



# Supporting Children with Literacy: A Guide for Parents

A brochure developed by the

## **MANITOBA READING ASSOCIATION**

Provincial council of  
INTERNATIONAL LITERACY ASSOCIATION

Frequently asked questions by parents:

- 1) WHAT IS LITERACY?
- 2) HOW CAN I HELP MY YOUNG CHILD BE A SUCCESSFUL LITERACY LEARNER?
- 3) HOW CAN I MAKE READING AND WRITING MEANINGFUL?
- 4) HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD CHOOSE SUITABLE READING MATERIAL?
- 5) HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD BE A SUCCESSFUL READER?
- 6) HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY CHILD IN DEVELOPING GOOD LEARNING & STUDY SKILLS?
- 7) HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD IN FRENCH IMMERSION?
- 8) HOW CAN I MAKE WATCHING TELEVISION & USING THE INTERNET A LITERACY EXPERIENCE?
- 9) WHAT ARE THE STAGES OF LITERACY DEVELOPMENT?

For more information, please go to [www.readingmanitoba.org](http://www.readingmanitoba.org)

*Material in this brochure may be photocopied for non-commercial educational purposes.*

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## 1) WHAT IS LITERACY?

Literacy is the ability to communicate thoughts, ideas, needs, and feelings. We do this by reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, representing, and thinking. Literacy also helps us to solve problems.

Literacy is part of what we do every day in our lives. We use literacy at home, in stores and restaurants, in our work and in all school subjects.

Literacy is a process of learning how to communicate in meaningful ways. Literacy learning begins in infancy and continues throughout life. We develop our literacy skills in different ways and at different rates. Literacy is a journey, not a race.

Parents are their children's first literacy teachers. Parents teach literacy by:

- ❖ Modelling the love of reading.
- ❖ Sharing culture and family stories.
- ❖ Reading aloud every day and talking about the pictures, ideas, stories, and information.
- ❖ Exploring the community together and talking about it.
- ❖ Cooking, baking and creating together.
- ❖ Making regular visits to the library.

## 2) HOW CAN I HELP MY YOUNG CHILD BE A SUCCESSFUL LITERACY LEARNER?

From birth to school days:

- ❖ Sing songs like “Pat-a-Cake” and play with rhymes and jingles such as, “One, Two, Buckle My Shoe”.
- ❖ Read aloud every day and talk about pictures, labels, cereal boxes, signs, logos, stories and words.
- ❖ Play and act out favourite nursery rhymes and stories.
- ❖ Talk about everyday routines such as story time, bath time, chores, shopping, and car rides.
- ❖ Talk about ideas such as food, clothing, toys, books, friends, and pets.
- ❖ Ask thinking questions such as, “Why do you think the boat floats?”
- ❖ Paint and draw together. Label art pieces with words or sentences.
- ❖ Print your child’s name and the names of friends and family.
- ❖ Write simple, short lists such as, “Things I need to take to daycare.”, “Today we will...”.
- ❖ Tell stories about childhood or family experiences.
- ❖ Visit the public library regularly. Talk about the books and videos taken home.
- ❖ Discuss books you have read. Listen to your child talk about a favourite book.
- ❖ Give praise for being a good listener, speaker, observer, artist, reader, and writer.
- ❖ Play board games, card games, and guessing games together.
- ❖ Talk about choices when viewing or using media and devices, such as television, computer, tablets, and phones.

**Have Fun! Celebrate Learning!**

### 3) HOW CAN I MAKE READING AND WRITING MEANINGFUL?

READING	WRITING
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Before</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Read the title. Talk about the picture on the cover.</li> <li>● Ask: What do you think the book will be about?</li> <li>● Look at all the pictures in the book. Talk about what you think will happen.</li> <li>● Say: Let's read to find out what happens.</li> <li>● Encourage children to ask their own questions.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Before</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ask: What are you writing? Why are you writing this? Who will read this?</li> <li>● Talk about your ideas before you write.</li> <li>● Sometimes drawing helps to plan the writing.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>During</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Stop from time to time to talk about what is happening.</li> <li>● Ask: Does this make sense? What are you thinking? What clues make you think this? What do you think will happen next?</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>During</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Have your child stop from time to time to read aloud what has been written.</li> <li>● Ask: Is this what you want to say?</li> <li>● Decide together if the story or information is clear.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>After</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Check your predictions. Were you right? What happened?</li> <li>● What happened at the beginning, middle, and end?</li> <li>● What does this make you think about? What did you learn?</li> <li>● Would you tell a friend to read this book? Why? Why not?</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>After</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reread to see if it makes sense.</li> <li>● Ask: Does it say everything you want it to say?</li> <li>● Ask: Do you want to change, add, or take away any parts?</li> <li>● Together, edit for capitals, punctuation, and spelling.</li> </ul>

#### 4) HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD CHOOSE SUITABLE READING MATERIAL?

Consider your child's interests and reading ability when helping your child.

Remember that reading material can be picture books, story books, novels, information books, "how-to" manuals, magazines, comics, graphic novels, joke books, apps, newspapers, websites, etc.

##### Interests

Know and support your child's interests.

- ❖ Talk with your child to find out about his/her interests.
- ❖ Tell your child about your interests.
- ❖ Encourage your child to choose reading materials of personal interest.
- ❖ Read to you child often. Talk about the ideas and information.
- ❖ Provide different kinds of reading material on several different topics.

##### Readability

Regardless of a reader's age, reading materials can be grouped into three levels:

**Easy-to-read:** Your child understands all the ideas and knows most of the words.

**Just-right-to-read:** Your child understands most of the ideas. A few of the words may be tricky, but your child will be able to solve most of these word problems with some prompting.

**Not-yet-ready-to-read:** Your child may have difficulty understanding the ideas. Too much time and effort will be needed to read the words and fix up mistakes.

Use the "10 out of 10" Rule to help your child choose the right book.  
Have your child read the first ten words of the text.  
Count the number of words read without help.

The "10 out of 10" Rule  
Easy-to-read: "10 out of 10" words read without help.  
**Your child can read this to you.**  
Just-right-to-read: "9 out of 10" words read without help.  
**You can read this with your child.**  
Not-yet-ready-to-read: "8 out of 10" words read without help.

*Information on Reading Choices used with permission from the Manitoba Council of Reading Clinicians Bookmarks Committee.*

## 5) HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD BE A SUCCESSFUL READER?

- ❖ **Read to your child. Keep reading even after your child goes to school and learns to read.** Reading aloud helps your child learn:
  - new vocabulary,
  - language and story patterns,
  - how fluent reading sounds,
  - new information about the world.
  
- ❖ **Take turns reading in a variety of ways.**
  - Take turns reading sentences, paragraphs, or pages.
  - Take turns being the characters and using different voices.
  
- ❖ **Listen to your child read to you.**
  
- ❖ **Talk about the story.**
  
- ❖ **Respond enthusiastically to your child as:**
  - you read aloud,
  - you and your child read together, and
  - you listen to your child read.
  
- ❖ **Use *Pause, Prompt, and Praise*\* to help your child.**

### **PAUSE**

If your child comes to a tricky word,  
**STOP**  
And give your child a chance to solve it.

### **PROMPT**

1. If your child does not continue, ask "What can you do?"  
Hints: Look at the picture. Check the first letter. Think about the story.
2. If your child is still stuck on a tricky word, say "Go back to the beginning of the sentence and try again. What would make sense?"
3. If your child reads a word incorrectly, ask  
"Does it look right? Does it sound right? Does it make sense?"

### **PRAISE, PRAISE, PRAISE**

Praise when the child reads well.  
Praise when the child corrects him/herself.  
"You knew that word didn't say \_\_\_\_\_"

## 6) HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY CHILD IN DEVELOPING GOOD LEARNING & STUDY SKILLS?

- ❖ **Be active and positive about your child's learning and schooling.**
  - Show your child that school is important.
  - Talk with your child's teachers about what is being taught and how your child is learning.
- ❖ **Show interest in what your child is learning at school.**
  - Talk with your child about topics they are learning and researching.
  - Share what you know, what you would like to know, and how you could learn more.
- ❖ **Help your child develop long-lasting study habits.**
  - Pick a regular time for study and quiet reading.
  - Set a quiet, bright place for working with appropriate supplies.
  - Check agendas and notebooks regularly. Have children post major deadlines on family calendars.
  - Encourage regular review in preparation for tests.
  - Talk about major projects. Visit the library to do research. Help set up timelines. Monitor progress.
  - Help children set realistic goals that are:
    - **Achievable**
    - **Believable**
    - **Controllable, with**
    - **Deadlines**

### Tips to Improve Memory

- ❖ Count the parts, items, or facts to be memorized. Look for patterns and relationships.
- ❖ Make mental pictures or visualize the information.
- ❖ Make simple, labelled pictures or diagrams.
- ❖ Say the information aloud to yourself. Quiz yourself using cue words and questions.
- ❖ Make associations and personal connections.
- ❖ Use acronyms to help remember key words
  - e.g. H.O.M.E.S. = Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior

## 7) HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD IN FRENCH IMMERSION?

Help your child do well in French Immersion programs. You do not have to be French speaking to help your child be a successful French Immersion student. Your role is to be enthusiastic and supportive in a variety of ways.

- ❖ Read to your child every day in the language that is most familiar for you.
- ❖ Listen to your child read in English.
- ❖ Keep in close contact with teachers to see how your child is progressing.
- ❖ Make sure your child sees that learning and reading are important to you and your whole family.
- ❖ Encourage your child to include French books among those they take out of the library or those they choose to purchase.
- ❖ Provide opportunities for your child to hear French and build knowledge of the culture and the language.
- ❖ Provide your child with French music to help develop an ear for the French language. Listen to Carmen Campagne, Jacques Chenier, or even Céline Dion for the more mature child.
- ❖ Suggest watching some suitable television programs or videos in French. Cartoons such as Caillou are often a good place to start.
- ❖ Participate as a family in cultural activities such as the Festival du Voyageur and French theatre.
- ❖ Subscribe to a children's magazine like "Pomme d'Api" or "Les Explorateurs".
- ❖ Listen to and praise your child's efforts in French home reading even if you cannot read French. Talk about this story in the language with which you are most familiar.
- ❖ Visit French libraries and bookstores.
- ❖ Check out French news websites to follow current events, like Radio-Canada.



## **8) HOW CAN I MAKE WATCHING TELEVISION & USING THE INTERNET A LITERACY EXPERIENCE?**

Television shows, videos, and the internet can be excellent sources for your child's learning if these are used in a positive way.

### **Television/Videos**

- ❖ Be aware of what your child is watching.
- ❖ Watch television and videos with your children and talk about what they see and hear.
- ❖ Talk about the events and characters in shows and videos. If this story is also in book form, talk about how the show and the book are the same and/or different.
- ❖ Help your child choose videos about nature, science, and different cultures.
- ❖ Talk with your child about how the use of music, sound effects, and colour help tell stories and convey information.
- ❖ Voice your opinions about commercials and advertisements. Discuss the way advertisers try to convince people to buy their products.
- ❖ Help children tell the difference between fantasy and reality.
- ❖ Talk about how the media shows values, relationships, violence, conflict, and resolution.
- ❖ Discuss how media shapes the way we see the world.
- ❖ Monitor how much screen time your children have.

### **Internet**

- ❖ Help your child choose interesting educational websites. Learn to use them with your child.
- ❖ Use the internet together to help your child develop safe internet habits.
- ❖ Discuss cyberbullying and respectful digital behaviour.
- ❖ Monitor your children's internet use carefully.
- ❖ Show them how to read carefully and evaluate information from the internet.
- ❖ Show them how to use email and texting for communicating with friends and family.
- ❖ Compare information from the internet with information from books.

## 9) WHAT ARE THE STAGES OF LITERACY DEVELOPMENT?

Becoming literate is a journey that begins at birth and continues throughout life. Although each child develops the ability to read and write at their own pace, all children's literacy development reaches specific milestones. Here are some common characteristics of each milestone.

### **Stage 1: Awareness and exploration**

Children explore their environments and build the basis for learning to read and write. Children:

- Enjoy listening to stories and talking about the pictures.
- Understand that there is a message in print.
- Pretend to read and write.
- "Read" labels of household products and signs in their environments.
- Enjoy word games such as rhyming and chants.
- Recognize some letters and begin to make some letter-sound matches.
- Begin to use what they know about letters and sounds to represent meaningful words such as their names, "I love you", etc.
- Draw pictures to tell stories.

### **Stage 2: Experimental reading and writing**

Children develop basic concepts of print and begin to engage in and experiment with reading and writing. Children:

- Enjoy being read to and have favourites (enjoy listening to a story again and again).
- Retell simple stories and facts from books that were read to them.
- Recognize more letters and make letter-sound matches.
- Like to play with rhymes and word games such as beginning sounds in words.
- Use descriptive words to explain their ideas and ask questions.
- Understand how print and books "work" (where to begin reading, go left-to-right and top-to-bottom).
- Match spoken words with print and understand that print matches pictures in books.
- Begin to print letters and some often-used words.
- Use drawings to show how things happen.
- Add details to pictures to show more meaning.

### **Stage 3: Early reading and writing**

Children begin to read simple stories and write meaningful messages. Children:

- Read and retell familiar stories.
- Use some reading strategies to get meaning from text.
- Recognize more and more words automatically.
- Become more fluent readers (make reading sound more like "talking").
- Become interested in words and try to use them in interesting ways.
- Recognize common letter patterns and some word families.
- Sound out words and print the sounds they hear.
- Write about topics that are meaningful to them.
- Begin to use some punctuation and capitalization in their writing.
- Use drawings to show how things happen.

### **Stage 4: Transitional reading and writing**

Children begin to read with more expression and write many different kinds of text for enjoyment and to give information. Children:

- Read longer pieces of text more easily and with expression.
- Read silently for meaning.
- Use reading strategies on their own to help them understand what they are reading.
- Identify an increasing number of words automatically.
- Write about many different topics for different purposes.
- Use word parts and common letter patterns to spell words.
- Punctuate simple sentences correctly.
- Read out loud to edit their own writing.
- Spend time reading on their own.
- Use reading to find out about topics of interest.
- Use drawings to explain and elaborate ideas.

### **Stage 5: Independent and productive reading and writing**

Children continue to develop and improve their reading and writing abilities. Children:

- Enjoy reading for their own purposes.
- Continue to read a greater range of texts with fluency.
- Use a range of strategies to help themselves understand what they are reading.
- Use appropriate strategies automatically for recognizing unknown words.
- Connect what they read with personal experiences.
- Write in many different forms such as stories, poems, reports.
- Use descriptive words and different types of sentences to make their writing more interesting.
- Revise and edit their own writing during and after writing.
- Spell most words correctly in final writing drafts.
- Use more detailed drawings to explain and elaborate ideas.

*Adapted from Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally appropriate practices for young children. A joint position statement of the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), adapted 1998.*

This brochure was developed by the

**Family Literacy Committee**  
of the

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