

Tips to Encourage Family Reading and Learning

Learning is fun and should be done at all stages of life. To help promote family Literacy, here are some tips from ABC Life Literacy Canada for children at different reading levels to accommodate and develop everyone's ability.

Reading with Infants

It's never too early to read to your children. Having children engage in literacy-related activities as early as possible will help them develop the necessary skills for good communication later in life.

- Select books with simple, bold, colourful shapes. These books usually have one or two lines of print on a page and each page has repeated phrases. Hearing words over and over helps children become familiar with them.
- Choose nursery tales, songs and stories about family life that have a simple sentence structure.
- Let the child pretend to read the story. Allow him/her to hold the book and turn the pages as the adult points to the pictures.
- Make the story come alive by using different voices and facial expressions. When a child hears different sounds, not only does the story become more fun, but this also helps the child develop critical listening skills.
- Children never get bored of hearing their favourite books over and over again. They need to hear the repetition of language to develop literacy skills.

Reading Tips for the Beginner Reader

Parents are their children's first teachers. They have an important role to play in helping their children become better readers. By reading to children several times a day, you can actually make a positive impact on their future academic success.

- Provide a comfortable reading space for the child with easy access to books. A place with good lighting, away from distractions, and a variety of books is ideal.
- Point to the words on the page as you read them. This will teach the child that reading goes from left to right, and will also help stimulate word recognition.
- Read alternate pages of the book and engage in a dialogue with the child. Ask him/her questions about the story to ensure comprehension.
- Make comparisons as the child reads. Comparing and contrasting helps the child recognize relationships between events and objects, and helps them notice similarities and differences.
- After reading a story together, ask the child what happened at the beginning, middle and end. Talking about the events in the story will stimulate higher-order thinking as the child tries to explain what happened in his/her own words.

Reading Tips for Independent Readers

Research shows that there is a predictable reading slump that happens at or around grade four. We often think by this age that kids can read well enough on their own, but this is when books start to get longer and words begin to get harder.

- Do not stop reading aloud with children even when they can read independently – just take turns sharing the role of narrator.
- Set a monthly goal for the amount of reading minutes the child should achieve. Log the minutes on a chart and as the child attains each goal, be sure to reward him/her with a brand new book, sticker, or bookmark.
- Encourage children to develop an interest in a variety of genres such as adventure, mystery, fantasy and poetry.
- Invite children to share books read in school with parents and caregivers at home. Parents and caregivers should also encourage children to share books they have read at home with their teachers and schoolmates.
- Keep in mind the more people your child sees and hears reading – parents, siblings, relatives, friends—the more likely your child will be turned on to reading.

Reading Tips for Lifelong Readers

Engaging in literacy and learning is important at any stage in life. Reading ability is like a muscle. If you don't exercise it regularly, you can actually lose the ability. Here are some tips to keep you and your children motivated to keep on reading and learning for life:

- Encourage older children to keep a journal or diary in order to help them hone their writing skills.
- Encourage family members to develop a habit of reading and discussing items from the daily newspaper to keep up-to-date on what is happening around the world.
- Get in the habit of giving books or magazine subscriptions as birthday gifts or on other special occasions.
- Lead by example—exercise your mind by doing crossword puzzles, word jumbles and word searches. Play board games as a family to develop vocabulary skills.

For more family literacy tips, activity ideas and Family Literacy Day® information, please visit www.FamilyLiteracyDay.ca