

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO LITERACY



Dear Teacher,

Literacy—the ability to read and write—starts developing long before children enter school. Reading and writing skills emerge hand-in-hand as children gain experience and confidence with language and literature.

And once a child starts school, the home continues to play a vital role in supporting the school's reading and writing programs. Research shows that children who are immersed in a language- and literature-rich environment are likely to achieve at a higher level in all areas than those who aren't. In other words: kids who read, succeed!

These blackline masters are filled with ideas to support parents in nurturing their children's literacy skills, thereby supporting your classroom initiatives. They contain useful suggestions for all ages—so why not pass out copies to your students' parents?

We enjoy working with you to bring children and books together.

Best regards

The Book Club Team

HOW TO NURTURE A LOVE OF READING IN PRESCHOOLERS

Knowledge of letters, sounds, pictures and print develop long before your child starts school. You can enhance your child's exposure to language and print naturally during the course of your day.

Here are five tips that will help you instil in your child a love of reading and language.

1) CREATE A POSITIVE NURTURING ENVIRONMENT

- Celebrate your child's early reading behaviours.
- Talk is the basis of language and reading development. Talk with and listen to your child every day.
- Cut apart old magazines and make a scrap box of pictures and words. Have fun creating a new story by gluing or taping the cut-out pictures onto clean sheets of paper.
- Play word games, such as 'I spy something that rhymes with log'.

2) READ A VARIETY OF BOOKS

- Read books you remember from your childhood. Favourite stories and characters are timeless.
- Read wordless stories and make up stories that go with the pictures.
- Children are full of interests and curiosities. Simple concept books give them the vocabulary they need to talk about the world.
- Children love to fill in the gaps when you read together. You can start with rhymes, songs and fingerplays. For example, 'Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great _____.'

3) READ PURPOSEFULLY

- Read aloud every day to your child. Select books that reflect your child's culture and give them a world of heroes and adventures through quality literature.
- Connect books to experiences and family outings. For example, if you visit an aquarium and your child seems particularly interested, read books about ocean creatures.
- Read around your home! Most homes are filled with box labels, mail addresses, messages and notes.
- Explore how books work. Talk about the cover of the book and read aloud the author's name. Take turns turning the pages, point to words as you read and talk about the pictures.

4) MAKE READING A HABIT

- The ritual of reading a bedtime story cannot be established too early. These times when you and your child are close together are essential in establishing a lifelong reading habit.
- Let your child select books to read. Read favourite stories over and over. Children love repetition and learn from it.
- Ensure that reading material is accessible. Visit the library and bookstores, and participate in Book Club.
- Be a reader yourself, and let your child catch you reading newspapers, magazines and books.

5) MAKE THE READING/WRITING CONNECTION

- Young children need to see themselves as readers and writers. Keep writing materials and resources around the house.
- When you need to be away from home, leave a message to be read to your child.
- Label your child's possessions. Children love to see their names written on everything!



TIPS FOR PARENTS OF EMERGENT AND EARLY READERS

Your young child is learning to piece together all kinds of information, moving from developing basic concepts of print to reading simple stories. Children in kindergarten and first grade are learning to weave together the meaning of a story, pictures and images, word meanings, language structures, and all those little black marks on the page. This kind of detailed work often requires young children to re-read favourite books, finding new information on each reading, and to read new books to practise their new skills.

Here are five tips that will help you coach your eager young reader.

1) CREATE A POSITIVE NURTURING ENVIRONMENT

- Flip through the book, look at the pictures and talk about the story before you or your child begin reading.
- Act like a coach. If your child asks you for help with a word, start by giving a clue.
- Look for your child's brilliance! Substituting the word 'puppy' for 'dog' may mean that your child is paying attention to the meaning of the story and using clues in the pictures. Substituting the word 'dig' for 'dog' may mean that your child is paying attention to the letters in the word.

2) READ IN A VARIETY OF WAYS

- Read to your child every day. Your child will love to hear you bring stories to life over several days.
- Take turns reading each page or character. At another time, listen to your child read from another early-reading book.
- All reading doesn't happen in books. When you're cooking, read the recipes together.

3) READ PURPOSEFULLY

- Read for information. Read street and shop signs together. At the supermarket, ask your child to point out certain items by reading the names of the products.
- Make a scrapbook with your child illustrating your holiday experiences and family traditions.
- Read books based on your child's interests and ideas. Nonfiction books are great to read together.

4) MAKE READING A HABIT

- Make a special bookshelf. Find a special place for your child to keep their books. Try to keep books in every room of your home.
- Books are great to read in the car, while waiting in line, or while riding on a bus.
- Encourage your child to read or tell stories to younger children, or even their teddy bear.

5) MAKE THE READING/WRITING CONNECTION

- Help your child make and keep a journal of thoughts they have at the end of a book or series.
- Make up a simple story frame to create a 'fill-in-the blank' story. For example, write, 'Once upon a time there were _____. They told their _____ they were going to seek their _____.'
- Write down stories your child dictates to you—this will help your child understand writing strategies.



TIPS FOR PARENTS OF EARLY AND INDEPENDENT READERS

Some children in Middle Primary see themselves as good readers, and others may see themselves as poor readers. A major goal during this stage of development is to help your child read and write more fluently and with greater ease and confidence.

Here are five tips that will help you coach your eager young reader.

1) CREATE A THINKING ENVIRONMENT

- Ask your child why they like a certain book or story. Discuss language, characters, plot and the elements of good literature.
- Notice when your child's reading skills have grown, and point out these improvements. Share any concerns with their teacher.
- Keep your supply of reading material fresh by checking out books from the library, borrowing books from friends, shopping in book stores and participating in Book Club. Books also make great gifts.

2) READ A VARIETY OF BOOKS

- Continue to read aloud to young, independent readers. Read books together that are too hard for children to read by themselves.
- Read series books and expand your child's genre selections to include humour, mystery, biography and historical fiction. Children at this age fall in love with characters, situations and authors.
- Read magazines, newspapers, and comic books—these are also important genres.

3) READ PURPOSEFULLY

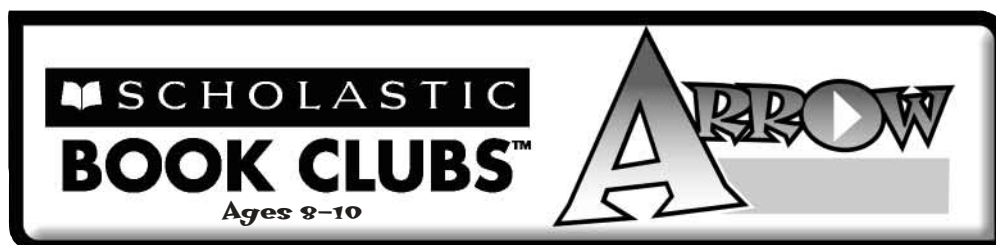
- Read for information. Read maps, graphs, charts, and recipes together. Learn how to read a bus timetable!
- Let your child catch you in the act of reading. It's important that your child knows you enjoy reading too.
- Support your child's hobbies and interests with books and reference materials.

4) SUPPORT THE READING HABIT

- Be sure your child has enough time each day for reading.
- Tie books and TV together. For example, read about whales after watching a 'Whales' TV special.
- Don't rush your child through a book. Your child may be a thorough reader, getting into the images the author 'paints'.

5) MAKE THE READING/WRITING CONNECTION

- Help your child make and keep a journal of thoughts they have at the end of a book. If you are reading the same book, share the journal.
- Encourage your child to tell you a story, either fictional or a story about the day. Share your stories too.



TIPS FOR PARENTS OF OLDER READERS

Your child is now independent. At this stage, many parents take a hands-off approach to their child's reading and writing development, but you can still enjoy sharing good books together.

Here are five tips to help you encourage your independent reader.

1) CREATE A THINKING AND SHARING ENVIRONMENT

- Reading for pleasure is the key to remaining a motivated reader. If your child doesn't like a particular book, discuss the reasons why and help your child find books they will love.
- Reading is a social act and your child will enjoy talking about books with you. Read the same book occasionally, and talk about key events in the story, the characters and the author's style.
- Being a student is your child's job. Children find it helpful to talk about what is going well, what can be improved, and what help and support they need to do their jobs. Listen and seek solutions together.

2) READ A VARIETY OF BOOKS

- Your child might be a mystery fan, into horror serials, or even comic books. Having a favourite genre is great, but be sure to continue to expose your child to different types of books.
- Children love to hear stories and poetry read aloud, and reading aloud increases your child's listening comprehension and vocabulary. Read aloud together.

3) READ PURPOSEFULLY

- Make sure your child has access to appropriate reference materials and knows how to use dictionaries, encyclopedias and the thesaurus.
- Children love to know that their opinions are valued. Read current-event newspaper articles and discuss your child's point of view and opinions. Follow a breaking story over the course of a few days.

4) SUPPORT THE READING AND STUDYING HABIT

- Give your child access to a wealth of reading material—library books, newspapers and magazines.
- Help your child schedule time for reading.

5) MAKE THE READING/WRITING CONNECTION

- Encourage your child to write a memoir—a story of their life up to now.
- Keep writing materials and resources around the house.
- Make writing a habit—it is just as important as making reading a habit.

