



Early Literacy Skills A Tip Sheet for Families

Did you know?

Early literacy is everything a child needs to learn before formal reading or writing emerges. **Pre-reading and pre-writing skills** include much more than just learning the alphabet. For example, the upper body strength needed to be able to hold a pencil to write with is developed starting as an infant during tummy time, and the knowledge that we read words and pages from left to right starts to develop as soon as a child begins being read to.

Early and Often!

- Reading, singing and talking to your child as young and as often as you can helps them develop all the skills they will need to be able to read, understand what they read, and have conversations with others when they get older.
- Repetition is also how young children learn new things, so repeating the same songs, stories and words in their environment is helpful for them.
- Give young children access to the tools they will use to write with later; even babies who can sit up can be given chunkier crayons or fingerpaint to use (with supervision).

Keep it Simple!

- Anytime is learning time! Daily routines including mealtimes, getting dressed, and diaper changes are all times to talk and sing to children.
- Narrating what you are doing or helping the child do through the routine, talking about what comes next in the routine, or even making up a silly song about it are all simple ways to develop speech and language.
- Pointing out and identifying traffic signs while driving, business logos on buildings and asking a child to help identify items needed when shopping by pointing them out are all simple ways to encourage pre-reading skill development.





Early Literacy Skills Resources and Supports

The Hanen Centre “Book Nook” – A monthly book selection with tips for helping families use the book to build literacy skills.

<https://www.hanen.org/information-tips/book-nook>

Southeast Public Health (Language Express) Book List- A comprehensive listing of books, rhymes and other helpful tips for encouraging literacy skill development in babies and young children.

https://healthunit.org/wp-content/uploads/Book_Lists.pdf

KidsInclusive Preschool OT/OT Classroom- Demo videos and resources on building core and fine motor strength, which are needed for a child to use writing tools or hold and turn pages in a book.

<https://sites.google.com/view/preschoolot/preschool-ot>

ABC Life Literacy Canada Family Literacy Page- Resources and more to support literacy skills for the whole family.

<https://abclifeliteracy.ca/literacy/family-literacy/>

Family Literacy First- Simple activities, stories, rhymes and more for use at home and modules for early years professionals working with families.

<https://familyliteracyfirst.ca/resources/english/>

Looking for local support? Check out the 2026 Every Kid In Our Communities coalition’s Leeds and Grenville supports slideshow for information on resources in your community.

<https://everykid.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/WTK-Power-Point-2025FINAL2026.pdf>