the word be entered in his or her word book.
- When reading a big book that is repetitive, suggest that children may want to enter a certain repetitive word into *My Word Book*.
- When a child brings a special item to school to share, make a label for it and place it on the sharing shelf. The child may want to put that word in *My Word Book*.
- When a new unit of study is introduced, write words that relate to the unit on word cards along with a descriptive picture. Put them in a writing center, where children may copy them on paper or into *My Word Book*.
- Near the end of the year you may have some kindergarten children starting to ask how a word is spelled. If this occurs, you can help the child look for the word in *My*

*Word Book*. If it is found, the child can copy it, and if it is not found, you can help the child enter the word.

You may have noticed a pattern in many of the activities and suggestions we make for the use of this book. The words “SUGGEST” and “MAY WANT TO” appear over and over. This is intentional, because as the creators of these materials, we feel very strongly about their appropriate use. While the activities should be introduced and made available to all, children must be allowed to choose them and will indicate interest when ready to learn from them. You must be careful NOT to make suggestions so often that you turn children off. As observers of young children, kindergarten teachers will be able to tell just when an appropriate suggestion will put the child in motion.

*My Word Book* encourages children to pay attention to print in a developmentally appropriate way as they become young authors and illustrators. It is designed to help children focus on the words in their environment that they are naturally interested in as emerging readers. Its use is child-centered and child-directed, and allows children to learn from and follow one another as they learn about print and communication in kindergarten. Above all, *My Word Book* allows children to say, “These words are mine, and I can read them.”



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