

## Does your child need extra help?

Many children need extra help. In fact, many adults are successful today because they received extra help when they were in school. So you should not be upset if your child needs extra help right now.

As a parent, it is important to recognize your child's challenges and work together with the teacher to make sure the necessary help is received. Recognizing that your child needs extra help is not always easy. Here are some common signs to watch out for.

*Your children may need extra help when:*

1. Marks are below average
2. A teacher talks to you directly on the issue
3. There seems to be too much homework
4. Homework seems consistently too difficult
5. Talking about school or a certain subject puts a child in a bad mood
6. They avoid talking to you about the topic
7. They find excuses such as illness to avoid school
8. They are easily and happily distracted from homework

If you see any of these signs, you should contact the teacher and discuss your child's challenges. Work with the teacher to create a plan of action and agree on how it will be carried out and measured.

Tips to helping your child succeed with extra help:

1. **Get them involved in the plan.** Give your child the chance to have some say in when the work will be done, how much time is given for each task, and what the goals are.
2. **Making the grade is not all about marks.** Help improve your child's self-confidence by letting him or her know that marks are only one way of evaluating performance and ability. Marks alone can't measure your children as individuals.
3. **Finish what they start.** Help children understand it is important to stick with an assignment until it is completed. Make sure your children know you are proud of them when they master something.
4. **Be positive and give praise.** Be sure to congratulate your child with each success and milestone reached.
5. **Talk to the teacher.** Keep in touch with the teacher to learn about your child's progress. Work together if a new action plan is required.

## 5 Tips for sharing family stories

1. **Bring your child into the story**

Choose stories about interesting things that happened to you or to members of your family, including your child. Include your child in the storytelling by making links to him/her. For example, “You know how you like to ride your bike? Well this story is about a time when I was your age and I rode my bike to get bread for dinner...”

2. **What kind of story to tell**

Stories do not have to have a clear beginning, middle and end with a problem and solution. They could simply describe an event that happened. Try to keep the stories brief and simple, especially for younger ones. Children’s attention spans become longer as they get older.

3. **Bring in all five senses**

Use words that will relate to your child’s five senses – sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. These words help to bring the story to life and make it more real for your child. Use physical gestures like hand movements to show action, and facial expressions to show emotion.

4. **Introduce new words**

Including one or two new words will add detail to the story and help expand your child’s vocabulary. These could be words that relate to the story that help to paint a better picture in your child’s mind, e.g. invitation, guests, celebration, etc.

5. **Tell stories anytime**

Share family stories throughout the day –it doesn’t have to happen only at bedtime. You could tell stories at meal time, on walks through the community, while riding on a bus or subway, while driving in a car or waiting for appointments.

## 5 tips to help choose books for your child

Here are some tips to help you choose books that will keep your children enthusiastic about reading.

1. **Select books that match your children's skill level**

The *Five Finger Rule* can help you find out if a book is easy, just right or too hard. Ask your children to hold up a finger for every word they do not understand on a page. If there are more than 4 or 5 words on a page they do not know, the book is probably too hard and may prove frustrating. Try suggesting another book or reading the book together.

2. **Rhymes, repetition, humour and pictures**

Younger children enjoy books that use word repetition, rhymes and familiar words. Most children also like books that are funny. Look for books with colourful pictures and simple words.

3. **Use books to learn about life events**

Reading books about events affecting your children's lives (new brother or sister, moving, new school) can help them deal with fears and feelings. Choose books that relate to what's happening in your family.

4. **Find favourite authors and popular books**

If your child has a favourite book, try to find other books written by the same author. Ask friends, family, and teachers what books their children have enjoyed and try a book swap. The children's librarian at your local library can also be a great source for popular book suggestions.

5. **Read languages other than English or French**

Any kind of reading can help your children develop their skills, so encourage them to read books in languages besides English. If your children know how to read in their first language, they will find it easier to learn English.

## 10 Tips for Summer Learning Fun

Make the most of summer by having fun and learning too. Here are some simple, easy ideas that will reinforce what your children have been learning in school. There are also ways to learn different skills and try out new experiences.

- Introduce your children to outdoor games such as Freeze Tag, hopscotch, Frisbee and Simon Says. These are simple and fun ways for children to interact. They can also teach cooperation, listening skills and counting.
- In addition to wonderful books and resources, many libraries have summer programs geared to children of different ages. Ask the children's librarian for recommendations. You can visit your local library to see what is happening or visit their website.
- Today's museums have a new look; they are working hard to make displays that are accessible to kids. They also have special summer events. There are a variety of museums across the province to visit. Learn more by visiting: [Guide to Ontario Museums](#).
- Family trips such as camping and visiting another city can be educational too. Visit local historical sites, take a nature walk or discover local events. Ask your children to look up travel information and research places of interest. A great place to start is [www.ontariotravel.net](http://www.ontariotravel.net).
- If you're taking a car trip, play games like I Spy or finding license plates from out-of-province cars. This will keep everyone entertained and make learning fun.
- Have your child keep a summer diary. They don't have to use it everyday, just when they think they have something important to write. It is a great way for children to record their experiences and remember the things they have done over the summer. For younger children, have them draw pictures of summer activities they are enjoying to create a picture diary.
- Summer is a great time to take a stroll. A walk can provide a chance to explore your part of the world together. Find out what's happening in your neighbourhood.
- If you're going to a local park for the splash pool or setting up a plastic pool in the yard, take along some measuring cups or other household items that can be used to measure weight or volume. In the sand box or on the beach, encourage children to write their names, do multiplication or draw pictures.
- If you have a garden or belong to a community garden, get children involved in planting. If you have a balcony, fill a couple of pots with soil and plant flowers or vegetables. Or fill an inexpensive window box with herbs or flowers. For more ideas visit [Gardening with Kids](#).
- Creating clothing art can be fun for all ages. T-shirts and fabric paint and markers can be found at the dollar store and painting can be done with brushes, bits of sponge, rubber stamps, feathers, or marbles. Make your own shapes by cutting a potato in half and carving a design into it. Try writing numbers or words creatively, or create a design around a child's name.
- Don't let your sidewalk be wasted. With a box of sidewalk chalk, you can create hours of fun. Draw pictures, write words, play Tic Tac Toe. You can also use water to write words and learn science by watching them evaporate.

## 10 tips that use arts and crafts to develop math and literacy skills

Art fosters a child's imagination. It can encourage problem solving and critical thinking. Look for opportunities to help your children develop literacy, thinking and math skills while they enjoy creating their art work.

1. **Offer a wide range of art experiences.** When kids can explore different kinds of materials, they gain a sense of pride that is reflected in their creativity. Art stimulates learning, and plays an important role in developing their communication and thinking skills.
2. **Organize different art materials and then let your kids explore them.** Encourage your kids to tell you what they like or don't like about certain materials. Art helps develop decision-making skills and fosters imagination.
3. **Gear art activities to your child's age and level of development.** It takes time for children to build skills and confidence, so offer them encouragement.
4. **Let your kids make their own choices.** Art is a way for kids to express their feelings. Keep the activity unstructured. For example, if your kids talk about painting a snowman let them decide what it should look like. Encourage them to talk about their choices, without judging their decisions.
5. **Encourage your kids to explore interesting materials.** These could include leaves, pine cones, egg boxes, cereal boxes, straws, wrapping paper, etc. Kids can count them, divide them into equal piles or match them by colour. All of these activities build math and literacy skills.
6. **Talk to your kids about what they are doing, rather than asking them to interpret the art.** Ask about the different colours, textures and shapes of the materials. For example, ask "What does this painting make you think of?", or "I wonder what will happen if we mix the red and blue paint together?"
7. **New activities are great vocabulary builders:** Introduce new words like "drizzle the glue", "dab the paint" or "sprinkle the sparkles". Keep a dictionary close by to point out the words.
8. **Point out art in the everyday environment.** For example, talk about the shapes and textures in the playground. Ask questions like, "How many triangles can you count in the playground?". Talk about the different colours of the leaves. Make a game out of estimating quantity. For example, ask them to guess whether there are more red or yellow leaves in a certain area.
9. **Encourage questions.** Giving kids the confidence to ask questions lets them expand their knowledge and understanding of art. Use their questions to introduce new words into their vocabulary.
10. **Provide an area to display your child's work that so it can be enjoyed by family and friends.** Children enjoy seeing themselves as artists. Be sure to date the artwork, so that you can talk about work done "6 weeks ago" and they learn about time and calendars.

## 10 tips to get your child ready for school

Starting school is an important step in your son's or daughter's life—and yours. It's a big change. It's exciting. It's even a little scary. Here are 10 tips that will help you get your child ready for that first day of school.

1. **Get familiar with the school.** Before the first day of school, visit the school with your child so that the route, the building, and school surroundings become familiar.
2. **Start the routine early.** About a week or so before the start of school, begin putting your child to bed at a normal time for a school night. For a week before school starts, be sure your child then gets up, dressed, and fed like a regular school morning.
3. **Practise sharing.** Give your child all kinds of opportunities to be with other kids, to learn to share, wait, and take turns. That's what school is all about.
4. **Children should dress themselves.** You won't be at school to help your child get ready for the outdoors. Encourage children to practise at home putting on and taking off their own jacket, snowpants, boots, etc.
5. **Dress your child accordingly.** Your child is going to be active at school. Choose clothes and shoes that are comfortable and durable. Give your child outdoor clothing for all types of weather.
6. **Teach the importance of listening.** School means being able to listen. Kids need to understand and practise listening, things like: look at who is talking, don't interrupt, and think about what is being said.
7. **Learn at home.** Include learning in your child's everyday life. For example, a child can practise by reading package labels or weighing produce while shopping. Read to your child. Play word or counting games.
8. **Develop young muscles.** Give your child every opportunity to exercise and develop larger muscles by running, climbing, playing with a ball, etc. Smaller hand muscles can be strengthened with *Play-Dough*®, pencils, and crayons.
9. **Set "at home" ground rules.** Figure out priorities for after-school activities, homework, chores, TV time, and video games before the first day of school. This will allow you to agree on a schedule and avoid confrontation later on.
10. **Encourage questions.** Give your child the confidence to ask questions in all situations. Let your child know that it's OK to tell the teacher if something is hard to understand.

## 10 tips to help you when talking with the teacher

The parent/teacher meeting is an important time to share ideas and information with your child's teacher. You can also discuss ways to help your child develop strengths and overcome challenges. These 10 tips will help you get the most out of your time with the teacher. Remember: at many parent/teacher meetings, your time will be limited.

1. **Be prepared.** Before meeting the teacher, think about what you want to know and understand about your child's school experience. Review the report card and write down key questions you want to ask.
2. **Ask yourself questions.** Focus on what you want to get out of your parent/teacher meeting by asking yourself questions. For example, "What methods are being used to teach my child?" or "What can I do to get involved in my child's learning?"
3. **Talk to your child before.** Ask your children what they think they are good at and what needs improving. Let them tell you how they feel about school, the teacher and getting along with others.
4. **Arrive ready.** Be sure you come to the parent/teacher meeting in a positive frame of mind and with all the materials you need. Bring the questions you prepared in advance along with your child's report card.
5. **Relax and feel confident.** You know your child best and want what's best. Remember, the teacher also wants your child to be successful.
6. **Be clear about what's being said.** If you need clarification or have concerns about an answer the teacher gives, ask the teacher to explain it further. Don't be satisfied until you fully understand.
7. **Think about what was discussed.** Take some time to think about what you and the teacher talked about. If you are still unclear about something or want to ask more questions, don't be afraid to call the teacher to talk further.
8. **Follow-up at home.** Talk with your child after you have met with the teacher. Discuss what was talked about in the meeting, focusing on the positive and how to achieve the goals that you set.
9. **Keep a log or journal.** Write down the actions you take and any observations about your child. This is important information that can be shared with the teacher at the next meeting.
10. **Arrange the next meeting.** Set a date when you will call the teacher for an update on your child's progress or to arrange another meeting.

## 10 tips to help your child build vocabulary through new words

Learning new words helps children read more complex books and stories. Children learn new words when someone reads to them and they read on their own. The more children read, the more words they are likely to know.

**vo · cab · u · lary:**  
all the words known and used  
by a person

Here are some things you can do with your children to help build their vocabulary.

1. **Point out words that appear often.** As you read together, point out words that you see often. These words include “I”, “me”, “a”, “the”, “but”, “my”, “he” and “she”. Your children will begin to notice the same words in every story.
2. **Play rhyming games.** As your children begin to recognize certain words, you can try playing rhyming games. These games will build their vocabulary and increase their awareness of different word sounds. As they get older, have them write out rhyming words (cat, mat, sat, splat, flat, etc.)
3. **Make sound effects.** Use different voices and sounds to keep your children interested in the story’s words. If a word sounds like its meaning, e.g., splash or splat, point this out – it makes the word more interesting. Hearing different sounds also helps your children develop better listening skills.
4. **Make connections.** Help your children connect the words you read with the words they hear. Follow along with your finger as you read to show how print moves from left to right. Point out the pictures in the book and talk about what you see, matching the words to the pictures.
5. **Talk about daily events.** Talk with your children about past and future events, using the special words that go with these activities. For example, making breakfast could be associated with words like omelet, spatula, bowl, cereal or toaster. Taking a holiday would mean using words like ticket, schedule, suitcase and so on. Every once in a while, use a new or more difficult word and talk about its meaning.
6. **List new words.** Encourage your children to keep a list of the new words they have learned. Ask them to listen for new words as people talk. Have your children find new words in newspapers, books, flyers, and magazines. Talk about the meanings of these new words with your children as they add them to their list.
7. **Look for “word families”.** Give your children a word that is found inside other words (for example, *grow* is found in *growing* and *growth*). Ask your children to name other words that are related. Explain that these words are part of the same “word family”.
8. **Build sentences.** After talking about a new word and its meaning, ask your children to write their own sentences using the word.
9. **Look up words.** As your children start to understand written words, get a children’s dictionary. Whenever they need to know the meaning of a new word, they can look it up in the dictionary and talk to you about it. You may not know the word either and you can learn together!
10. **Listen to music.** Songs introduce new words, especially ones that rhyme or repeat, which makes them easy to learn and remember. Music helps with learning languages and developing listening skills.



## 10 Tips to help your child with homework

Homework is an important part of learning. When you support your children's homework routine, you can help them do better at school. Here are some simple tips to help get the most out of their homework.

1. **A routine is good.** Homework can be habit forming and that's good news for you and your child. Work out a homework schedule and make sure children adhere to it. It won't be long before homework is complete without your getting involved.
2. **Give space for homework.** Distractions and homework don't mix. So do your best to create a bright and quiet space where your child can concentrate on schoolwork. Make sure it's away from distractions like TV, music and loud siblings.
3. **Practice makes perfect.** Repetition reinforces learning. That's why it's helpful to have kids practice reading, writing and math with you every day. Ten to 15 minutes a day can work wonders, whether reading a favourite book together, or helping measure ingredients in the kitchen.
4. **"How was your day?"** Every school day is an adventure. Kids will do and learn so much they'll be bursting to tell someone all about it. So take a few moments every day to chat about the school day—and be a good listener.
5. **Check in occasionally.** When kids do their homework all alone, their concentration can often wander. Check in once in a while and see how it's going. Ask if there are any questions. Sometimes kids just need to talk about a homework problem to figure out the answer.
6. **Turn everyday activities into homework.** Teachers give homework and so can you. Include children in everyday tasks and assign activities such as searching newspapers, reading recipes, creating shopping lists, plotting out routes on a map, etc. Small activities can often teach big lessons.
7. **Make kids proud of their effort.** Getting the answers right is important, but it's only part of what homework is all about. Doing a thorough and neat job is important, too. Make it a habit to sit down and go over completed homework. Look at it together for thoroughness and overall quality of work. Always look for something positive.
8. **Motivate with applause.** "Hey, you did a great job". Words like these have an amazing effect on children. Encouragement gives them confidence and makes them feel good about doing their best. At the end of every homework session, try letting your son or daughter know that you appreciate and admire the effort.
9. **Encourage curiosity and questions.** Learning really begins when kids start asking questions. Who, what, where, when and why are magical words of discovery that make learning more interesting and fun. Give your children the confidence to ask for help if the homework is difficult or confusing.
10. **Know what's going on at school.** Unfortunately, kids don't always tell parents everything. Make a point of staying in touch with teachers, especially if you have a question or concern. Let teachers know they can always call you if there is a problem.

## 10 Tips to help your child with MATH

Tips for grades 4-6

1. **Connect math to daily life.** Let your kids know the importance of math in day-to-day living. Talk about the ways you use math in your job and around the house. Show them a tax form or how you pay the bills. Ask them how they used math during the day.
2. **Practise mental math using coins.** For example, show that a certain item costs a certain amount and ask what coins are needed to pay for it.
3. **Play games together.** Show them math can be fun and exciting. Play family games to add excitement to math activities, like chess or checkers or games in the car such as math bingo or adding licence plate numbers. Lots of board games need math such as *Junior Monopoly*® or play card games such as *Uno*®.
4. **Cooking can be counting fun!** Get older children involved in helping out at dinner time and let them help measure ingredients for dishes or estimate the number of potatoes that are needed to feed everyone.
5. **Play the estimating game.** Ask your kids to estimate measurements, distances, time and grocery bills. Be sure to compare the estimate with actual. Or get them to guess how much the apples you are going to buy will weigh and then take them to the scale in the grocery store and find out.
6. **Perform time calculations.** For example, make up a sentence and ask your child to recite it as many times as possible in 15 seconds. Then ask how many times it could be repeated in 1 minute, 5 minutes, 10 minutes, etc.
7. **Use common toys to understand math concepts.** Build a tower from blocks. Count the blocks. Then talk about the need for a base of the right size and the stability it creates.
8. **Sports and math.** There is a lot of math used in sports: batting averages, points per game, save percentages – these are math terms that a sports enthusiast will love. If you watch a game with your child, read the newspaper report together sometime the next day and talk about the math concepts.
9. **Computers + math = fun.** There are great computer games available for math—ask your librarian or check out your local computer store. Make sure they are "parent approved". There are also super websites that have fun math games, so do an Internet search for sites and bookmark them for future use.
10. **Measuring made easy.** Estimate and measure the area of different shapes. For example, use small square objects (plastic tiles, dice, etc.) to estimate then measure how many are needed to fill the area of various flat surfaces such as a magazine cover.

## 10 Tips to help your child with MATH

### Tips for kindergarten to grade 3

1. **Counting can be fun and entertaining.** Sing counting songs such as "One, Two Buckle My Shoe". Your local librarian can recommend fun counting books. Play Hopscotch – it's a counting game! There are lots of games where you count, such as *Snakes and Ladders*, *Dominoes*, *Crazy Eights* and *Candyland*®.
2. **Computers + math = fun.** There are great computer games available for math – ask your librarian or check out your local computer store. Make sure they are "parent approved". There are also super websites that have fun math games, such as [TVOKids](http://TVOKids.com), or do an Internet search for other sites.
3. **Start Easy and Work Up!** Once they have got the hang of counting by 1s, introduce skip counting, such as counting by 2s and 5s.
4. **Use household items for counting practice.** Practise adding and subtracting with objects found around your house like spoons or pots and pans. When they've become good at these skills, move on to simple multiplication.
5. **Tap into your child's curiosity.** Go on a number hunt together and discover places where numbers are used such as a clock, TV, computer keyboard, calendar, telephones and licence plates.
6. **Use everyday activities.** Your child's world is filled with everyday math problems that can be solved. For example, "There are four people in our family and we each need a knife and a fork to eat dinner. How many knives and forks do we need to set the table?"
7. **Kitchens can be math zones.** Bake some muffins or cookies and ask your child to help you measure out the ingredients. It may be a bit messy but it's fun family time and there's nothing like a fresh cookie as a reward. Have math fridge magnets available so children can start making number patterns and doing simple math problems.
8. **Predict and compare.** Start to measure and estimate things like how far it is from the driveway to the house or how long a trip will take and then measure and compare the actual time it takes.
9. **Talk about time.** The concept of time can be hard to grasp. Talk to your kids about minutes and hours. Then get them to try counting days and weeks – for example how many "sleeps" until the weekend or a visit to a friend or relative.
10. **Identify geometric shapes and sizes.** Play "I Spy". Instead of looking for words beginning with a letter, look for different colours or shapes and count the number you find in the room.

## 10 Tips to help your child with reading

### Tips for grade 4-6

1. **Keep reading with your child.** Kids are never too old to be read to—or let your kids read to you. Read a variety of material – magazines, newspapers, books, poems and comic books. Try cutting out or printing interesting or funny articles to share with them.
2. **Public libraries today are worlds to explore so try and go regularly.** Your library has great resources – books, computer games, DVDs, CDs, magazines, newspapers and Internet access. There are also terrific in-house programs such as reading circles for little ones and homework clubs for older children. If you have access to a public library, talk to the librarian about what is available.
3. **Read some of the same books as your child.** There are many books that are loved by people of all ages. Ask your librarian or child's teacher for suggestions. You can share your thoughts and ideas, and have great conversations about the characters, stories or topics.
4. **Ask your children what they're reading.** Ask what it's about and what is most enjoyable about the book. Ask your child to describe it to you.
5. **Tap into interests and hobbies.** Kids are more likely to read about what they find really interesting, like sports or crafts. Don't worry if it's a comic book, magazine or an illustrated novel, just remember all reading is good and tastes will change as they get older. When you go to the library, let them choose their own books.
6. **Find books that relate to TV shows.** Let's face it, TV and video games are part of life now and our kids benefit when we help them learn how to think about these messages too. We also know that some kids find TV and video games fascinating. You can use this to your advantage—introduce them to books or magazines that relate to their favourite shows, movies or games.
7. **Encourage your older kids to read to younger kids.** The older child will practice reading out loud and the younger child will enjoy being read to. Best of all, they get to enjoy spending time together.
8. **Play games together.** Trivia games and board games such as *Junior Trivial Pursuit®* or *Junior Scrabble®* can be a fun way to learn about words and reading. Children have such a good time playing they don't realize they are learning.
9. **Computers can be reading zones too!** Though we all feel that kids may spend too much time on the computer, there are some great games that help kids with reading and allow them to create their own stories and books. Look for "parent approved" on the box in stores and in the library.
10. **Give praise.** The best motivation comes from your positive feedback. Whenever your child finishes a reading or writing assignment, ask about what was read and praise your child's effort.

**A special note:** Educators agree that literacy skills develop and improve as a result of a wide range of activities. For example, a child's literacy skills are enhanced when parents who do not speak one of Canada's official languages read to their children in their native language. Children will benefit from this reading experience.

## 10 Tips to help your child with reading

### Tips for kindergarten to grade 3

1. **Cuddle up and read.** Quiet times together are opportunities to bond...and read. The cuddling can be as important as the reading. Make it exciting: put some drama into your voice or let your child read every other page. As you go, explain any new words or ideas.
2. **Public libraries today are worlds to explore so try to go regularly.** Your library has great resources – books, computer games, DVDs, CDs, magazines, newspapers and Internet access. There are also terrific in-house programs such as reading circles for little ones and homework clubs for older children. If you have access to a public library, talk to the librarian about what is available.
3. **Make your kitchen part of your "reading zone".** Have fridge magnets available so children can start making words and short sentences.
4. **Words are everywhere – take everyday opportunities to read with your child.** Your child's world is filled with words – on cereal boxes, street signs, stores, posters, subway ads, etc. Wherever you go, you can always find new words and point them out.
5. **Games can be great learning tools.** Board games or card games such as word bingo or memory and rhyming cards can be a fun way to learn about words, letter sounds, and reading. They can help children realize how much fun learning can be. Check out your local school fair or second-hand stores for gently used games. You can even create your own by cutting out pictures, writing words on cards and getting you child to match them.
6. **Computers are reader friendly too!** Though many worry that kids may spend too much time on the computer, there are some great games that help kids learn to read and allow them to create their own stories. Look for "parent approved" on the packaging in stores and in the library. Find some kid-friendly websites, like [TVOKids](http://TVOKids.com) and [Canadian Geoillustrated for Kids](http://CanadianGeoillustratedforKids.com), that have games you can play along with your child.
7. **Books make great gifts.** Ask family and friends to give a book instead of a toy as a gift. Make sure to tell them about your child's reading level and interests. To build up a home library find almost-new books at garage sales and school fairs.
8. **Subscribe to a magazine.** There's no substitute for the excitement of receiving mail. Let your kids subscribe to their favourite age-appropriate magazine and watch their eyes light up with the arrival of each new issue. Great magazines for younger children include *Chirp*® and *Chickadee*®.
9. **Be a reading role model.** When your kids see you reading, they will want to imitate you. It won't be long until they learn that reading is fun, interesting, and a "grown up" thing to do.
10. **Keep books, magazines and newspapers handy.** Keep a box in the kitchen or living room for easy access.

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## 10 Tips to help your child with WRITING

### Tips for grades 4-6

1. **Read from a variety of sources.** Reading and writing are linked – success in one supports success in the other. Read stories, articles, ads, instructions, etc. to your child and then talk about what you have read.
2. **Be a writing role model.** Let your child see you writing when possible – letters, work assignments, letters to the editor, email. Help your child to understand about writing for different purposes like short stories, poems, letters, etc. Make sure they see all different types of materials such as books, magazines, newspapers, comic books and illustrated novels.
3. **Get children to write on their own.** Capturing the day's events on paper or creating a story or poem is a great way for children to develop their own writing style. Let them write about their interests – it doesn't matter what the subject is.
4. **Encourage your child to write down ideas.** A journal or diary is a simple way for kids to keep track of their thoughts or feelings. They can write about things that happened at school, on TV, news stories, pictures, sports, and activities. Journals can be purchased at the dollar store in a variety of sizes with different covers. Or for a special occasion, get one with a lock for private thoughts.
5. **Keep writing sessions short.** When your child has a writing assignment, help to schedule brief periods of writing rather than trying to write it in one go. Help create an outline before putting pen to paper.
6. **Cyberspace writing.** Encourage your children to write emails to or instant-message with family and friends. If they have their own email address, write emails to each other.
7. **Computers can be a writer's best friend.** Though we all feel that kids may spend too much time on the computer, there are some great games that help kids develop their writing skills by allowing them to create their own stories and books. Look for "parent approved" on the packaging in stores and in the library.
8. **Encourage your child to talk it out.** Writing mistakes can often be easily caught by reading stories out loud.
9. **Listen and talk to your children.** Help your child talk about what, where, when, how and why as they are preparing to write about something. If your child seems stuck, ask what the problem is and talk about it.
10. **Play games and do puzzles with your child.** Games such as *Junior Scrabble*®, word finders or crossword puzzles that involve creating and using words are a great way to develop word vocabulary. Keep a dictionary handy.

## 10 Tips to help your child with WRITING

### Tips for kindergarten to grade 3

1. **Read from a variety of sources.** Reading and writing are linked – success in one supports success in the other. Read stories, newspapers, advertisements, instructions, etc. to your child every day and then discuss what you have read.
2. **Encourage your child to write.** Children love to make their own birthday cards, write thank you notes, make place cards for the table, or send an email to a friend. Save old cards from birthdays and holidays to recycle for homemade cards. Whenever possible, let your child see you writing – grocery lists, instructions on the family whiteboard, emails, etc. – and get them to help.
3. **Writing can be done anywhere.** Have lots of magnetic letters or words on the fridge. Get a box of chalk and write your names on the driveway or sidewalk. Get a white board – it can be used again and again.
4. **Play writing games.** Make a game of letter finding. Show them how to form a letter and then go letter hunting in your house or in a book – count the number of "Ds" on a page. Find a picture they like and have them write words or a sentence about it.
5. **Help children build their vocabulary.** Try rhyming games starting with one word such as "mat". Say and write down all the words that rhyme, like "cat", "hat", "fat" and "splat". You'll be surprised how fast their word list grows.
6. **Explore the meaning of words.** Create a word book at home and have your child add words as they're learned. Have them note the words they use the most and talk about why.
7. **Write to each other.** Write notes to your child and leave them in interesting places, like the lunch box. Ask them to write a reply or come up with something new. If they have their own email, email each other. Have kids email jokes to family and friends.
8. **Don't limit what you write with or what you write on.** The sky's the limit – pudding, sticks or fingers in mud, earth, snow and sand, sparklers, steamed up windows and mirrors, and bubble soap markers for some sudsy learning.
9. **Writing comes in all shapes and sizes.** Point out different ways writing is used – letters, signs, advertisements, instructions – and explain why they are different. Also point out different ways letters are created – printed, cursive (written) and fancy variations. Let them be inspired to create their own letter art.
10. **Start writing at an early age.** Children often learn to write before they can read. Encourage this by showing them how to print their name or the names of friends and other family members. Buy them notebooks with lines so they can learn to make their letters correctly or a practice book with letters they can trace.



## 10 tips to help your son with reading

Research demonstrates that boys as a group are lagging in reading and writing skills. If your son is having difficulty, he may need different approaches to encourage interest in reading. Here are 10 simple tips you can use at home to improve your son's literacy skills.

1. **It takes time to build confidence and skill.** It's not how hard the book is that counts, it's the amount of reading that matters. Let your son choose the books he wants to read, even if it's below his reading level. This will help him feel better about his reading skills and give him confidence to try more challenging material.
2. **Let him make his own choices.** If it's his choice, then he'll want to read it. Don't worry if he chooses the same types of books to read over and over or if they have edgy humour. Remind yourself that he's actually reading and enjoying it.
3. **Everybody enjoys a good story, so read to him.** If your son finds a story interesting but the book too hard, share the reading. This will also make the book more fun to read.
4. **Be a role model.** Make sure your son sees you reading and writing. If he sees you doing it, he'll respect you and the activity more.
5. **Challenge his mind in other ways.** Reading and writing are only a couple of ways to challenge your son's mind. Spend time with him and share some brain teasing games like chess, crossword puzzles, board games – even video games. An active mind is better prepared for reading.
6. **Give his teacher a call.** Next to you, his teacher knows him best. Talk to your son's teacher for updates on his reading and writing. Discuss ways that you can help encourage your boy's literacy skills.
7. **Have him read all sorts of material.** There's much more to read than just books. Try reading the instructions to a model airplane or new video game. It's all reading and it's all good practice.
8. **Tap into your son's hobbies and interests.** Turn his interest in sports and music into a reason for reading. Give him books and magazines about things that he already finds fun and interesting and he'll soon discover that reading can be interesting too.
9. **Use the Net.** Just because it's on a computer screen doesn't mean it's not reading. The Internet is loaded with great sites and games that are perfect for your son. Let his interests be his guide to the sites he'll want to read. Exchanging emails with friends and family is also a great way to practise writing. Just be sure he knows all about Internet safety and that the parental controls are on.
10. **Make his day with a positive word.** A pat on the back, school work on the fridge, a smile and the words "good going" ... these are gestures that will motivate your son to love reading and writing. So whenever your son finishes a reading or writing assignment, has read a new book or written a story, show genuine interest in it and tell him you're proud.

The Ministry of Education has produced a special publication on boys' literacy. Although it is intended for teachers, many parents may find it insightful. Download [Me Read? No Way! A practical guide to improving boys' literacy skills](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/brochure/meread/index.html) at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/brochure/meread/index.html>