
Children and literacy

Summary

- Your child is literate if they know how to use language with confidence.
 - You are your child's most influential teacher and can encourage them in many ways to enjoy speaking, listening, reading and writing.
 - The first five years of schooling are the most important in laying the foundation of literacy.
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Literacy is the basis of your child's learning. Your child is literate if they know how to use language with confidence. This includes speaking, reading and writing.

Literacy skills begin in the pre-school years and are built on throughout the school years. You are your child's most influential teacher and can encourage them in many ways to enjoy speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Speaking and listening

You can help your child develop listening and speaking skills in many ways. Suggestions include:

- Encourage conversations with your child. Be an example of how to listen and take turns speaking.
- Take the time to listen to your child's stories without interrupting, correcting or judging.
- Include your child in family discussions and appropriate decision making such as what to do together at the weekend.
- Expose your child to various types of music, theatre and cinema.
- Explain and model social etiquettes of conversation, such as not to interrupt when someone is talking or how and when to use titles such as 'Mr', 'Ms' or 'Aunty'.
- Model active listening skills such as allowing the child to finish what they are saying and cueing into body signals of the child to assist them to talk.

Reading

You can help your child develop reading skills in many ways. Suggestions include:

- Lead by example and allow your child to see you regularly reading newspapers, books and magazines.
- Encourage your child's reading by showing them how to find information that is of interest to them. This may include television guides, dictionaries, cookbooks and the sports pages of newspapers.
- Play word-oriented games with them.
- Have plenty of books appropriate to your child's reading level in the house.
- Be prepared to allow children to read books that you may not think are of great literary value. It is important to encourage a love of reading first and this is best done by allowing the child to choose what they read.
- Read stories together.
- Let your child read and choose from the menu when out for a meal.

Writing

You can help your child develop writing skills in many ways. Suggestions include:

- Lead by example. Allow your child to see you regularly writing for different reasons – letters, thankyou notes, Christmas and birthday cards, lists – or filling in forms.
 - Make sure your child has plenty of their own writing materials, such as their own paper, pens, textas and pencils. Where possible, let them choose their own writing material and create a special place for their 'writing'.
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- Encourage them to start their own journal to record their activities, thoughts and special occasions.
- Give your child time to practise using a computer. Let them teach you what they know about the computer and display their ability to use its many programs.
- Ask your child to make and decorate cards for birthdays, to say 'thank you' or for other celebrations and occasions.

Inform other carers

Maintain consistency for your child by informing other carers such as childcare staff, pre-school teachers or babysitters of your child's developing literacy skills. Ask to be kept informed of your child's progress and interest in speaking, reading and writing.

Early Years Services

Research shows that the first five years of schooling are the most important in laying the foundation of literacy. The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is working to improve child literacy through the Early Years Literacy and Numeracy programs, which monitor and assess every Victorian child. Using national literacy benchmarks as a guide, a child can be given extra help or extra challenges. Parents are encouraged to take an active role in their child's learning and progress.

Working with your child's teachers

Research shows that when parents and teachers work together, children are much happier and settled in the education setting. You can improve and support your child's developing literacy skills by working in partnership with their teachers. Some suggestions include:

- Get to know your child's teacher.
- Inform the teacher about your child's life at home and learn what is going on in your child's early childhood or school setting. Maintain an open dialogue about all aspects of your child's learning, including any concerns you may have about your child's progress.
- If possible, involve yourself in your child's early childhood and school life by offering to help out in areas where you feel comfortable. Suggestions include assisting the learning in the room, helping to organise school fetes, joining the canteen roster or participating in the parent's club, committee or council.
- Support your child as much as you can by attending their special occasions such as concerts, sports days and presentations.
- Encourage your child to start their own out-of-school projects. Offer support only when asked.

Where to get help

- Your child's early childhood service and school
- Victorian Department of Education and Training Tel. (03) 9637 2000
- Parentline Tel. 13 22 89

Things to remember

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