

**27 Ways
to Celebrate**

Family Literacy Day



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27 Ways to Celebrate Family Literacy Day <http://wp.me/pNAh3-qX>

In the spirit of sharing, I'd appreciate if you'd return the favor by clicking here: www.drsaraheaton.wordpress.com and subscribe to my blog. You'll get the latest on "Literacy, Languages and Leadership" and have a change to give feedback by leaving a comment.

[Click here for more information on Literacy and Essential Skills.](#)

January 27 is Family Literacy Day. Here are 27 ways to celebrate, categorized according to Canada's 9 Literacy and Essential Skills. Here are 3 ways to celebrate each Essential Skill.

Reading text

Read to your child or children.

A book. A graphic novel. Anything that sparks interest. The important thing is to enjoy the activity of reading together. Make it fun and give them the gift of reading that will last a lifetime.

1 Read to your child or children.

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2 Have your child or children read to you.

They pick the material or you pick it. Doesn't matter. Just get them reading. Listen intently. Nod your head to show you are paying attention. Ask a few questions after the reading has finished to show interest and curiosity.



3 Read a newspaper article as a family.

Critique and evaluate the article together, talking about its meaning, content, and bias. Each member of the family reads the entire article or take turns reading sections of it aloud around the dinner table.

Document use

4 Read and understand nutritional labels.

As a family become conscious of what you are eating today by checking out the nutritional labels on the food products you eat. Understanding information from tables is one aspect of document use.

5 Use transportation schedules to plan an outing.

Whether it's a trip to your local zoo or a visit to Disney World, gather together bus or plane schedules, find out how much things cost and the hours of operation of places you want to visit. Gathering information from schedules is another aspect of document use.

6 Read an instruction manual to achieve a goal.

Is there something sitting around your house that has yet to be opened or built? Today's the day! Instead of seeing instruction manuals as a "last resort", teach your family that they can be helpful. Challenge them to read through a set of instructions to build or assemble something for your home. Understanding and using the instructive information and blueprints is also an important aspect of document use.

Numeracy

Plan an home renovation project.

7

Have you been thinking about improving your kitchen? Updating one of the children's bedrooms? Get out a tape measure and start taking some measurements!

8

Calculate what you'll need for your project.

How much paint do you need to cover the surface area of the walls you want to paint? How much laminate do you need to buy for a new living room floor?

9

Set a budget for your project.

Now that you've figured out how much of each material you need, you can calculate a budget for your project as a family. Calculate what the project will cost you and how much you can allot to each type of material.

You don't have to go out and buy all these things, but learning how to take measurements and calculate what you'll need are important numeracy skills.

Writing

10 **Write a letter to a loved one far away.**

Letter writing is a dying art. Teach your family the value of knowing how to put pen to paper to maintain family connections. Have each member of the family write one paragraph to someone special who lives far away. After the letter is written, prepare the envelope together by having one person write the recipient's address and another person write the return address on the envelope.

11 **Write and send an e-mail as a family.**

Like writing on paper, knowing how to put words on a screen using a word processing or e-mail program is an important part of document use. Write an e-mail to a family member with an upcoming birthday. Avoid "text talk" such as writing "u" instead of "you". For this family e-mail, use proper words and full sentences. You can always save the e-mail to the drafts folder if the birthday is a few days away.

12 **Fill out applications together.**

Does everyone in the family have a passport? If not, fill out passport applications together. Help an aspiring college student with an application to a post-secondary institution. Learning to fill out forms correctly is an skill that you can build together as a family.

Oral communication

For activities that focus on oral communication, make it a "no technology" time, so family members learn to listen to one another, rather than checking their texts or playing video games during times when the focus is on speaking and listening. Tech time comes later. For these activities, put the phones, iPods and other mobile devices aside and concentrate on one another.

13

Share updates.

Around the dinner table, have each person give an update on their day, as well as upcoming events such as games, school events or important work meetings. Challenge everyone to avoid slang and speak in full sentences. Other family members practice active listening, nodding and responding with questions that express interest and curiosity.

14

Have a family debate.

Pick a topic that every family member can contribute to. It may be a political issue or where you want to go for your next family vacation. Have each family member make a case for their point of view and try to persuade the others. The point isn't to win or have a heated argument, but rather to construct excellent verbal arguments and listen to one another without interrupting.

15

Solve a problem.

As a family, talk about a problem you want to solve. It can be anything from how to organize the front hall closet better to deciding what movie to see on Friday night. A "problem" does not necessarily have to be emotionally charged. Once you learn how to solve simple problems, larger ones become easier, too.

The general formula is Problem -> Action -> Result. What is the problem you want to solve? Why does it need to be solved? What actions will you take to solve it? Describe the actions step-by-step. Finally, talk about the results you expect. What will happen because of the actions you take? Human Resources and Skills Development offers [a free tip sheet on using oral communication to solve problems.](#)

Working with others



Play a game.

16

Choose a game that you can play independently, in pairs or in teams. Board games such as Risk or Settlers of Catan are good choices. Play one round with individual players and one round in pairs or teams. Become aware of the differences of working alone versus working with others.

17

Plan a family meeting.

What will you talk about? Who will lead the discussion? It is OK for leadership to rotate or for different people to take the lead on different aspects of the meeting. What do you want out of the meeting? How much time will you spend on each item? Learning to plan and actively participate in meetings is an important aspect of working with others.

18

Talk about the personality types in your family.

Are you a "Type A" personality? A "Type B"? A "Type C"? or a "Type D"? Most people have an idea what a "Type A" is, but the others are not always so clear. Print off this [tip sheet](#) from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada and share it with your family. Which personality types do members of your family relate to? What are the benefits of each? How can you learn to appreciate one another's preferences without judgment or wanting them to be more like you?

Continuous learning

19

Attend a workshop or a course as a family.

Spend a day learning how to snowboard or take a cooking class together. Have family members put suggestions into a hat for a topic or subject they'd like to suggest to the family. Select randomly. Figure out where you can find a course on that topic and register the whole family.

20

Go to a local interpretive centre or museum.

Some communities have interpretive centres in parks which are free of charge. Learn about your community, local wildlife or other topics.

21

Have family members teach each other a skill.

Make it simple and easy to learn in an afternoon. Topics such as "How to post a picture to Facebook", "How to balance a cheque book" or "How iron a dress shirt" are good examples. Take turns having each family member teach a simple skill to everyone else. Others must practice the new skill and demonstrate that they have made an honest attempt to learn. Use this as an opportunity to practice Working with Others, by offering and receiving constructive and helpful feedback.

Thinking skills

Thinking skills are often used in conjunction with other essential skills. These skills involve diagnosing problems, researching, and using information to make decisions.

Plan a family outing.

22

In addition to using schedules to plan transportation, research where you will go and what you will do when you get there. Use your numeracy skills to plan a budget for the outing.

Research materials for your home reno project.

23

For example: What are the benefits of each type of paint (egg shell, semi-gloss, gloss, etc.)? Which is best for your home reno project? Why? Determine what the various types of paint are and either individually or in pairs, have family members choose one type of paint and research the benefits. Visit a local hardware store as a family and talk to a paint expert. Use the information you've researched to make an informed decision.

Do some consumer research.

24

Are you planning to buy something as a family? A new toy? An appliance? Teach your family the basics of consumer research, by showing them how to research products and services, compare similar products, understand consumer reviews and learn about bias in research. Which store offers the best price for the product you are looking at? Can you order it on line for less money? If you can order it on line, use your numeracy skills to factor in shipping and handling to determine the final price. Check out the [Canadian Consumer Handbook](#) and use it to inform your research.

Computer use

25

Learn keyboard shortcuts.

Whether you use a PC or a Mac there are tons of shortcuts to help make your computer use more efficient. Check out this [Tip Sheet](#) for a few ideas. Have family members share their favorite computer shortcuts. Post them on the fridge. Quiz each other over dinner.

26

Have a Family Play Date with technology.

Learn how to use a video game controller by playing video games. Start a family game of Scrabble on line. Incorporating play into technology and computer use can reduce anxiety and make it much more enjoyable. Focus on the fun. Allow those with high technology literacy to lead the way in teaching and facilitating. When you get frustrated, just laugh and try again. It's not about being perfect, it's about sharing time together as a family.

27

Improve your "mobile literacy".

Do the teenagers in your world know how to do all kinds of things with their cell phones and other mobile devices, but you've been left behind in the 20th century dust? All cell phones today have texting capability. Have a young person teach you how to text or show you how to do it more efficiently. If you already know how to text, learn how to send a text long distance, send a photo or a web page link, or Tweet using your phone. Digital literacy doesn't stop at your desktop. Asking a young person or a "techie" in your family for help with technology is a great way to involve them in literacy.

About the author



Sarah Elaine Eaton holds a PhD in Education from the University of Calgary. She has worked as an educator since 1994.

Her involvement in the literacy movement began as a 10-year old child, when her mother began working as a volunteer literacy tutor, helping new Canadians learn to read and write English, while acquiring basic literacy skills at the same time. Learners would take tutoring in Sarah's home, where she engaged with them in conversations about what it was like to be a new immigrant learning to read and write for the first time, and doing so in a new language.

Eventually, Sarah became an educator herself and has taught thousands of learners in classes at post-secondary institutions, at workshops she has given in numerous countries and through volunteer work.

She is a keynote speaker, workshop facilitator and author.

Her 2 printed books are:

- [101 Ways to Market Your Language Program: A Practical Guide for Language Schools](#)
- [Formal, non-formal and informal learning: The case of literacy, essential skills, and language learning in Canada](#)

Visit her blog:

Literacy, Languages and Leadership

<http://www.draraheaton.wordpress.com>

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[Literacy – It isn't about how much money you have](#)

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