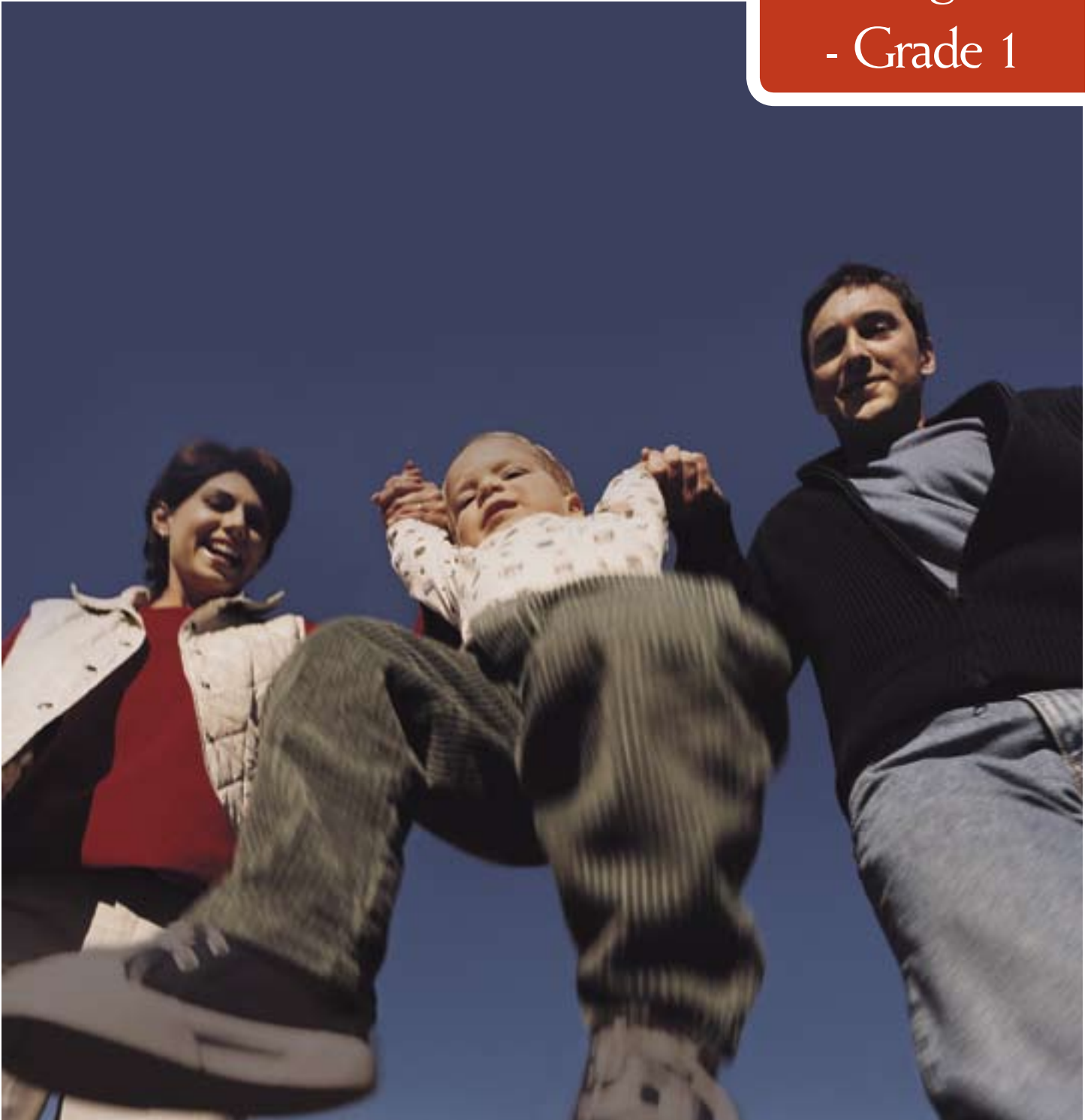


Reading For Families

Helping your child with
reading at home

Kindergarten
- Grade 1



AchieveBC

Reading for Families: Helping Your Child Learn

Parents and guardians are a child’s first and most important teachers, and helping your child learn to read is one of the most important things you can do. This is because reading opens the door to lifelong learning. Set aside time each day to read to your child. Read all kinds of things, like storybooks, poems, magazine and newspaper articles, non-fiction books, comic books and letters. Continue reading to your child even after they have learned how to read. Reading aloud fosters a love of reading and builds your child’s vocabulary. Ask your child to read aloud. Take turns reading pages or using different voices for different characters. Talk about words, stories and books. Visit a public library, read recipes, create grocery lists and play word games. Be creative, and have fun!

READING FOR FAMILIES: HELPING YOUR CHILD WITH READING AT HOME

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1 Talking and Learning

We know that children who are exposed to books and oral language and who have chances to interact with other children are better prepared for school. When you talk and sing to your children, and encourage them to talk and play with others, you are helping them to become successful readers and learners. Here are some tips to get you started:

- > Talk to your children. Ask them questions about their day and things that they see, hear, taste, touch and smell. What did they like or not like? Why? What would they like to know more about?
- > Use rhyme and song to help your child learn new words. For example, play “Find the odd one out” – say two words that rhyme (e.g. *moon*, *spoon*) and one that does not rhyme (e.g. *car*). Ask your child which word does not belong.
- > Create opportunities for your child to talk with other children outside of school. For example, have your child telephone a friend, or arrange a ‘play date’ or a visit to the library with your child’s friend or neighbour.



2 Sounds, Letters and Words

Learning Consonants

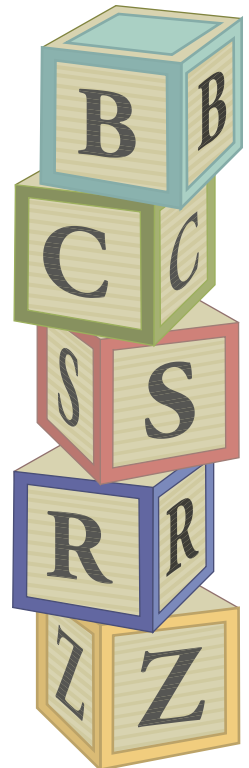
You can help your child begin to identify letters and match sounds to letters in familiar words. Choose activities where children can have some success, see progress and have fun. Here are some suggestions for games and activities that you can do at home:

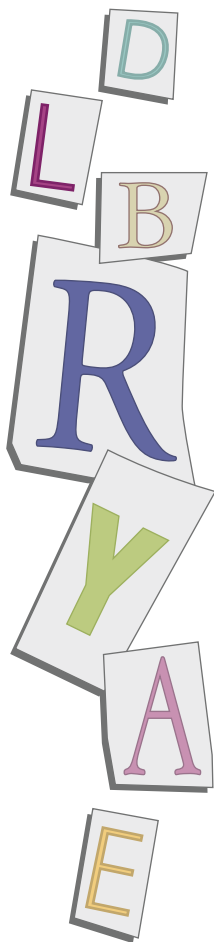
- > Play “I Spy” with your child, “spying” words that begin with various consonants (like *m* or *p*). Use furniture, signs, labels and grocery items – any words you come across in your daily travels together.
- > Have your child choose a consonant (e.g. the letter *t*). Write the letter on pieces of paper and, with your child, place the paper on objects around the house that start with that letter sound (e.g. table, toilet, towel, tomato). Try placing the letter on an object that doesn’t fit the pattern, and see if your child catches the “mistake.”
- > Play with word patterns by building a “rhyming tower.” Place a block on a table. Choose a word such as *cat*, and ask your child to think of words that rhyme (sound the same, like *mat* or *hat*). Take turns. Each time one of you comes up with a rhyming word, add a block to your “rhyming tower.” How high can you build the tower before it collapses?

Sight Words

Ask your child’s teacher what common sight words (words that your child can recognize immediately, without sounding out individual letters or syllables) your child should know in their grade. Think up fun ways to help your child learn them. Here are some ideas for fun activities:

- > When you read with your child, choose a word and have them snap their fingers every time they read it (e.g. *Snap your fingers every time we read the word “and”*).
- > Encourage your child to spell, read and eat their words, using alphabet pasta or cereal.





- > Cut out letters of the alphabet from newspapers, magazines or cereal boxes and put them in a container. Your child can use them to practice spelling out their sight words.
- > Set aside one evening a week as Games Night. Choose a commercial or homemade word game that the whole family can enjoy.

Starting to Read

If your child is starting to read short, simple stories with pictures, help them with unfamiliar words and the meaning of sentences. Here are some tips to get you started:

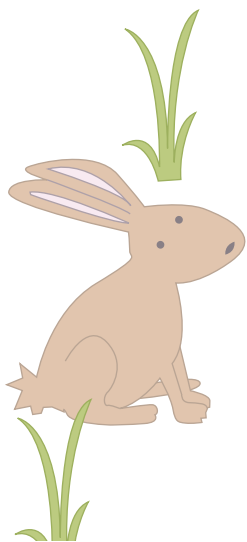
- > When your child is “stuck” on a word, wait a few seconds and then prompt (give a hint or help) with questions (e.g. *What sound does the first letter make? Do you know a word that starts with that sound and would make sense? Does the picture help you?*)
- > Think of a word your child will know, and give hints to help them guess it. For example, *It has four legs and soft fur. It’s smaller than a dog. When it’s hungry, it says “meow.”* From these context clues, your child should be able to guess the word is *cat*. Take turns choosing words and giving clues.
- > Ask your child to read to you from a storybook while you cook dinner. Talk to them about what they read. If they get stuck on a word or lose track of the meaning, try giving some hints (e.g. *What do you know that can help you? Think about what might make sense. What other word do you know that is like that one?*). Suggest that they try jumping over (skipping) the word and reading on to the end of the sentence. Then, have them go back and try to figure out what word makes sense.

3 | Understanding What’s Being Read

Making Predictions

You can help your child understand what’s being read by asking them to make predictions about story events. Here are some suggestions:

- > When you are reading a story with your child, stop before you reach the end. Ask your child to predict (think about and tell) what will happen next (e.g. *How would you end the story?*). After you finish reading the story, talk about whether your child’s guess was right. Ask them which ending they liked better (the real ending or their own) and why.
- > Before you read a book with your child, look at its cover together. Ask your child to predict what the story is about. Look at the cover picture and think of questions that reading the book might answer (e.g. *Why does the child look happy?*).
- > Before reading a non-fiction book with your child, ask questions like *What do you know about rabbits? What do you want to know about rabbits? Is this book going to be useful? How do you know?* When children have questions that need answers, they have a purpose for reading.



Looking for Meaning

You can also help your child understand what’s being read by encouraging them to look for meaning beyond what is written on the page. Here are some ideas:

- > When you read with your child, ask questions that require your child to read between the lines. For example, *Why do you think Ashley said that? How do you think Ashley felt when Terry was allowed to play soccer? How would you feel if that happened to you?*
- > Play detective at the grocery store, on the bus, or walking in the park. Take turns guessing what someone is doing, feeling or saying. Give reasons to make your case. For example, *I bet that person is having a birthday party, because they're buying a cake and balloons. I think that child is happy, because they're going really high on the swing and smiling.*



4 Making Personal Connections

Connections to Life Experiences

The more you can help your child connect (link) their own life experiences to the characters or situations they read about, the more meaning (understanding) they will find in what they read.

- > When you read with your child, point out any ways the story is like their life. Talk about other stories, people or events that are similar to the book. For example, *We went to the park for your birthday too. Those grandparents live in Ottawa, just like your grandparents.*
- > As your child turns the pages of a book and looks at the pictures, ask them what they think is happening in the story. Ask them to think about ways the story is like their life. Encourage them to make personal connections (e.g. *What do you know about whales? Does this remind you of our last trip? Do you remember when you went to the dentist?*).

Talking about Likes and Dislikes

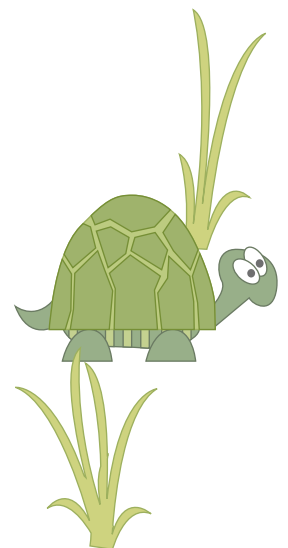
Talking about what your child likes or dislikes about a story or book is important because it teaches them to use and explain their own thinking. There are no right or wrong answers when talking about opinions. Here are some questions you can ask your child to start a conversation about a story or book:

- > When you read with your child, ask them what they like or don't like about the book. Encourage them to be specific rather than vague. For example, if your child says *I like the turtle*, ask them why. *I liked the way the turtle sang and danced for the other animals.*
- > After reading a story or watching a movie, ask questions that require your child to form an opinion. For example, *Who was your favourite character? Why? What was the most exciting part of the story? Was this a good story? Why?* You can do this in daily conversations too. If your child says *I like playing with Jamie*, ask *Why do you like playing with Jamie?*

Creating a Rich Reading Environment

Reading should be a natural part of daily life, and there are many things you can do to encourage your children to read at home. Here are some suggestions:

- > Make sure you have reading materials in your home – storybooks, non-fiction books, magazines, etc. It doesn't matter whether they are old or new, bought at a bookstore or borrowed from a library.





- > Set aside regular time for family reading – even 10 or 15 minutes a day will make a big difference. Read with your child or, if your child can read on their own, have family members read independently.
- > Talk with your child about what they are reading. Ask what happened in the story and whether they liked it.
- > Make sure your child sees you reading and treating books with care. Children are naturally curious and will want to do what you are doing.
- > Create a special place, in the child’s room if possible, where books and other reading materials can be stored. If you don’t have a bookshelf, use a basket, a wooden or plastic box or some other kind of sturdy container.

5 | What is Literacy?

Literacy is the ability to read, write and communicate, and to understand and use information. It is an essential skill that can help your child to succeed at school and accomplish daily tasks throughout life. Literate people can:

- > Read for enjoyment and to obtain information
- > Use their reading and problem-solving skills to make sense of unfamiliar words and ideas
- > Explain what they read to others
- > Write to express themselves
- > Communicate their thoughts and feelings to others

6 | Literacy Websites

There are a number of websites that offer useful tips, ideas and activities for parents and guardians who want to help their children with reading and writing. Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

www.bced.gov.bc.ca/literacy/

www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/brochure/earlyreading/

www.earlyliterature.ecsd.net/

www.starfall.com

www.kinderart.com/littles/litles.html

Our commitment to education:

Education is the most important investment we can make in our children’s lives. The Province of B.C. is committed to building a top-notch system that puts students first. For more information, visit AchieveBC.ca