

Sparking a Love of Reading: How Parents Can Support at Home

A guide to providing choice, voice, and confidence in reading

Shouldn't my child be reading chapter books by now? Is it okay for my child to read graphic novels? Is it okay if my child reads the same series over and over (and over) again?

If you've ever wondered or asked these questions, this article is for you! In Canada, learning to read is recognized as a basic and essential human right as ruled by the Supreme Court of Canada in 2012 and reaffirmed by the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) in their "Right to Read" inquiry in 2022.

While children need explicit and structured literacy instruction in order to read well, there are many things that parents can do to help support a love of reading at home!

- 1) **Let your child choose their books** - graphic novels, nonfiction books, audiobooks, books about puppies, zombies, or hockey players? A book that they've already read fifteen times? Great! [All books are for everyone.](#)
- 2) **Read to your child** - for as long as you can! Don't stop just because they're in upper elementary or junior high. Find a book that you can enjoy together - you can take turns reading sentences or paragraphs (or pages or chapters) to help your child practice their oral reading fluency.
- 3) **Model reading** - let your child see you reading! Keep a bookcase available in your home, talk about what you're reading with your child, and work together to find time to read in your daily schedule. Even better - make hot chocolate, get cozy, and read your books together.
- 4) **Listen to audiobooks.** Chat about the story, build vocabulary by focusing on new words in the story, ask questions, talk about the characters and the setting.
- 5) **Share High-interest books** - leave high-interest books in obvious places for your child to find/look at around your house. If they get bored, let books be the answer!
- 6) **Play with words** - provide opportunities to play with letters or words. Put letter magnets or poetry magnets on the refrigerator. You can write messages to one another.
- 7) **Talk about words!** What do they mean? Where do they come from? Be curious about words and look up their origin in the [Online Etymology Dictionary](#).
- 8) **Play word games** like *One Word Story*, *I'm Going on a Trip*, *Telephone*, *Fortunately/Unfortunately*, etc. Working with words, their meaning, and their usage helps the words stick in your child's brain! A list of verbal word games with rules [here](#).

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

- 9) **Turn on the captions** - when your child is watching a video, having the captions on means that they will practice reading without even really realizing it. Because we naturally read text that appears on a screen, using captions and subtitles can help maximize print exposure and boost print/speech connections necessary for successful reading.
- 10) **Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors.** This term was coined by [Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop](#) and refers to books that reflect a child's own experiences, provide a window into different cultures and family experiences, or let a child enter a different world. Providing books that share diverse experiences gives kids a better understanding of the people around them and the amazing world in which we live.
- 11) **Find some new books!** Make it part of your routine to go to the library, the thrift store, or the bookstore and pick out new books to read. Let your child choose books that spark their interest or imagination. Host a book swap with family, friends, a Girl Guide unit, or Scout group and get everyone something new to read. Pro Tip: attend the [Calgary Reads Big Book Sale](#) each May as an annual family tradition - all of the money raised helps support early childhood literacy initiatives in and around the City of Calgary.

Learn More:

[10 Ways to Support Your Child's Literacy at Home - National Center on Improving Literacy](#)
[How to Help Kids with Reading at Home - Understood.org](#)
[Listen and Learn with Audiobooks - Reading Rockets](#)
[Literacy at Home - Reading Rockets](#)
[Reading and Learning at Home - International Dyslexia Association](#)
[Reading Tips - babies to Grade 3 - Reading Rockets](#)
[Supporting Literacy at Home: Simple Ways to Nurture Reading and Writing](#)
[Why Reading is Important for Your Children - Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association](#)