

Early Literacy Conversation Guide

	Birth – 12 months	12 months – 2 years	2–3 years	3–5 years
Tips on introducing early literacy to families	Ask what interactions with baby feels most comfortable to them (i.e. singing, reading, cuddling, talking, playing) “Baby loves your voice. Interacting with you is important for their brain development. Talk, sing, read and share stories with them throughout the day!” “Baby feels so loved when you cuddle, hug and play interactive games like peek-a-boo. You are responding to things they enjoy!” “It’s never too early to start sharing books with baby, the time spent together will build a foundation for learning.”	Ask about baby’s communication skills (i.e. pointing, making sounds, saying words) “During your baby’s routine, you can find ways to encourage their development.” “When getting dressed, hold up socks and say: Here’s your sock! It goes on your foot!” “At bath time, talk about what you’re doing and say: It is bath time, I am filling the tub with water!” “On walks, point and name things you see: Look at that orange cat!”	Ask about child’s interest and access to books “You may notice your little one is saying more words. Talking, singing and reading with them will help them learn even more!”	Ask about plans and feelings about starting school “Talking, singing, reading and sharing stories together is a great way to get them ready for school.” “You can help your child start to notice and name letters or symbols and their sounds when reading together. But don’t let it get in the way of enjoying the story.”
Books to recommend	High-contrast black & white books (newborns) Sturdy board books Touch and feel books	Board books Picture books Books that name things	Rhyming books Picture books that tell simple stories	Picture books that tell longer stories Counting and alphabet books
Ideas for sharing stories/books	- Name and point to things you see in the pictures - Let baby explore the books (touching, putting in mouth) - If baby stops showing interest, stop reading. Try another book at another time.	- Help child turn the pages - Count items in the book: “1-2-3-4. I see four stars.” - Point out features such as: - Colours: “The clouds are white.” - Size: “This mitten is small. But this mitten is big!” - Shapes: “The clock is round.”	- Encourage child to help hold the book and turn the pages - Ask child to find and point to pictures: “Show me the water.” - Ask questions: “Where does the boat go?” - Count items you see in books	- Ask questions your child can answer: “Look at this book cover, what do you think the book is about?” - Make connections from the book to child’s life: “This girl is a fast runner. So are you!” - Talk about feelings in the book: “This boy looks happy. He has a big smile on his face. What else tells us he is feeling happy?”

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Messages for families



"You are your child's first teacher! By noticing and responding to what interests your child, you are helping their brain to develop."

"Talk, sing and read together, every day. Hearing lots of words will help your child develop language and reading skills as they grow."

"You can use a book in any way that works for your family. Even when you talk about the pictures or make up your own story, it builds a strong foundation for learning."

Tips for clinics

Connect families to local libraries and community programs. Reach out and request brochures, posters and information about their programs. These can be shared with families and incorporated into your conversations about early literacy.



Frequently asked questions from families

Which language should I speak to my child? I don't want them to get confused.

- Speak the language or languages you feel most comfortable with
- Your child's brain can learn languages in the years before they turn five. This is the best time to expose them to languages
- What's important is that they hear lots of words from you and other adults who care for them
- When a child learns a language at home, it does not make it harder for them to learn another language at school

I'm worried that my child's language is delayed. What can I do?

- Continue to talk, sing and read to your child, every day
- Follow their lead and take part in activities they are interested in
- Find local library and community programs (if available) so your child can enjoy story time and have a chance to play with other children
- Monitor progress and continue to raise concerns at future visits
- NOTE: If you, the healthcare provider, have a concern about the child's language development, further investigation and/or referrals to other healthcare practitioners (i.e. audiologists, speech-language pathologists) may be warranted.

Can my child learn from the words they hear on TV, a tablet, or other devices/screens?

- Children learn best from you and other caring adults in their lives, in person
- The Canadian Paediatric Society's screen time guidelines are:
 - under 2 years old - no screen time;
 - 2 to 5 years old - no more than 1 hour per day.
- We know it is not always possible to follow these recommendations. For times when you do let your child use a tablet or other device:
 - help your little one choose what to watch;
 - monitor how much time they spend on the screen;
 - sit with your child and watch or play together - ask questions, make comments, talk about what you're seeing on the screen, make connections to things in the child's life (for example: "The kids are watching the squirrel. We saw a squirrel at the park yesterday!").

Please visit
www.childrensliteracy.ca
for more tips!



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