

SLPs as Authors:  
The Art and Science of  
Writing Children's  
Books for Preschoolers

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**KEY POINT #1 : Authors must be cognizant of emergent literacy goals when developing children's literature for intervention (and beyond).**

Literature-based intervention has been recommended as a best practice to support language and literacy goals for children with language delays for over 25 years (Justice & Kaderavek, 2002; Kaderavek & Justice 2002; McKeown & Beck, 2006; Towson & Gallagher, 2016). In pre-readers, emergent literacy goals include oral language (e.g., vocabulary and story comprehension/ expression), phonological awareness (e.g., rhyme, alliteration), print awareness (e.g., differentiating between text and picture, letter awareness) and alphabet knowledge (i.e., phoneme-grapheme relationships) (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). Being cognizant of foundational emergent literacy goals, as established by this robust research base, is key to the development of children's literature to support positive outcomes related to language and pre-literacy.

**KEY POINT #2: : To increase opportunities to use language in the natural context of joint reading, authors must consider how to build opportunities for active participation into reading interactions.**

Joint reading has been described by many researchers as an ideal, natural context for facilitating early language and preliteracy skills. (e.g., Crowe, Norris, and Hoffman, 2000; Justice et al., 2010, Yader, 1989). The transactional model of language development (Yoder & Warren, 1993) suggests that the learning process involves ongoing reciprocal interactions between child behaviors and adult behaviors. Robertson (2016) and Lennox (2013) found that children who are engaged as active participants in the reading interaction are more likely to demonstrate an increase in their oral language and literacy skills than children who are passive partners in dyad read aloud episodes. Even preschoolers, who are not yet developmentally ready to read, can become actively involved in reading when books are structured to include opportunities to move from a passive participant in the reading interaction (listening only) to an active role (chiming in, speculating, predicting, repeating, role playing, story building, etc.)

**KEY POINT #3: Authors must consider the impact of specific elements, characteristics, and genres of children's books on early language and literacy development in general and in relation to specific skills and targeted outcomes.**

Researchers have begun focusing on how to choose and use books more systematically to support specific language (Schwarz et al., 2015) and literacy (Treiman, Rosales, & Kessler, 2016) goals. Other researchers are focusing on the benefits of using different genres to promote specific skills (Breit-Smith, Olszewski, Swoboda, Guo, & Prendeville, 2017; Knudsen-Lindauer, 1988). Lennox (2013) concludes that different book genres teach children about different book structures and specific elements within a story structure can impact on specific skill development. Findings from body of research can inform SLP authors regarding characteristics, and qualities of children's stories that have the most potential to lead to positive outcomes in early language learning and pre-literacy skill development.

# Book Assessment Worksheet

Skill	Notes
<b>Emergent Literacy</b>	
Print Awareness	
Phonological Awareness (rhyming, syllabification.)	
Phonemic Awareness (isolation, identity, blending, segmentation, substitution, addition, subtraction)	
<b>Interactive Reading Strategies</b>	
Echo Reading	
Paired Reading	
Friendly Questions	
Prediction	
Wordless	
Reader's Theatre	
Other	
<b>Language Targets</b>	
Vocabulary	
Word Categories	
Syntactic Structures	

Skill	Notes
<b>Language Targets (cont)</b>	
Reading Fluency	
Reading Comprehension	
Figurative Language	
Narrative/Sequencing	
Other Language Targets	
<b>Speech and Phonology Targets</b>	
Articulation/Speech Sounds	
Phonological Processes	
<b>Critical Qualities</b>	
Engaging Illustrations match targets	
Character Diversity	
Extension Activities (or potential for same)	
Singing/Rhythm	
Sign/Gestures	
Sound Effects, Animal Sounds	
Family/Parent Friendly	
<b>Social/Emotion, Developmental, Other Targets</b>	
As Noted	

# What do publishers want/need from potential authors?

**SAMPLE**

## Product Proposal

**DYNAMIC  
RESOURCES**  
BRIDGING THE GAP FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

- A. **Proposed Title** (Working Title is fine).
  
- B. **Author(s)** – is at least one author or collaborator an SLP or Audiologist?
  
- C. **Brief Overview** - Summarize your idea. Think: how would I describe this resource on the back cover of the product that would make someone want to buy it?)
  
- D. **Speech/Language/Literacy (or CCSS) targets:** What specific areas of speech, language, literacy, or child development does this book target?
  
- E. **What research base or theory provides the foundation for this book?**
  
- F. **What Read with Me (Interactive) Strategies can be used with this story?** (Echo Reading, Paired Reading, Friendly Questions, Predicting, Wordless, Reader's Theatre or other)
  
- G. **Need** - Why is this resource needed? Are there other similar resources currently available? If so, what makes this resource different?
  
- H. **Estimated Length:** Note: Children's books should be no longer than 24-28 pages
  
- I. **What extension activities/lesson ideas/therapy resources could be developed for this book?**
  
- J. **Illustrations** – Do you have a vision for illustrations/cover. This is not a required section, but does help us determine if we can deliver your vision.
  
- K. **Special requirements in terms of format, size, accompanying materials, packaging, etc.**
  
- L. **Anything else you would like to add that isn't covered above**

# SLP AS AUTHORS: ACTION PLAN

## Engage Imagination!

What skill/s do I want to target? (Why does this book need to be written)	
How do these targets/skills related to language/ literacy development?	
How will I incorporate opportunities for children to participate actively in reading?	
What kinds of extension activities could be developed?	
WRITE! (hint: Create a writing schedule)	
Self Publish? Seek out Illustrator, graphic artist, publishing options, marketing strategy	
Publish? Inquire, complete/provide product proposal	

## SHARE !!!

Shari Robertson  
ASHA 2022

TITLE	AUTHOR
Capering Cows, Shivering Sheep	Shari Robertson
Rudy and the Butterflies	Perry Flynn
Run, turkey, Run	Peggy Agee
A Peanut Sat on a Railroad Track	Liz Kristen
I Can Say That	Suzy Lederer
Spotless Spot, Cat Queen	Alexandra Bowser
Now, You're Peaceful and You Know It	Suzy Lederer
Go By Goat	Liz Kristen