

# Book time to learn with your children every day

Each January, the ABC Canada Literacy Foundation and Honda Canada remind families to take time to read and learn together. On Jan. 27, they invite thousands of Canadians to take part in Family Literacy Day events and activities at schools, libraries, and other agencies that support families.

Parents should provide a variety of interesting literacy experiences all year long that assure that their children learn to appreciate and enjoy all the wonderful aspects of language — talking, singing, listening, reading, and writing. There are many ways to show your children how words and language are used in everyday activities and at the same time nurture a love of learning. There is no better way to help children succeed in school.

## • Talk With Your Child

Talk about topics that

**Lori McMechan**

## PARENTING POINTS

**Lori McMechan is a parenting group facilitator at the Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre, a facility of Child and Family Services of Western Manitoba.**  
» 255 Ninth St., Brandon  
» 726-6280

interest your child. Talk about the day's events and how your child feels about them. When a child can describe and explain things well, he is more likely to find learning to read easy. Saying words helps people read words.

It is important for parents to take time to explain things with descriptive sentences. For example, if your child says "cow," you could answer,

"Yes, that's a black-and-white Holstein cow, and she is having grass for breakfast."

## • Create an Environment that Supports Reading

Show your child that reading is valuable and fun by making it part of your own life. Have newspapers, magazines and books in your home. Talk about the things you read and ask about books your child enjoys. Avoid pressuring your child to perform. Reading skills develop best in a relaxed atmosphere.

## • Make Reading a Part of Everyday Life

This is the best way to teach children how to read. When travelling around town, point out what signs say. Even before a child knows letters, that child can recognize the word "stop" on a stop sign. Some children learn the words "Ford" or "McDonald's"

before they can spell their own names. You can make a game of learning to identify words.

The same game can be played in a store. Because children know what a milk carton looks like, they can "read" the words on the label. Read cereal boxes at breakfast. Or, play family games that teach reading skills. Some favourites are Lotto, Scrabble, and Word Roll.

## • Spend Time as a Family Reading Out Loud or Storytelling

This may sound old-fashioned, but it is one of the best ways to help your child become a good reader. Children need to hear how good sentences sound before they start reading them.

Reading aloud is a great activity for the whole family. Choose books or stories that everyone can enjoy. Older children can take turns being

the reader, too. Many children remember the times when their parents read to them as some of their happiest family times.

Storytelling is like reading out loud, and can be as valuable. Your child can contribute, maybe by finishing the stories that you begin. Children love to have their stories written down or typed, so they can be held and read again. Older children can begin to write down their own stories.

## • Make Homemade Books Together

You will need some paper, a stapler and some imagination. Encourage your child to come up with a story and write it on paper. If your child is too young to write, you can write it out as he or she dictates it to you. Your child can draw pictures to go with their story. Make a cover page for the

book and staple it together. Your child will be delighted when you read their story.

Reading is essential for success in school. It is also a wonderful source of enjoyment. One of the best ways to interest children in reading when they are six or seven is to read to them every day when they are young. It is important to get children interested in books from the time they can sit in your lap and focus.

Visit the website for National Literacy Day, at [fld-jat.ca](http://fld-jat.ca). They offer many more tips and activities for promoting literacy that take only minutes a day. Reading, writing, playing a game, following a recipe, or even singing a song all help children develop a better understanding and appreciation of how words are used every day.