

# LITERACY AND NUMERACY TIPS TO HELP YOUR CHILD EVERY DAY

*A GUIDE FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN AGED 0-12*



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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](http://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.

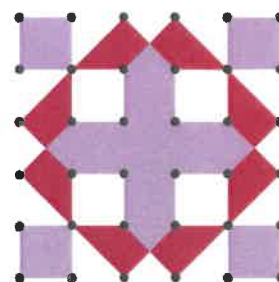
- » Name and notice the similarities and differences between shapes. For example, shapes with curves, corners or edges.
- » Help your child draw shapes, cut them out and sort them into groups. Ask your child to explain why they have sorted the shapes this way.
- » Use cookie cutters to explore different 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?







