LITERACY AND NUMERACY TIPS TO HELP YOUR CHILD EVERY DAY

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN AGED 0-12

THE EDUCATION STATE

VICTORIA State Government

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INTRODUCTION

HOW DO I USE THIS BOOKLET?

Research shows that families are the most significant influence on their children's learning, development, health, safety and wellbeing. Your family can play a key role in helping your child prepare for school, and then succeed when they reach school.

This booklet provides handy tips and ways you can help your child develop literacy and numeracy skills. It provides fun, inexpensive, accessible and practical activities you can do with your child at home. The booklet also provides questions you can ask your child to help them learn. Doing these practical activities will help your child develop excellent reading and writing skills, and help them speak well and be a good listener.

Through everyday activities at home you can also help them develop their numeracy skills, such as calculating and using numbers, recognising patterns, and using language to develop mathematical understanding.

These literacy and numeracy activities are excellent opportunities for you to model key learning values such as enthusiasm, persistence and curiosity.

These tips and activities can also be used by a child's older siblings and grandparents, or other relevant people in a child's life, to help develop their literacy and numeracy skills.

The booklet is divided into activities for two age groups: *Birth – Year 2*, and *Year 3 – Year 6*. Go to the sections appropriate to your child's level and look at the tips and handy hints. You don't have to do all the activities, but doing some everyday will improve your child's learning.

This booklet aligns with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (Birth – 8 years of age) and the Victorian Curriculum (Levels Foundation – 10), both of which outline what is important for all children to learn. The activities in this booklet reflect these standards, and support content taught every day in your child's early childhood service and school.

For information on the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework go to:

http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/edcare/veyldframework.pdf

For information on the Victorian Curriculum go to:

http://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/

If English is not your first language, you can always involve your child in these activities in your first language instead of English. Research shows that learning two or more languages from a young age can benefit children in many ways, and help them succeed at school in all subject areas.

WHERE CAN I GET HELP?

YOUR CHILD'S MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH NURSE

Your child's maternal and child health nurse can provide advice about your child's health and development, and provide general advice on ways to stimulate your child's learning.

YOUR CHILD'S EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR, KINDERGARTEN TEACHER AND SCHOOL TEACHER

Your child's early childhood educator, kindergarten teacher and school teacher can provide advice about how you can help develop your child's literacy and numeracy skills.

Topics you could discuss with your child's early childhood educator, kindergarten teacher, or teacher include:

- your child's progress in literacy and maths
- the goals your child is working towards in literacy and maths, and how you can support your child to achieve them
- strategies you can use to assist your child in areas he or she finds difficult
- how your child has responded to the tips in this booklet.

ONLINE RESOURCES

The Victorian Premiers' Reading Challenge runs each year from March to September. Participating early childhood services and schools will register your child – otherwise you can register your child at:

http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/events/prc

The Victorian Maths Challenge is a fun and engaging way for families to engage in real life mathematics and explore problems together:

http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/events/vmc

The Victorian Government's Find Use Share Education (FUSE) website makes it easy to connect to great learning tools from your home computer or local library computer. It includes games you can play with your child to build their literacy and numeracy skills:

https://fuse.education.vic.gov.au

The Department of Education and Training has general information and resources for parents with young children:

http://www.education.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood/parents

The Department's website also has general information and resources for parents with children at school:

http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents

BIRTH TO SCHOOL YEAR 2:
LITERACY

Families play a key role in developing from birth a child's language and literacy skills.

A child's understanding of the world and their capacity to learn is greatly influenced by how much their family values their literacy skills. Children who start school with greater literacy skills perform better in school, and not just in language-based subjects like English.

It is important to think of literacy in the early years as a range of different activities and forms of communication, including music, movement, dance, storytelling, visual arts and drama, as well as talking, viewing, reading, drawing and writing.

It is never too early to read to your child. Reading should start in the first few months after birth. Even if as an adult you don't read often, or don't particularly like reading, it is important that you spend this valuable time with your child to stimulate their language development, and to encourage their love of reading.

Talk as much as you can with your child and engage them in conversation often. You may be their only source of language so the more you speak and engage with them, the faster they will learn new vocabulary and speak with greater fluency. Oral language skills are an important predictor of reading and writing skills, so the better your child can speak, the better their overall literacy skills will develop.

And remember, literacy in your child's early years can always be fun. Excursions and playtime are great activities in which to engage and talk with your child. Fun activities are also the best opportunities to teach your child new vocabulary and new ways of saying things.

HELPING YOUR CHILD TO SPEAK AND LISTEN

Talking with your child

Regularly talking and interacting with your child extends their language and listening skills, and helps grow their confidence with language.

Include your child when discussing everyday activities such as grocery shopping, gardening, cooking dinner, collecting mail from the mailbox, doing housework, and travelling in the car or bus.

Outings can also provide a world of new vocabulary. Discussion during outings can enrich your child's understanding of the world. Outings might include going to the park, the zoo, a shopping centre, museums, libraries and art galleries.

Other fun activities can include:

- Share rhymes, poems and songs. Encourage your child to join in.
- Share and talk about family histories and family photos.
- Look at picture books or art books. Ask your child to describe what is happening in the pictures and make up stories together.
- Collect cardboard and other household items for your child to build with. Ask your child to describe what they are building.
- Look at 'junk mail' and talk about the things for sale.
- Listen to simple radio programs or podcasts together and discuss the content.

- Play vocabulary games with your child such as, "what's the opposite of ….?" (for example, "what's the opposite of big?") and "what's another word for….?" (for example, "what's another word for angry?").

Oral storytelling

Storytelling is a great way to extend your child's speaking and listening skills, and to expand their memory and imagination. Either you can tell the story, or you can encourage your child to tell the story.

Storytelling might be about:

- your child's favourite toy
- another family member
- a pet
- a favourite fictional character from a book or television program
- a famous person
- the work of people from different professions, such as astronauts, firefighters, nurses and teachers
- an imaginary world with imaginary characters
- an imaginary animal that can speak.

Here are some tips to start your storytelling:

- Make it exciting, with different voices, puppets, or a finger play.
- Have a dress-up box for your child to use for storytelling and imaginative play.
- Start with what interests your child.
- Start by creating a character and a setting.

HELPING YOUR CHILD TO READ

Reading together

Reading together is a valuable thing to do. Reading increases your child's vocabulary, expands your child's understanding of the world, and gives them confidence when using language. Reading is also an important way to make the link between spoken words and written words.

Here are some general tips:

- Visit your local library to select and read books together, and to attend story time sessions. Library story time sessions are a great way to share the joy of reading with your child in a group setting.
- Encourage your child to select books, magazines, catalogues, or multimedia stories according to their interests.
- Set aside time for reading every day. Reading before bedtime is a good habit to get into.
- Position yourself so your child can see the words and the pictures.
- Run your finger across the page with each word to help your child identify and remember words and sounds.
- Share wordless picture books to develop imagination, ideas and vocabulary by naming and describing things in pictures.

- Look for rhyme, rhythm or repetition in books. This will help develop your child's love of language.
- When reading to your child, read stories with expression, or try putting on the voices of characters. This will help make reading fun.
- Point out important features about a book – for example, the words and pictures, the front cover, the spine, the contents page, or the title.
- Explore words using a dictionary.
- Encourage your child to take over some or all of the reading if they feel confident.
- If your child is confident with their reading, allow them to read without interruption. Fluency is gained with confidence. Mistakes can be discussed after a block of reading, or in subsequent readings.
- Allow your child to read at their own pace. Model good pace when you read to them.
- Give your child the opportunity to re-read books.
- Encourage your child to join the Victorian Premiers' Reading Challenge, which runs each year from March to September. Participating early childhood services and schools will register your child – otherwise you can register your child at: http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/events/prc
- Join the 1000 Books Before School program at your local library: https://www.slv.vic.gov.au/live-learn/1000-books-school.

Helping your child work out difficult words

When your child begins to read to you, they will often have difficulty with long or tricky words. It is important to give your child time to work out difficult words themselves. This helps develop their reading skills.

You might, however, help them if they are stuck by asking questions like these:

- Look at the picture. What word makes sense?
- Look at the picture. What object can you see in the picture that might start with that letter?
- What letter (or letters) does the word start with? What sound does that letter (or letters) make?
- What letters are in the middle of the word? What sound do these letters make?
- What letter (or letters) does the word end with? What sound does that letter (or letters) make?
- Can you put those sounds together to make a word?

Another good strategy is to ask your child how they worked out the word. This helps reinforce reading strategies they learn from you and from school.

Book chat

Discussing the content and meaning of books is an important part of reading. Chat about the book before, during and after reading, and encourage your child to share their ideas and to ask questions about the book.

Here are some questions you can ask before, during and after reading the book:

- Look at the cover. What do you think this book might be about?
- How would you describe the character at the beginning of the story?
- How does the place the book is set in make you feel?
- What is happening in the pictures?
- What do you think is going to happen next?
- Why might a character have done this? What would you do in the same situation?
- Who was your favourite character in the story? Why did you like that character?
- What was your favourite part of the book?
- Can you retell the story in your own words?

Making the most of screen time

You can use the same questions you might ask your child during Book Chat (see above) to discuss TV programs (such as cartoons) or films that you watch together. Understanding visual media is a key element of your child's literacy.

There are also a number of great games on the internet to help engage your child in reading.

These games include:

- Phonics games that improve reading and letter sound awareness. Phonics involves sounding out individual sounds in a word, and then putting these sounds together to make the word.
- Grammar, punctuation and spelling games.
- Vocabulary games.

Here is a short list of good websites to help begin your online search for games and other resources:

- https://fuse.education.vic.gov.au (select Early Childhood or Primary Students tabs)
- http://education.abc.net.au
- http://storymonster.acmi.net.au
- http://www.abc.net.au/tv/programs/play-school-story-time

Taking Small Bytes (http://fuse.education.vic.gov.au/?ZY2GMP) is also an excellent resource. It contains 100 digital technology activities for you to do and discuss with your child. It also contains tips about using digital technologies wisely and safely.

Reading the world together

The world is full of letters and words you and your child can read together.

Activities could include the following:

- It is important to show your child the value of reading for everyday purposes. Include your child when you read recipes, greeting cards, calendars, shopping lists, food labels, instructions, maps, newspapers, emails, signs, weather forecasts and websites. For example, you could read a recipe together and follow the steps to make your child's favourite meal. Or you could ask your child to read and tick off each grocery item on a shopping list as you buy or unpack them.

- Cook alphabet soup and say letters together as you eat them.
- Play a word hunt. Write random words on bits of paper and place them around a room. Say one of the words and ask your child to find the right word.
- Put post-it notes on objects around the house so your child can read and learn new words every day.

HELPING YOUR CHILD TO WRITE

Learning to write begins with scribbling and drawing. This is an important first step and should be encouraged. The next step is to encourage your child to write letter-like shapes, before moving on to practise writing the alphabet – both capitals and lower case letters. After this, encourage your child to write sentences containing short words.

If your child cannot write yet, you could write for them. Here is a strategy:

- Ask your child to talk about an experience or something that interests them.
- Ask your child what part of the conversation they would like you to write down.
- As your child is talking, write down their ideas. Use their language.

- Ask your child to describe back to you what you wrote down, or ask them to read back the writing.
- Your child may want to draw a picture or create something to match the writing.

Encourage your child to take over some or all of the writing when they feel confident. When your child starts writing, try the following:

- Discuss the topic to give your child some ideas to explore. This gives them confidence to begin writing.
- Teach your child any vocabulary they might need.
- You can encourage your child by writing on a similar topic alongside them. Then you can share your writing with each other and discuss the differences.

Here are some general tips to help your child when writing:

- Make sure you give your child the necessary resources, such as pens, pencils, paper or notebook, and a desk. Creating a special 'writing box' to store your child's pens and pencils helps them see writing as an important activity.
- Support your child to read their writing aloud.
- Encourage your child to create a picture, drawing or collage that visually represents their ideas.
- Always proudly display your child's work in a prominent position in your house. This will give them confidence, and demonstrates the importance of writing.
- Create an 'ideas bag' or 'ideas folder' to use as a writing prompt. To inspire writing ideas, collect objects such as photographs, pictures cut from magazines, brochures, movie tickets, or any other found item.

Writing about experiences and interests

Topics might include:

- a piece of writing about a recent experience, such as a wedding or birthday party, or an excursion. For example, a trip to the museum could result in recounting the day's activities, a report about dinosaurs, a report about "The Best Thing I Learnt Today," a short story about a family of dinosaurs, or a written list of exhibitions
- something that interests them. Your child could create a poster or a short article on a hobby or other interest
- a dream or memory they have discussed recently.

Writing creatively

Because creative writing is fun, it is an excellent way to foster a love of writing. It also helps develop your child's imagination, which has been proven to be important in critical thinking and problem solving. You can use a book you have recently read together as a source of inspiration, or create something new.

Some ideas for writing creatively include:

- Create a short story in cartoon form.
- Cut out pictures of people from magazines and create speech bubbles and dialogue.
- Create your own superhero and have them go on a short adventure.
- Use artworks found on the web, such as paintings and photographs, as inspiration for a story.
- Write a story or create a cartoon together by taking turns at writing sentences or cartoon cells.

- A simple story structure involves a character who has a goal (for example: to win the football match; to find a lost dog; to save the world) but faces problems in achieving that goal. This structure can be the basis for a short story you write together.

Opportunities to write every day at home

Like reading, writing with your child should become an everyday activity at home.

Try some of these writing ideas:

- Write a shopping list or add items to a list.
- Keep a board to write and read family messages.
- Give your child a pad of sticky notes to write reminders for themselves.
- Plan and write your weekly menu together.
- Write captions for photographs in your family photo album.
- Write labels for your child's art works and creations.
- Make words using magnetic letters and stick them on the fridge.
- Make and write greeting cards, birthday cards, and thank you notes.
- Keep a family calendar on display and write down family events.

BIRTH TO SCHOOL YEAR 2:
NUMERACY

A child's first years are a time of rapid learning. Research tells us that babies have an innate capacity to understand numbers. As your child's first teacher, you play a key role in developing their numeracy skills from an early age.

Developing numeracy skills early gives children an important foundation for their learning and development. It helps prepare them for daily life, including general problem solving and handling money.

Maths includes noticing numbers, shapes, patterns, size, time and measurement. Incorporating maths into everyday experiences is easy and fun. Maths is everywhere – in the playground, at the shops and at home.

Children need lots of experiences in making, counting, drawing and talking about numbers. The activities in this section will help your child to develop these skills. You may feel the maths your child is doing at their early childhood centre, kindergarten or school is different from how you were taught, but you can still support your child in many ways. Make connections for your child by explaining how numbers and counting are a part of everyday life.

DOING MATHS TOGETHER AT HOME

Talking about maths

It is important for children to develop specific language skills related to maths. Visits to the playground, or helping at home, provide rich and meaningful contexts to develop these skills. It might take time for your child to use these terms and language effectively, but exposure to this mathematical talk is a strong support for future learning.

Some activities to develop mathematical language:

- Use specific terms when asking for items. For example, ask your child to get the 'one litre' milk bottle from the fridge, or the 'one kilo' bag of flour from the cupboard.
- When cooking, talk about different measurements used, such as teaspoons, millilitres, litres, and cups. Discuss ideas about empty and full.
- As you walk, talk and play together describe your child's movements as they climb 'over' the fence, slide 'between' the poles, and swing 'under' the monkey bars. This helps your child understand language related to spatial awareness.
- Sorting activities support your child to understand concepts such as 'same' and 'different'. Use recycling as an opportunity to sort items to place in the rubbish. For example, paper, plastic, food waste and general waste.

Counting

Counting is one of the first experiences of maths for young children.

Learning to say numbers often begins with a favourite song or rhyme and the repetition of the number names. Children will often say the numbers before they visually recognise and identify individual numbers.

Here are some activities and tips to engage your child with counting:

- Listen for the counting sequence in these songs and rhymes, which can all be found on www.youtube.com:
  - Five Little Ducks
  - Ten in the Bed
  - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Once I Caught a Fish Alive
  - Ten Green Bottles
  - Five Little Monkeys
  - 1, 2, Buckle My Shoe
- Children will begin by counting all objects in a group, for example fingers and toes, the buttons on their clothes, steps to the house, or their toys.
- As children move on to counting a set of objects, they begin to link each object with one number. In the beginning, encourage your child to touch each object as they say the matching number.
- When beginning to count a group of objects, children may need to arrange the objects in a line to help them count. Later they will be able to start counting from any object without arranging the objects.

- Once your child is confident, use different numbers as the starting point for practising counting. For example, start counting from 6 or 10. Ask your child to count forwards and backwards. Ask what number comes before, or what number comes after, a given number.

Counting everyday

You can incorporate counting into everyday activities such as:

- Cut fruit into six pieces and ask your child to count the pieces.
- Count the pieces of toast you cooked at breakfast.
- Add the total number of cutlery items at the table.
- Count the number of people travelling in the car or on the bus.
- Count the number of houses as you walk along the street.
- Count how many steps it takes to walk from the kitchen to the bathroom.
- Practise counting when grocery shopping with your child (for example, counting the number of apples you put into the bag).
- Encourage your child to talk about the number of things in the pictures they draw.

Hunting for numbers

Number hunts are a fun and engaging activity for your child. Ask your child to find numbers around you. Look at and say the numbers on car number plates, signs, calendars, newspapers, shopping catalogues, speed signs, and houses.

Using playing cards

Playing with cards is always a fun activity, particularly on a rainy day or on holidays.

You can:

- Play matching number games like 'Snap' with playing cards.
- Order the numbers on the cards from smallest to largest, or largest to smallest.

Playing shop

Playing shop helps ground your child's maths learning in the real world while also developing their social skills. One way to play shop is to create a mini-shop at home.

Here are a few tips and activities:

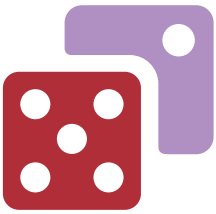
- Collect food and grocery items and label them with prices written on sticky notes, or prices cut out of shopping catalogues.
- Talk about how we pay for items using coins, notes and cards.
- Make paper money or use play money to buy and sell goods from the mini-shop.
- Collect old receipts or price tags and use them in the mini-shop.
- Notice the features of different coins, including their shapes and the animals and people shown. Discuss the differences. Create coin rubbings with pencils and paper.
- Encourage your child to order food items by height (tallest to the shortest) or by cost (least expensive to most expensive).
- Introduce kitchen scales to the mini-shop to weigh foods, such as a box of tea bags or a bag of rice, and order items by weight.

Playing games

Making maths fun and interactive by playing games will help engage your child.

Here are some ideas:

- Play 'I Spy' or other games to help your child identify shapes, numbers and patterns.
- Board games are a fun way to involve the whole family with maths. Help your child when rolling dice to count, move, and stop after moving the number shown on the dice.
- When using dice your child may count all the dots on the die face to determine the total number. Over time they will begin to recognise automatically the value on the die face without counting.
- The Victorian Maths Challenge is a fun and engaging way for families to engage in real life mathematics and explore problems together: http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/events/vmc
- Play number games online with your child. Here is a short list of good websites to help begin your online search for resources:
  - https://fuse.education.vic.gov.au (select Early Childhood or Primary Students tabs)
  - http://education.abc.net.au
  - http://www.ictgames.com/resources.html



Playing with shapes

Playing with shapes helps develop your child's awareness of different shapes. It also improves their hand-eye coordination.

Here are some tips and activities:

- Jigsaw puzzles, tangrams or shape sorting toys help teach your child problem solving skills and spatial awareness.

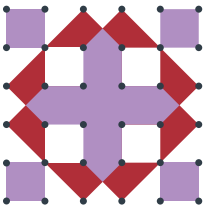
- Name and notice the similarities and differences between shapes. For example, shapes with curves, corners or edges.
- Help your child draw shapes, cut them out and sort them into groups. Ask your child to explain why they have sorted the shapes this way.
- Use cookie cutters to explore different shapes using playdough. Encourage your child to identify shapes in their everyday life, such as a round ball, square window or hexagonal 'STOP' sign.
- Making paper planes together combines many mathematical concepts, including angles, shapes, halving and symmetry. Once complete, you can compare which plane flew the furthest and have fun measuring too.
- Use building blocks to create a tower. Using the same number of blocks, ask your child to build another tower that's different to the first tower.

Making patterns

Recognising and making patterns are important maths skills for exploring numbers, shapes and symmetry.

Activities include:

- Identify and explain visual patterns on clothing, wrapping paper, buildings, crockery, cards and furniture. Create a scrapbook to refer back to for ideas during arts and crafts.
- Use coloured pegs, blocks, beads or cutlery to begin a pattern for your child to continue. Once confident, ask them to create a pattern of their own.
- Try to incorporate some patterns in rhythm. Create a clapping pattern and ask your child to copy and then create their own pattern.
- Encourage your child to draw, create and describe their own patterns. Use them for borders on greeting cards.



Moving with maths

These ideas use movement of the body to experience counting:

- Count each toss of the ball as you play a game.
- Estimate how many jumps it will take to get to… Then count how many jumps it takes to get to…
- Count with your child as you climb steps or walk from the park bench to the slide.
- Ask your child to find ways to balance their weight with a friend on the see-saw.
- Sing rhymes and songs that involve counting while skipping.

Measuring things

Understanding measurement and scale are crucial to your child's understanding of maths.

Here are some tips and activities:

- Use a wall measuring chart to measure the height of people in your family.
- Talk to your child about objects around them and help them judge which is bigger or smaller, taller or shorter.
- Cut a piece of string for your child – any length will do. Use the string to measure the objects in your house to find out what is longer or shorter than your 'string measuring tape'. Ask your child to identify anything that is the same length.
- Explore other ways of measuring, such as using a cup, jug, teaspoon, icy pole sticks, footprints or hand lengths.
- Help your child to build a tower of blocks that is taller than a favourite toy. Ask your child to count the total blocks to measure the height of the tower.
- Estimate and measure who can jump the furthest, or stand on one foot for a longer period, or how many buttons might fill a jar.
- Explore the size of different containers by pouring and filling. Estimate, then check to see which holds more or less.
- Notice changes in the weather and the time of day. Use an old bottle and create a 'rain gauge' to measure and monitor how much it rains.

Asking questions to investigate

Ask your child questions like these to encourage them to investigate maths:

- What shapes can you see?
- How could we measure the…?
- How will we find half?
- What is the best way to share the…?
- How do I get from … to …?
- Which is closer: the sandpit or the swing?
- How tall can you build a tower before it falls?

YEAR 3 TO YEAR 6:
LITERACY

The first few years of reading is a wonderful time for your child. Books expose them to new ideas and new worlds, and their imagination grows.

Talk positively about reading so your child also values it. Continue to read as much as you can with your child. When they feel confident, encourage them to take over some or all of the reading.

Always be patient when they are reading and try not to emphasise speed. Also, try to read as much as possible yourself to model reading to your child.

These years are a time when your child will learn more about the world. Engaging them in discussions improves their speaking skills, and helps them understand the world and their place in it.

In these years your child will also begin to write with greater confidence. The ability to write well enables your child to communicate effectively, and will improve their chances of success at school and in their future careers. Encourage your child to write as often as possible, on a range of topics and interests.

Literacy can always be fun and engaging. Let your child choose books and activities matched to their interests, and always encourage a healthy dose of fun and play in all activities. This will help foster in your child a love of reading, talking and writing.

HELPING YOUR CHILD TO SPEAK AND LISTEN

Talking to your child

As your child moves through primary school, they will speak with greater fluency and with a greater knowledge of the world.

Some tips to foster more fluent speaking include:

- Continue to involve your child when discussing everyday activities, such as grocery shopping, gardening, cooking dinner, collecting mail from the mailbox, doing house work, and travelling in the car or bus.
- Try to ask your child specific questions about their day. A general question like "how was your day?" will likely get a single-word response of "good." Ask specific questions like "what is the book you are reading in class about?" or "what did you do at lunchtime today?"
- Involve your child in your discussions about the day's events or current events. Ask their opinion. This helps them understand different perspectives and increases their vocabulary.
- Show a genuine interest in your child's reading, writing and viewing of all types of texts. Talking about texts can create meaningful discussions and help your child see them as important.
- Show interest in topics your child is studying at school. These can be a great springboard into discussions.

- Encourage your child to discuss their everyday problems and feelings.
- Use questions and discussion to explore other people's feelings. This will help your child to develop empathy for others.
- Use questions and discussion to broaden your child's experience and knowledge of the world, particularly during new experiences or on outings.

Discussing news and current events

As your child gets older, they become more aware of news and current events. Discussing news and current events can enrich your child's understanding of the world.

Questions are an effective way to encourage your child to think critically about an event and can help foster empathy. Questions also help your child to develop oral fluency when discussing social issues.

Questions you might ask when discussing a news story or current event include:

- What do you think caused the event?
- How do you think people will be affected?
- Is it fair?
- Why do you think people think that/do that?
- What do you think will happen next?
- How could the problem be fixed?

Some other activities to develop your discussion:

- Read several articles together on the same issue to get different opinions. Then discuss the different opinions.
- Have a debate on a topic, with you and your child taking different sides of the issue.
- Download and listen to podcasts on an issue, and discuss.
- Discuss different "What if?" scenarios. This will help develop your child's problem solving and imagination.

HELPING YOUR CHILD TO READ

Here are some tips to encourage reading:

- It is recommended that you continue to read together in the later primary years, even if your child is reading independently.
- Take your child to the local library often so they can choose, borrow and renew books. Taking your child to the library at the beginning of school holidays encourages weeks of independent reading.
- Encourage your child to borrow from their school library as well.
- If your child likes an author, find another book or a series of books by the same author.

- Encourage your child to read about their favourite author or illustrator at their website.
- Introduce your child to read different genres such as fantasy, science-fiction, action and adventure.
- Introduce your child to reading different types of texts, such as poems, music lyrics, and short plays.
- Encourage your child to read non-fiction. The newspaper or an online encyclopedia might be a good start, but your child might also be interested in history books or autobiographies of their favourite sportsperson or celebrity.
- Encourage your child to use a dictionary to look up words they might not understand.
- Allow your child to play age-appropriate video games that require reading.
- Encourage your child to join the Victorian Premiers' Reading Challenge, which runs each year from March to September. Participating schools will register your child – otherwise you can register your child at: http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/events/prc
- See also "Creating a literacy-rich home" later in this section.

Book Chat

Book chat is an important strategy to help your child to reflect more deeply on the content and meaning of their favourite books. In the previous section, Birth to Year 2, Literacy, book chat questions related mainly to recalling information on plot and character (see p. 15). These questions are still very important to ask when your child is in primary school. As your child moves through primary school, add more questions when discussing the book you are reading together, or when discussing the book your child is reading independently.

Some further questions might include:

- Does the main character change in the story? How does the character change?
- If you could change the ending of this book, what would it be?
- What do you think is the story's main message?
- What is your opinion about the story's main message?
- Can you relate the story or message to another event or issue?
- How could other people see it differently?

HELPING YOUR CHILD TO WRITE

As your child moves through primary school, he or she will begin writing longer creative pieces, writing in different genres, and exploring non-fiction and persuasive writing.

Some general tips to help with your child's writing in these years include:

- Continue to encourage them to write for everyday skills. This includes writing recipes, family messages, shopping lists and greeting cards.
- Make sure they have an appropriate place to write, such as a desk in a quiet room.
- Provide stationery, such as coloured pens and pencils, and different coloured paper.
- It is always helpful to discuss the writing topic with your child before they start to write. This will give your child ideas and confidence to start writing.
- After discussing the topic your child is writing about, you may want to write down a few arguments or story plot points to help them. They can then expand on these points.
- Encourage your child to write creatively in different genres, such as fantasy, realism, and adventure.
- Encourage your child to write different types of literary texts such as poems, short plays or film scripts.
- Use a book your child has read as a springboard into creative writing.
- Persuasive writing will become a focus at school, particularly in high school. Encourage your child to write down their opinions and ideas about specific issues.
- Encourage your child to edit their work for mistakes before they show you. They should also make sure the writing makes sense. Getting your child to read their work out loud is a good technique to find mistakes in writing.

- Using a dictionary helps with spelling mistakes.
- Using a thesaurus helps to expand your child's vocabulary.

Some fun activities might include:

- Encourage your child to keep a diary where they record their feelings and experiences.
- Write a review of a book or film. Encourage your child to have an opinion about the relative good and bad points, and how the film could be improved.
- Create 'found poetry.' Pick 20 random lines and phrases from books or poems and arrange these lines into a new poem. It can be fun to discuss the different possibilities of joining different lines, and the changes in meaning these create.
- Give your child a topic that has two clear sides, such as "Homework should be banned." Ask your child to write a few paragraphs outlining their arguments for and against.
- If your child has recently finished a novel or film, ask them to write creatively in response to it. They might write an alternative ending, a short sequel, or write a series of diary entries from a character's perspective.

Digital writing and creating

We now live in a world full of digital technology. To give your child the best chance of success in literacy, it is important that your child becomes comfortable with technology and can use various technologies to share their ideas and show their creativity.

Some activities your child might do include:

- Create a website with a specific interest in mind, such as a hobby, a sports team, or an historical event that interests them.
- Write a blog on a hobby or interest.

- Write a short film script and then shoot the film using a mobile phone, tablet or video recorder. Use editing software to edit the film and create titles.
- Write a radio script and then record the script using a mobile phone, tablet, or digital voice recorder.
- Write a short story and record it using a mobile phone, tablet, or voice recorder. Find digital film score music or sound effects to create mood and suspense.
- Write emails or instant messages to family members.
- Use presentation or slide software to create presentations for the family about a recent family holiday, or about something of personal interest.

Family projects

Take the opportunity to involve the whole family in reading and writing.

Some family projects could include:

- Email friends or family members.
- Write messages together on your social networking sites to communicate with family and friends.
- Read a book series together.
- Read together the instructions for a new household item to find out how it works.
- Record family events or travel experiences in a journal or on an online blog.
- Write plays and perform them for family and friends.
- Write a film script together and make the film.
- Read, select and collect news articles, and create an album about, for example, a sporting team, favourite animal, or leisure activity.

- Solve crosswords, word puzzles, brain-teasers, and quizzes.
- Browse libraries and bookshops together. Search for cheap books in charity stores and at garage sales.
- Prepare for an outing together, including reading public transport timetables, maps, and information brochures.

Creating a literacy-rich home

Creating a literacy-rich home gives your child every opportunity to engage in reading, writing, speaking and listening. This kind of environment encourages your child to see these skills as an important and normal part of every day.

Here are some tips to create a literate home:

- Books. Lots of books. With lots of books your child will see reading as a normal activity and will always have something new to read.
- Create a language-rich bedroom and home for your child, with alphabet and word posters, and labels.
- Organise a bookshelf to display your child's books.
- Create a comfortable space for your child to read, perhaps with cushions and blankets, to encourage your child to see reading as a relaxing and fun activity.
- Provide writing materials and a writing desk. Having different pens and pencils, and a place to write, encourages your child to write more often. Creating a special 'writing box' to store your child's pens and pencils helps your child see writing as an important activity.
- Collect props for imaginative play, and materials for craft projects. These can form the basis for practising speaking and writing.
- Set aside a time each week for 'family reading time' when every family member is reading, either individually or together.

- Regularly discuss what your child is reading or writing.
- Very importantly, read yourself. One of the most important ways to get your child reading is to model reading for your child. Children are encouraged to read – and to see reading as a normal part of the day – if they see their parents reading often. Siblings, grandparents, and other relevant persons in a child's life can also be reading role models.

YEAR 3 TO YEAR 6:
NUMERACY

Family participation in learning is one of the most accurate predictors of a child's success in school and beyond.

Providing opportunities to discuss and engage in mathematics supports your child's learning in and out of school. Your child will also begin to connect the importance of maths with their everyday activities, such as navigating public transport, comparing and choosing the best item to buy in stores, setting a budget, and cooking.

Talk positively about maths so your child also values it. If your experiences in maths at school were less than ideal, avoid making comments like "I was bad at maths at school," or "I didn't like maths because it was too hard." Comments like these can lower your child's expectations of themselves, and can perpetuate myths about people being naturally bad or good at maths.

Conversely, if you did well at maths in school, avoid jumping in with answers or solutions. Encourage your child to talk about how they might work out maths problems. This helps boost their confidence and deepens their understanding.

Regardless of your own school experiences in maths, be reassured that maths today is not about learning by rote. Today, the focus is on recognising that there are multiple ways to get an answer, and being able to explain how and why you chose the approach you did.

There are many activities you can do at home to help explore maths with your child. When participating in these activities, avoid associating them with speed. Expecting your child to work quickly on maths can cause maths anxiety. Try to focus on the process and not the outcome.

EXPLORING NUMERACY WITH YOUR CHILD

Exploring sports

Sports provide a good opportunity to engage your child in maths, particularly if they are a keen sportsperson.

Here are some questions to ask your child when watching or playing their favourite sport:

- How does your favourite sport tally the score? What maths is presented on the tally?
- How do other sports tally the score – for example, tennis, golf, cricket, netball, football?
- What maths do you use to find the total of the scores?
- Who is at the top of the ladder? How is this determined?
- Are there other ways to record the score?
- How long do your favourite sport games go for in minutes and seconds? How is the time in the game divided? Into halves, quarters or something else?
- What are the shapes of different playing fields and courts? Talk about edges and angles.
- How can you estimate the perimeter and area of a playing field?
- How many cars could be parked on the MCG field? How could we work this out?

Watching the weather

Because it changes daily, the weather can be a great topic to discuss maths with your child.

Try these activities:

- Visit the website http://www.bom.gov.au/vic/
- Ask your child the difference between each day's minimum and maximum temperatures. Do they notice a pattern or trend in the weather changes?

- Find a seven-day forecast, then record the actual temperature for each day and compare. Ask your child if the forecast was accurate. Ask them what similarities and differences they notice.
- Use the information on the weather website to explore differences in weather between your area and other areas. Ask your child how much rain you get compared to other areas. Ask your child to identify differences in temperature between your area and other areas. Who might be affected by an increase or decrease in rainfall?

Sharing recipes

Discussing maths when cooking can provide a daily maths lesson involving measurement, time, and cost.

Here are some activities you could try at home:

- Collect and read recipes and discuss the use of fractions, millilitres and grams. Encourage your child to make accurate measurements using measuring cups and spoons.
- Discuss how you would double or halve a recipe. Encourage your child to record new measurements for the recipe. Discuss why and when you might need to do this.
- Identify the temperature and cooking time on the recipe. Discuss why different recipes have different temperatures and cooking times.
- Estimate the cost to buy all the ingredients to make the recipe. Compare this with the actual cost of items. Ask your child if they think it was cheaper to buy the ingredients and make dinner or get takeaway.
- Make a list of the abbreviations used in the recipe and then write them in full – for example, L for litre, ml for millilitre, tsp. for teaspoon, tbsp. for tablespoon.
- Investigate the prices of fresh fruit and vegetables available in the supermarkets compared with market vendors.

Browsing catalogues

Discussing catalogues can be a great way to improve your child's maths knowledge of money and percentages.

Here are some questions you could ask:

- How would you spend $40 from a catalogue? How many products can you buy for $40?
- Select five products from the catalogue, then calculate what the cost would be if there was a 50% sale. Does it make a difference if you add up the items, and then deduct 50%, or if each item is reduced by 50% then totalled?
- What is the best value sale item in the catalogue? Can you explain your reasoning?
- Compare the cost of a product across different stores using different catalogues. What did you find?

Travel timetables

Here are some questions to ask your child that improve their knowledge of time and their problem solving skills:

- Can you identify your starting point on the timetable?
- What is the earliest and latest time to travel on this route?
- How long does it take to travel the entire route?
- How many stops are there on this route?
- What is the difference in the time travelled when not making all the stops?
- What is the cost? Is it good value compared to other travel options?
- Which is the best route to travel? Why do you think this?
- To get to training on time, when will you need to leave?

Handling money

Encouraging your child to think about money, saving money, and considering how they spend money is very important.

Here are some tips and activities:

- Encourage your child to work out how much change you will get after buying something.
- Investigate costs for family trips together. For example, a visit to a theme park may include the cost of transport, entry tickets, food and transport.
- Discuss saving money for presents or something your child may want to buy. Work out how long it will take to save this much if they get a small amount of money each week.
- Negotiate increases in pocket money as percentages. For example, a 5% increase would be how much money per week? Is this better than a monthly increase?
- Encourage your child to save a percentage of their pocket money or birthday money and work out how much this would be. For example, how much money would you have if you saved 40% each week?
- Calculate together how much a mobile phone costs per month. What percentage of total cost is spent on messages and what percentage on phone calls?
- Read the newspaper or watch the news. Discuss what is happening with the stock market and why these changes may occur.

Understanding fractions

Fractions is a maths topic that is very relevant to everyday life. We use our knowledge of fractions to solve problems and make decisions all the time.

Support your child by using mathematical language to talk about fractions.

Here are some maths language terms your child uses at school:

Fraction – any part of a whole, a group or a number (for example, $\frac{3}{8}$)

Numerator – showing the number of parts of the whole (for example, in the fraction $\frac{3}{8}$, the numerator is 3)

Denominator – shows how many equal parts the whole is divided into (for example, in the fraction $\frac{3}{8}$, the denominator is 8)

Proper fraction – when the value of the numerator is less than the denominator (for example, $\frac{3}{8}$)

Improper fraction – when the numerator is greater than or equal to the denominator (for example, $\frac{5}{3}$)

Equivalent fraction – fractions that have the same value or amount (for example, $\frac{2}{3} = \frac{4}{6}$)

Mixed numbers – a whole number and a fraction (for example, $1\frac{1}{2}$)

Children begin by learning that there are many numbers between whole numbers. A number line is an effective model to help your child understand this:

Your child also begins to develop an understanding of the relationship between fractions, decimals, ratios and percentage.

Decimals – a fraction that is made by dividing a whole into ten equal parts (tenths) or one hundred equal parts (hundredths). For example, 75 red pens of 100 total pens can be rewritten as 0.75 or .75

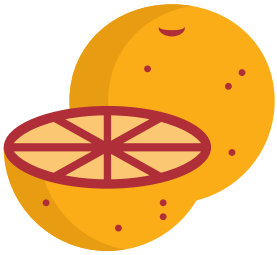
Ratio – a comparison of two or more amounts. For example, in a fruit bowl there are 3 apples and 4 pears. This ratio of apples to pears is represented as 3:4.

Percentage – is the number of parts out of 100. For example, in a collection of 100 buttons, 75 are red. This can be represented as 75 per cent or 75%.

Talk positively about how you use fractions in everyday life. Making models of fractions for your child will support their understanding of fractions.

Try some of these ideas by making use of everyday objects:

- Can you show me halves and quarters as you cut the orange?
- Can you cut up the apple to make six equal pieces? What fraction of the whole apple is one piece? Four pieces? How else could you say that?
- What percentage of the glass is filled with water? What is the ratio of water to air in the glass?
- How do the hands on the clock face show the time quarter past? Why do we use the word 'quarter' when telling the time?
- If you fold a towel three times equally, what fraction does it show?



Connecting online

Here are some other useful websites you can access from home or the local library. Some are also available to download as apps on various devices:

- https://fuse.education.vic.gov.au (select Primary Students tab)
- https://education.abc.net.au
- https://www.wolframalpha.com/ (start with the Elementary Maths link)
- http://www.ictgames.com/resources.html
- https://www.scratchjr.org/
- https://www.kodable.com/parents

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