



Canadian  
Children's  
Literacy  
Foundation

Fondation pour  
l'alphabétisation  
des enfants  
canadiens



# Words build their world



## Tips for Talking, Singing, Playing and Reading in the Early Years

Families have always been children's first and most important teachers. Many of us get a helping hand from the wonderful early childhood educators in our childcare centres and libraries. Here are a few things you can do to support little growing brains at home.



## Start by relaxing.

### This is fun-based learning.

You don't need special tools, software or equipment. You've got what it takes – YOU.

No matter how well you think you sing or how good a reader you are, you've got this.





# Remember who the leader is. (Hint: it's not you.)

**Follow** your little one's lead and go at their pace.

Let them **help** choose what you read, play or do together.

**Cheer** on your child's efforts with encouraging words and joyful looks.

**Slow down.**

Wait for them. Sometimes interest shifts quickly, and you don't need to finish the activity or story.

Best Start has some fun ideas for everyday play using all five senses.

## Read, speak, sing and play.

Snuggle up. Use silly voices. Make reading a shared experience even before your child can talk.

Ask things like, "Where's the cow? There she is beside the big red barn!" or "How many ducks can we count?" It's OK to chew on the book too (well, OK for them!).

Thinking about getting some digital help with story or song time?

If you're using screens or television, try to pick content that is educational, age-appropriate and interactive. Try to stick within recommended limits when you can.

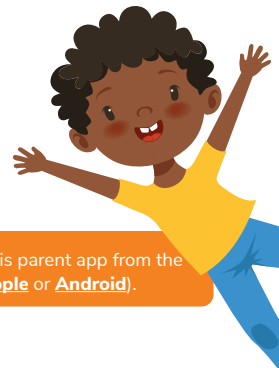
Milestones and activities from our friends at Calgary Reads

Check out the helpful guidance on screen time and young children from the Canadian Paediatric Society

Can you involve your child in the grown-up parts of your day? Can your chores become their play? Need some "help" cooking, cleaning or folding the towels?

The Toronto Public Library has lots of resources for talking, reading, singing, playing and writing.

There are lots of fun activities on this parent app from the Centre for Family Literacy ([Apple](#) or [Android](#)).





# Repeat.

Your little one will likely want the same stories, finger plays and games over and over and over...

That's normal and great!

The repetition helps build strong language and learning pathways in the brain that will build a foundation for life.

Little ones, like most of us, like predictable environments and some structure.

## Wondering how all of this builds your baby's brain?

Exposure to words – through reading, speaking and singing to your little one – builds their brain's capacity for a lifetime.

## Hang in there, you're not alone

It's not easy. Some days you'll be able to do more than other days. Be kind to yourself.

You've got this, and we're here to help.

Check out the Alberta Family Wellness Initiative's Brain Story site to learn more!



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Visit [childrensliteracy.ca](https://childrensliteracy.ca) for more tips and information about how you can support your child's brain development.