

*Fathers and literacy: Supporting your child*

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Fathers have an important role in encouraging their children's literacy skills. Fathers can make significant contributions to their young children's literacy, and most fathers find the experience of supporting their children rewarding. Reading with children, and encouraging children to develop their skills in writing and conversing are ways for a father to be involved in his child's literacy development. Showing your child that you are a reader of a variety of materials is a good way to set a positive example. Creating opportunities for your child to write also sets the stage for lifelong literacy skills. Making time for quality conversations between you and your child helps to strengthen your relationship, and is also a very important literacy activity. It is important to remember that literacy is a lifelong endeavour. Here are some suggestions for you to consider:

Choose reading materials from a variety of genre: for example, story books, informational books, newspapers, maps, internet resources, instruction booklets, or cook books.

When reading with young children, it is particularly important to choose high quality books – ones with interesting plots, beautiful pictures, and vocabulary that is enriching. You will also want to help your child to develop skills in making good choices for themselves.

Help children to value writing as a form of communication at all ages. Encourage young children's attempts at writing and drawing by displaying their work in your home. Show children the varieties of ways you make use of writing in your life – from making grocery lists, to writing letters.

Remember that conversation (both talking and listening) is the foundation of literacy, and essential for your emotional relationship with your child.

Here are some more specific recommendations for children of differing ages:

**Very young children (to age 2):**

Focus on the pleasure of books and stories and all sorts of texts.

Take regular trips to the library.

Read something every day!

Show your child how books 'work' (how to turn pages, and where the beginning of the book is).

Point out environmental print – such as signs and billboards.

Play language games that involve rhythm (such as pat-a-cake) – this helps children get a physical sense of language.

Listen to a variety of music and sing aloud.

Provide safe writing tools and art media with supervision.

Take time for conversation – take turns listening and talking.

**Pre-school aged (2-4 year olds):**

All of the above and -

Show your child how to select books based on their interests.

Show your child that written words represent thoughts and ideas.

Show your child that letters represent sounds – and some letters have more than one sound.

Encourage your child to create writing and drawing using invented spellings.

Resist the urge to pressure your child to memorise letters or words, or to ‘read’ by sounding out words – the focus should be on the pleasure!

**Kindergarten and primary school aged (5-11 year olds):**

All of the above and -

Encourage your child’s beginning reading skills – following the lead of your child’s teachers.

The most important aspect of this is cultivating an enjoyment for reading and literacy.

Keep an open dialogue with your child about what they enjoy about reading and writing, and listen to any struggles they may be experiencing.

Keep in touch with your child’s teacher about your child’s developing literacy.

As your child gets older, monitor their reading, particularly of online materials, including social media.

Encourage independent reading.

Supply your child with lots of paper and suggest they keep a journal – and respect their privacy.

Look for ways to expand their vocabulary through reading, writing, and conversation

Resist the view that literacy and reading one type of book, or using one type of media.

**Middle school/High School (11-18 year olds):**

Although your child is more independent in these years, continue to read with them, write to them, and have conversations about their reading and writing. Continue to show them the purpose and meaning of literacy in your life, and show them that you are interested in reading some of the books that they might be reading. Remember that there are a variety of genre for adolescents to choose from, and it may take readers this age some time to find what they like since there are so many choices.

**College and beyond:**

Have discussions about what your child is learning and experiencing if they attend college.

You might choose a book or piece of text to read them (every month for example) and make time to talk about it.

Write letters to your child.

Remember that reading with your child can continue throughout your lifetimes together!