

# *Pass the Play, Please:*

Literacy & Learning Through Fun & Games

a Great-West Life  
*Connecting Communities* guide

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# Pass the Play, Please: Literacy & Learning Through Fun & Games

*“You are the best game in town and the best toy in  
the house.” Dr. Monte Bail.*

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## **Welcome**

There are a million ways to encourage kids to get involved in language, literacy and learning. Though it's common knowledge that kids learn from reading and from being read to, there are many other ways that these necessary skills are developed. Many of the day to day things that we do with our children have a huge impact on their development: stuff like encouraging conversation, playing word games, getting involved in pretend play, pointing out familiar landmarks all impact on how kids see the world and express what they see to others.

This guide is meant to introduce parents and older kids to some of the fun ways to play with language. The book has been designed with a “keep it simple” philosophy, so that activities involve few materials (or none) and can be played inside or outside, sitting in a waiting room, or even while watching TV. Remember too, that these are just ideas: there are endless fun things parents can develop based on some of the suggestions included here. So, settle in, flip the pages, and pass the play!

## **About Great West Life and Connecting Communities**

Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life have been dedicated supporters of the Connecting Communities program since it began in 2004. Their support is a reflection of the company's overall vision of understanding and responding to community needs. Frontier College organizes and hosts annual Connecting Communities conferences across Canada to engage communities in idea and information sharing about topics involving literacy and learning. The conferences are all different, and are developed in response to what best would suit participants in that community.

## **About Frontier College**

Founded in 1899, Frontier College is a national organization dedicated to strengthening social fabric by meeting a community's literacy needs. In Northern Ontario, we work with university volunteers and community partners to offer one to one tutoring programs, homework clubs and reading circles, as well as workshops and presentations. Literacy is about more than being able to read and write: it's also about strengthening culture, achieving goals, gaining knowledge and recognizing potential. A community's health, prosperity, employment, recreation and public safety are affected by literacy. We need to work together to read, learn and grow.

## Fun N' Games

### 1. Hot Dog ■ ●

Hot dog is the word that can be thrown into a story every so often: "The three little pigs lived in a hot dog in the forest." The quick response: "No, Mommy. House!" This is a fun game that will also keep your child's eyes following the print. (Kropp, 75)

### 2. Fill the Blank ■ ●

Read along normally right up to the end of the page, but stop with three words to go. "How about you finish up? You can read the words." As so many young children want the same stories read again and again, they have often memorized every word in the story! It doesn't matter if the youngster is actually reading or reciting the words: the important thing is that he or she is connecting the words spoken aloud with the writing on the page. (Kropp, 75)

### 3. Everyone's A Hero. ▲ ■ ●

Who says that *Thomas' Snowsuit* has to be about Thomas if your son is named Julian? Who says that the hero of a boy's book can't be a girl named Jill? Bring your child into the story. Allow your child to become the Paperbag Princess. This can lead to all kinds of imaginary play or storytelling. (Kropp, 75)

There's a terrific story called *Once Upon a Golden Apple* by Jean Little that is a great example of these reading games.

### 4. At Your Command ■

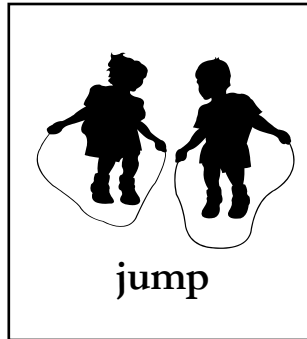
Prepare a pile of action words such as *jump, run, dance, sing, hide, peek, hop, clap, sleep, spin, laugh*. Use index cards and print each word on one card. If your child is young and/or a beginning reader, you can also draw stick figures to picture the action.

- Shuffle the cards, and fan them out in your hand or on a table.
- Have the child choose one card and look at it, without sharing it with you (or, if more than one child is playing, then without sharing it with anyone).
- The child then acts out the "command" on the card, and other players try to guess what the word is that the child has chosen.

**Symbols for Age Levels:** ▲ = preschool (toddler to JK) ■ = primary (K- grade 2)

● = intermediate (grades 3-5)

- Take turns until all the papers have been pulled, or play until everyone has had enough guessing! (Barron, 71)



#### 4. At Your Command

#### 5. Wordy Workout ■ •

Tongue twisters are great, because they challenge kids of all ages. They often combine rhyme, alliteration (words beginning with the same sound) and homonyms (words that sound the same but are spelled differently), and are great for memory games.

- recite a tongue twister first, and then encourage the child to give it a try
- talk about why the words are hard to say, or point out the sounds that make the words so tricky
- you can also encourage older kids to develop “tongue-twister collections” or to write/think up their own tongue twisters (Barron, 120).

Dr. Seuss’s *Oh Say Can You Say* is a great source for tongue twisters. Here are some other common ones:

She sells sea shells by the sea shore.

Then Ted sent  
Sven ten tents.

Seven selfish shellfish.

A tree toad loved a she-toad  
Who lived up in a tree.  
He was a two-toed tree toad  
But a three-toed toad was she.  
The two-toed tree toad tried to win  
The three-toed she-toad's heart,  
For the two-toed tree toad loved the

Sven said,  
"Ted, send ten tents."  
Then Ted said,  
"Send ten cents."  
When Sven sent  
Ted ten cents

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ground

That the three-toed tree toad trod.  
But the two-toed tree toad tried in  
vain.

He couldn't please her whim.  
From her tree toad bower  
With her three-toed power  
The she-toad vetoed him.

A tree toad loved a she-toad,  
That lived up in a tree.  
She was a three-toed tree toad,  
But a two-toed toad was he.

Rubber baby buggy bumpers.

How much wood could a  
woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck  
could chuck wood?

Mixed biscuits.

Is this a zither?  
Once a fellow met a fellow In a field  
of beans. Said a fellow to a  
fellow, "If a fellow asks a fellow, Can  
a fellow tell a fellow  
What a fellow means?"

## 6. Pig Latin ■ •

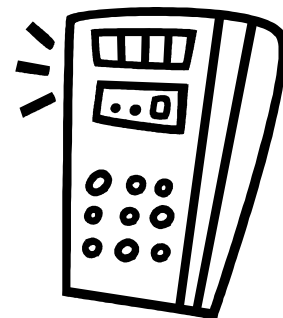
This is a silly way to add fun to words and to get kids thinking about the words that they choose in speech. The best thing about Pig Latin (aside from it sounding so silly) is that it helps kids become familiar with where sounds sit in words. Speakers move the starting sound of a word to the end of the word, and add the sound "ay." So, "pizza day" becomes "izzapay ayday" (Vail, 47).

## 7. Make A Calculator Talk ■ •

The numbers on a calculator are made up of straight lines. If the numbers on a calculator are looked at upside down, then they can look like letters.

Turn the calculator upside down, and "translate" these numbers into words:

- 505, a call for help;
- 8075, what a mother thinks about a messy room;
- 3573, something different
- 3507, what happens when a game's not won
- 7718, a name
- 345, when "he" won't do
- 8078, the creature that ate Manhattan
- 0.7734, glad to see you



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- 77345, a beach souvenir
- 5376606, gear for swimming or skiing

How it works:

There are eight numbers that look like letters when the calculator is upside down: 0=O, 1=I, 3=E, 4=H, 5=S, 6=G, 7=L, and 8=B. Figure out a word that has some of these 8 letters, and then “write” it backwards on the calculator, so that when the calculator is turned upside down, the numbers spell the word properly, left to right (Kenda and Williams, 262).

#### 8. Magical Mosaic Picture Puzzle ■ ●

Visit a second hand store or choose a puzzle that is no longer played with to create a written or artistic masterpiece.

- assemble the puzzle on a piece of newspaper
- paint the entire surface of the puzzle with white paint. Allow the paint to dry completely
- apply a second coat if the original puzzle picture is still visible
- once the new white background has dried, the time is right to write!
- write out a favourite poem, a tongue twister, some different riddles, or a scene from a favourite story. Add illustrations if desired. Use a permanent black marker, or other permanent colours that will not rub off or smear. Let the puzzle dry completely after writing.
- the puzzle is ready for playing! How long does it take the writer to match up his/her own writing and put the pieces back together? (Burton et al, 21)

#### 9. What’s in a Room? ▲ ■ ●

This is the classic mix of memory games with I Spy. The game can be played with paper and pencil if players can write, or verbally if not. Vary the game depending on the ages of players: young children may not remember objects (or might not know all objects’ names) but will remember colours; older children may remember more than objects, including how many books were on a bookshelf, how many photographs were on the wall, etc.)

Stuck at a walk-in clinic with a sick and cranky child? Try a version of this game where the child closes his/her eyes and answers yes or no while you ask what objects are in the waiting room.

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- A room is a great “play surface” for this game because it requires no preparation. However, the game can be adapted by collecting a bunch of everyday objects on a cookie sheet and sitting it in the middle of the kitchen table: remember to cover the objects with a towel once the play begins!
- give players a set amount of time to look at the “play room” or cookie sheet with the objects they are to remember. Encourage the players to look carefully at everything without touching the objects (so that they remain in the same place). Players cannot write the names of objects down during the “memorizing” phase.
- once time is up, the play begins! Players can write down all of the objects that they remember, can draw simple pictures of the objects that they remember, or can test one another by asking questions (“Is there a red ball in the corner?”)
- the winner can be decided by the number of items he/she remembers, or by remembering an item that everyone else has forgotten (Burton et al, 110).

#### 10. Rhyme Time ■ ●

This simple I Spy based game can be played in the car, on a bus, at home or anywhere to pass the time. This is a great way to encourage kids to recognize similar sounds in words and to build vocabulary.

- the game can be written or spoken aloud. Written games work well for two or more players, as then a single object can be chosen and “rhymed” for a specific period of time. However, if players are on the move or in a place with no writing materials, the game can be played out loud with players taking turns to rhyme different objects.
- have a player choose an object and start the game. The next player then says a word that rhymes with the object. Count the number of rhymes as players go along
- alternately, a parent can act as the “rhyme officer” and select the word that players will use for rhymes. This way, words with multiple rhymes can be chosen, and a parent can vary the words based on age or vocabulary (Burton et al, 17).

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### 11. Whisper Game ▲ ■ ●

Also known as Broken Telephone, this game is a hit with all ages, because everyone loves to share secrets! Gear the message length to the age of the children playing.

- have players sit in a circle, at a table, or in a row.
- the leader whispers a short message to the first player. That player listens, then turns to the next person and whispers the message to him/her. Messages shouldn't be repeated or spoken out loud.
- the message travels through the circle or group. The last player listens to the message, and then says it out loud. Then the leader tells everyone what the original message was. The player who says the message aloud becomes the leader for the next round, and thinks up the new message (Perna, 4).

## Around the House

12. ▲ Daily activities are the perfect time for learning, because they're often repetitive and filled with opportunities to share language by describing what's happening. Words and phrases can be repeated in a variety of daily situations:

- climbing stairs;
- waking up, getting up in the morning;
- changing a diaper
- going to the bathroom;
- brushing teeth or hair;
- getting dressed
- meal or snack times
- picking up toys
- having a bath
- getting ready for bed (Manolson, 36)

13. ▲ ■ Household chores may take a little longer to complete by involving a child, but they're an excellent and easy resource for language and learning:

- setting the table;
- cooking or preparing a meal;
- baking
- unloading the dryer or putting clothes into a washing machine
- buying and/or putting away groceries
- opening mail
- shovelling snow or raking leaves
- washing the car
- washing dishes
- making beds
- getting in and out of the car (seatbelts, locking, unlocking)
- turning lights on and off (Manolson, 36).

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For an interesting twist, consider a game of Sign Me Up (#44) while taking part in Household Chores.

#### 14. The Daily Mail ▲ ■ ●

Talk about the types of mail you receive, who brings the mail, and how it gets there.

- sort the mail together, or allow the child to do so. What things are in envelopes? What pieces are ads, flyers, magazines, newspapers. Whose name is on each envelope?
- look at the outside of the envelopes together. Read names, addresses. Look at postmarks. Look at how many days it took the mail to get there.
- let the child open some of the mail (the appropriate stuff). Show him/her what a bill looks like, and what information you read on the pages inside.
- look at flyers together and identify common items on sale. Talk about them: “Hey, look, bananas are on sale this week. Should we get some?”
- save return envelopes, unused order forms, etc., for the child to develop his/her own mail.
- older children can also read/write cards, thank you notes, invitations, post cards and other items. This is also a great opportunity to teach intermediate about reading money signs (“How much is this bill for this month?” and due dates on incoming mail) (Barron, 30).



#### 15. Simon Says ▲ ■

In the bath, use Simon Says to encourage your child to pick up speed while following oral instructions. “Simon says, “Wiggle your toes. Simon says, “Squeeze your facecloth.” This can be a fun way to review words associated with parts of the body, and can also get children learning how to wash themselves with soap (Barron, 85).

#### 16. You’re the Author ■ ●

Think of all of the ways that you use language and writing every day. Sit down with the child and do some of those activities together. You can dictate or spell

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words for the child to copy, or the child can work beside you using invented language. Correct spelling (or even proper letters of the alphabet) isn't important: it's the match between oral language and written that makes this a great activity.

Different things that you can write include (MTSB, 38):

- addresses in an address book;
- grocery lists
- to do lists
- letters to school
- letters or postcards
- instructions for doing something
- household rules
- silly rhymes or stories
- lists of favourite books, activities, toys, etc.

## Put the Cards on the Table...

### 17. Give Me the Apple ▲ ■

Paste pictures of objects onto old playing cards or cardboard pieces. Lay out a few cards with the pictures on them and say, "Give me the banana." Try to choose pictures of things that the child knows (fruit, animals, furniture, toys, etc.) (82, Manolson)

- You can later expand this by developing the game into sets: "Give me all of the fruit, Pick up all of the toys," etc.
- Other great "around the house" tools for Give Me the Apple are fridge magnets. Magnetic shapes, photos, business cards and the like can be used to sort by colour, look for letters or the alphabet, identify numbers or group by like/unlike.

### 18. Sight Word Slapjack ■ ●

Sight words are those that cannot be learned through the use of pictures. These are often words that kids simply have to memorize and learn to recognize "on sight." Some common sight words include:

about	draw	grow	laugh	own	start
better	drink	hold	light	pick	ten
bring	eight	hot	long	seven	today
carry	fall	hurt	much	shall	together
clean	far	if	myself	show	try
cut	full	keep	never	six	warm
done	got	kind	only	small	

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This is a fun way to strengthen sight reading while having a bit of fun. Kids can play against one another, or one person can be the “dealer” while the others are on the lookout for Slapjack.

- Using index cards or other same sized cardboard/stiff paper, select 13 words and write each word out on four separate cards. This will give you 52 words, the same amount as a regular deck of cards.
- If you are the dealer, designate one word as “it.” Begin flipping cards over one at a time, and tell your child to slap his/her hand over the pile once that word is flipped up. You can begin to flip the cards over faster and faster the more you play, as the child gets quicker at recognizing the words.
- If two “slappers” are playing with the dealer, whoever slaps the pile first gets to keep those cards. The person with the most cards at the end of the dealer’s turn wins, and then becomes the dealer.
- If two children are playing against one another, shuffle the cards, divide them in half, and have each child flip a card over simultaneously. Children flip cards over at the same pace, and whoever slaps the pile when the two cards say the same word wins both piles.

A similar slap game can be developed with look-alike words like though, tough, through, thought, throughout, and thorough. Writing each word out nine times will provide a 54 card deck. This is a much tougher version of the game, however, and could be very challenging for beginning readers.

The game can also be played using words such as math-process words (add, subtract, total, remainder, etc.) where, instead of having the dealer announce the word to be “it,” the dealer provides the definition of the word (“a word that means to take away”) to be slapped. (Vail, 22)

#### 19. Pictominos ▲ ■

Half the fun of this game will be making the playing cards. Use index cards and sheets of stickers (with the same image) or use rubber stamps with ink pads. This can also be a great alphabet game by using letters of the alphabet instead of different stickers or stamps.

- Count out 28 index cards. On one side of the card (the blank side, if the cards are lined) draw a line through the middle of the card, so that it looks like two pages of an open book.

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- place four identical stickers, or the same stamp, on one side of four of the cards. Do a total of six different sets of four, using the second half of the index cards, but making sure that different sticker or stamp combinations are made.
- at the end of the stickering/stamping, 24 cards will have stickers or stamps on both sides, and 4 cards will have one stamp with the other side blank. These blanks become “wild cards” or “free spots” that can be used to match in different combinations.
- use the cards to play memory games, to build pattern trains (ie., the sticker on the second side of one card matches up to the sticker on the first side of the next card, and the second side of card number two matches up with the first side of card number three), or to play “go fish.” (Burton et al, 98)

## 20. Dip Sac Toe ■ •

This is a simple spelling variation of Tic Tac Toe, where players “spell” their way to victory. A plain piece of paper drawn with a grid of nine squares can be used at the playing surface.

- the game can be played two ways: players choose their letters as they go, or players are dealt letters at the beginning of the game
- the following letters work well: T, A, E, I, O, C, P, S, H, D. Ten letters allow the tiles to be split evenly between the two players, and mean that one tile will be left at the end of the game. Older players may choose to play with other letters of the alphabet as well.
- Letters can be printed on squares of cardboard. Leave one side of the cardboard blank, so that if players want to “draw” the letters from a pile as they play, then each letter will be a surprise
- Players take turns starting the play. Play continues, one turn at a time, until all nine squares are filled or until a player completes a word and correctly reads it aloud. Words can read across, down, or diagonally.

## 21. Backward and Opposites ■ •

This is a simple and silly way to have a bit of code-word fun!

- write out 10 words on 10 different index cards. The words can be all related (like sports words, or animal words) or chosen from a favourite story.
- on the back of each index card, write each word out backwards.

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- to play, decide on a “guessing” time limit (30 seconds, one minute, etc) and then show the backwards word to the first player. The player has up to the time limit to figure out the word
- with more than one player, guessing can happen all at once (ie., backwards Jeopardy) or players can take turns.

the game can also be played with a chalkboard and chalk, or a white board and dry erase marker, if someone acts as “writer.” The writer will write the word backwards on the board, present it to the players, and then write the word correctly after the time limit is up. (Burton et al, 157)

## Creative Cookery

### 22. Pudding Picture ▲ ■ ●

Though we often associate “messy play” with babies, kids of all ages will love this down n’ dirty activity. Use a cookie sheet with a rim or a large cake pan. Spread pudding across the bottom and let your child “write” with his/her fingers. Play Hangman, SOS or Tic Tac Toe. Draw a simple picture and have another child guess what it is. Pudding Pictures can also be made using yogurt or YOP (Manolson, 80-81).

### 23. Make a Salad ▲ ■

Use meal preparation time as an opportunity to introduce kids to a “vegetable vocabulary.” Describe vegetables and explain the action words (cut, slice, chop, clean, wash) used in preparing them, as well as other language associated with cooking. The great thing about salad making is that it excludes any worries of a hot stove, and clean hands can handle the vegetables without danger of bacteria. For older children, encourage them to “make a recipe” aloud as the salad is assembled (Manolson, 80-81).

### 24. Baking Letters ▲ ■ ●

Three-dimensional letters of the alphabet, like those found with magnets on the back or made of foam, are great models for this game. You can use cookie dough or play dough for this.

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### Simple Sugar Cookie Dough

- 1 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/3 teaspoon salt
- 2 1/2 cups flour

1. Using an electric mixer at medium-high speed, cream the butter, gradually adding the sugar. Beat in the egg until evenly mixed, then blend in the vanilla extract and salt.
2. With a wooden spoon, stir the flour into the creamed ingredients, about one third at a time, until evenly blended. The dough may seem soft, but it will firm up when refrigerated.
3. Divide the dough in half. Flatten each portion into a disk and seal in plastic wrap. Refrigerate overnight (Barron, 116).

### Simple Play Clay

Though this dough is supposed to harden on its own, we found it best to oven bake it and let it sit at least three days before painting or glazing.

- 2 cups flour
  - 1/2 cup salt
  - 2 tablespoons of cream of tartar
- Stir together in saucepan.
- Add:
- 1 cup water
  - 2 tablespoons of cooking oil

Cook over medium heat for 3-5 minutes. Stir constantly until mixture becomes the consistency of mashed potatoes.

Dump clay onto a sheet of wax paper, and allow it to cool. Then spread the clay out to about 1/4 inch thick. Use cookie cutters to cut out shapes of letters, or roll pieces of clay into strips and then fashion into letters of the alphabet. Let the shapes dry on a wire rack for 24 hours. Paint with water-based or acrylic paints.

- when shaping letters with a really young child, it's best to encourage him/her to trace a chosen letter with a finger first, to get the sense of how the letter is made.

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- older children can spell their names, familiar words, etc., or can work at making the whole alphabet out of dough

Simple Play Dough (that can be stored in a container and won't harden)

The secret ingredient here is cream of tartar. This recipe makes play dough that is not grainy like uncooked play dough and keeps for a long time.

4 cups flour  
 1 cup salt  
 4 cups water  
 4 tablespoons oil  
 1/2 cup cream of tartar

Mix all ingredients in a sauce pan. Cook and stir over low/medium heat until play dough is completely formed and no longer sticky. Allow to cool slightly before storing in an air tight container or zip lock bag.

- Add a package of unsweetened powdered Kool-Aid to play dough for a great smell. [However, be prepared: the dyes will stain hands!]
- substitute one part baking soda and one part baking powder for cream of tartar if necessary.

## 25. Goody, Goody Gumdrops ▲ ■

This game can be played with jellybeans, gumdrops, coloured miniature marshmallows or Smarties. Hard candy wrapped in clear cellophane can also be used. Use a cookie sheet or a piece of wax paper on the kitchen table so that the sugar from the gumdrops doesn't spread everywhere. If two or more children are playing, make sure hands are clean so that handled goodies can be shared at the end of the game.

- place a pile of gumdrops in the center of the cookie sheet.
- have the child sort the candies by colour, and then count them;
- then ask the child to make up two even piles of candies (for older children, suggest they make two equal piles that have the same colours in them as well);
- how many gumdrops are all together?
- how many gumdrops are the same colour?
- what patterns can be made with the colours? Are there other ways to make patterns (ie., by building shapes, by piling candies atop one another, etc.)
- play a memory game. Set out pairs of colours (eight pairs or four pairs) in a square/rectangular shape. Have the child study the square for a few

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minutes, and then close his/her eyes. Change the location of two candies. Can the child tell you what two candies were moved? (Stock and McClure, 68)

## 26. Pretzel Alphabet ▲ ■ ●

A fun and easy recipe that can be used to introduce young children to letters of the alphabet, or to have older children design and bake the name of a friend as an extra-special gift.

1 ½ cups warm water  
1 envelope yeast  
1 tablespoon sugar  
1 egg  
4 cups flour  
1 teaspoon salt  
cooking oil



1. Mix warm water, yeast and sugar in a bowl. Set it aside.
  2. Beat the egg in a separate bowl, and set it aside.
  3. Grease a cookie sheet with a few drops of cooking oil.
  4. Add the flour and salt to the yeast mixture. Stir all ingredients together to form dough.
  5. Break off pieces of the dough and form them into letter shapes. Try not to handle the dough too much, as dough that is handled a lot will thicken when it is baked.
  6. Place the pretzel letters on the greased cookie sheet, and brush them with the beaten egg.
- Bake for 12-15 minutes at 350°F (Burton et al, 136).

*Presidents Choice* also makes Multi-Grain Alphabet Pretzels, available at Loblaws, Your Independent Grocer and No Frills stores. These are an inexpensive alternative to making your own play pieces for games like Dip Sac Toe (#20).

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## Refrigerator Fun

### 27. A Movable Feast ▲ ■

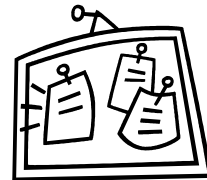
Magnetic Letters on the fridge

- have a whole bunch of letters, not just A-Z;
- play by having child point to matches (all the A's) or by you choosing a letter and the child finding the same one;
- have the child sort the letters into groups (all the A's, all the B's, etc.)
- name the letters aloud;
- for older children, spell simple words with the letters. You can spell familiar words (names of family members, animals, etc.) that even beginning readers will recognize;
- then leave messages—brief, fun ones! Wait for the child to notice the message, and then read it to him/her (if need be) (Barron, 26).

### 28. Captivating Captions ■ ●

This is a great activity to do with family photographs, but it can also be done with pictures from magazines, catalogues, or even colouring books.

- collect pictures and mount them into a booklet, or on a sheet of paper
- write captions about what's happening in the picture on a separate sheet. You can either dictate tough words to the child, or the child can write the captions in his/her own writing
- think of what a certain character might be thinking or saying. You can make your captions “speak” by adding comic book bubbles above the heads of the characters. You can also incorporate a bunch of different pictures into a silly story by making the characters speak to one another (MTSB, 55).



### 29. Daily Message Board ■ ●

Use a spot on the fridge or a white board or cork board in a regular place in your home to display a message to the child about events happening that day. You can also include specific instructions or even good wishes in your note:

**Symbols for Age Levels:** ▲ = preschool (toddler to JK) ■ = primary (K- grade 2)  
● = intermediate (grades 3-5)

*“Today is Tuesday, so Dad will drop you off at school and Mom will pick you up after school. Be sure to pack your note for your teacher that says you have to go to the dentist on Wednesday morning. You have Girl Guides tonight, so remember to do your homework right after school. You did an amazing job yesterday of getting your math done before dinner time!”*

Make sure you check in with the child to see that he/she understands the message and what is expected of him. However, give him/her enough time to read and think about the message before asking questions.

Parents can later challenge kids by including spelling mistakes, nonsense items or other silly things in the message. This encourages kids to pay attention to the full detail of the message (read every word) while having fun (Vail, 15).

*“Today is Tuesday, so Dad will drop you off at school and Mom will pick you up after skule. Be sure to pack your toothbrush for your teacher that says you have to go to the dentist on Wednesday morning. You have Girl Guides tonight, so remember to do your homework right after skule. You did an amazing job yesterday of getting your math done before dinner time!”*

### 30. Magnetic Fridge Faces ▲ ■ ●

Use duplicate photos or copies of digital images to have a bit of fun on the fridge. Use photos of family members, pets, favourite places, friends or activities.

- glue photos onto a piece of cardstock or cardboard (like an empty cereal box);
- once dry, cut out the photos, trimming the edges around the people.
- cover both sides of each photo with clear adhesive vinyl (you can get it wherever you buy shelf paper, and even at the dollar store);
- glue magnet strips to the back of each picture (or, even faster, use double-sided tape or photo squares)
- Use extra cardboard (or even white paper cut out in the shape of a balloon) to create funny captions for the photos. Don't attach the captions to the photos though, so that they can be moved around too.
- Create different scenes and silly sayings for the “characters that live on the fridge” (Burton et al, 15).

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### 31. Word Wonder Magnets ■ ●

Magnetic Poetry Kits for Kids are fun ways for kids to fiddle with words, but this is an inexpensive alternative to the tiny magnets that could end up all over the house! Strips of magnet can be purchased at department or craft stores. Or, even more user friendly, purchase magnetic sheets that are printer-compatible and easy to customize.

- collect different words from newspaper headlines, magazine articles, or even from a young writer's work. Cut the words out and glue each onto a piece of cardboard. Allow to dry.
- trim the extra cardboard from around each word, so that every word is in its own separate square. Then, cut a piece of magnet strip and glue to the back of the cardboard.
- words can be used to leave messages for others, to write poems or short stories, or to just play (Burton et al, 156).
- this is a terrific group activity if there are enough magnets to go around. using cookie sheets or pizza pans, encourage each group to use a given pile of words to come up with their own poem or adventure. This often introduces kids to new ways to say the same old thing!

### 32. Family Pictures ▲ ■ ●

Introduce young and beginning readers to familiar words with a fun fill in the blank exercise on the refrigerator! Primary age children who are already working on sounds and phonics activities will enjoy showing off their "sound know-how" with Mom or Dad at home.

- this is a great way to play with the magnetic alphabet letters that many households have stuck on refrigerators.
- choose photos of family members, pets or other simple-to-spell, familiar things (house, car, hat etc.). Place the photos under magnets on the fridge. Photos can be left on the refrigerator, or can be put away again after the game is played.
- next, use the magnetic letters spell out the names of the pictures. (Mom, Dad, Sam, David, Kara, brother, sister).
- encourage players to read the letters aloud that spell out the word. They can also use their fingers to point out the letters as they read.
- next, "steal" one of the letters, and ask the child to tell you what letter is missing. What sound does the missing letter make? What would the word sound like if the wrong letter was put in place?

**Symbols for Age Levels:** ▲ = preschool (toddler to JK) ■ = primary (K- grade 2)  
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- it's important not to make this too difficult for children who are just beginning to work with sounds. However, older children can also play by opting for more difficult words (cousins, relatives, babysitter, etc) (Perna, 7)

## Sing a Song of...

### 33. Music Ideas ▲ ■

Most children love to sing, and come to recognize tunes fairly early. They will happily sing and do actions along with any song that is introduced to them. Reading Circles and story hours at the Public Library often incorporate music and movement into the program, to get kids involved in the session. There are several books on finger plays (like the “Eensy Weensy Spider”) that parents can use to brush up on some of those long-forgotten activities.

It's easy to keep that musical spark flickering with older children as well. Primary children love silly songs, and will enjoy making up songs to familiar tunes. Also, books like *I'm Still Here in the Bathtub* (sung to the tune of “Take Me Out to the Ballgame”) by Alan Katz and David Katrow are great fun for kids and parents alike. The Wee Sing series is another great book and cd companion that offers everything from travelling tunes to nursery rhymes and lullabies. Wee Sing books come with simple sheet music and lyrics in a pocket book size.



### 34. Radio, Radio ■ ●

Use music and lyrics to talk about ideas and share listening and language.

- Listen with the child and comment on what you're listening to. “Oh, the weather report is on. Good. Now we'll know if it's going to rain tomorrow.” Or, “This is my favourite song! I love it when they sing...”
- recap what you heard after the fact. “Well, it's supposed to snow tomorrow, so we better get warmer boots out.”

**Symbols for Age Levels:** ▲ = preschool (toddler to JK) ■ = primary (K- grade 2)  
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- note music that you have on a cd or in a different format already at home. “Hey, we have that song! Do you remember?”
- encourage the child to be a radio announcer or disc jockey: what would he/she say? What kind of music would he/she play? (Barron, 48)

### 35. Treasure Hunt Finger Game ▲ ■

Going on a treasure hunt,	
going on a treasure hunt	(Walk fingers up child’s back)
X marks the spot	(Draw a big X)
Three big circles	(Draw three circles)
And a great big dot	(One poke with a finger)
Going up	(Walk fingers up to neck)
Going down	(Walk fingers back down)
Going all around	(Move fingers in a spiral)
Dry land	(Rub back with palms)
Marshy land	(Tickle under arms)
Wind	(Blow in ear)
Egg!	(Thump lightly on head)

(Barron, 88)

Older kids seem to graduate from finger games to other hand and clapping games. Not only are these entertaining, but they also encourage the use of memory and coordination. For a terrific selection of hand and clapping games for older children, check out *Let’s Play* by Camilla Gryski. An excellent selection of finger games for Preschoolers, titled *Ring a Ring o’ Roses* (published by the Flint Public Library in 1988) is available in most libraries as well.

## TV Time

### 36. The Terrific Tube ■ ●

Set aside 30 minutes or an hour to watch TV together. But do more than just watch the show: talk about it!

- tell the child that this is a time to talk about what is happening on the TV;
- watch the show together. Read any words on the screen to the child. Talk about what different words mean: like the show’s title, or in the credits, or during the commercials.

**Symbols for Age Levels:** ▲ = preschool (toddler to JK) ■ = primary (K- grade 2)

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- talk about the different ways that people speak to each other on TV. How does a commercial sound different than a newscast? How does it sound different during a weather report compared to a comedy? What about different accents, or words used to describe specific terms? Point them out to the child.
- talk about the commercials, and how they are made to try to sell products. Talk about what the commercials are selling, and about what the commercials say their products will do
- talk to the TV! Talk about how realistic or silly the program is, how much you like or don't like what it is you are watching. Let the child know that just because it's on TV, doesn't mean that everyone is going to like it or agree with it!
- when the time is over, turn the TV off. Talk about what you watched together. What did you like/not like?
- don't be afraid to show the child that there are good shows on television, and that you can learn things from TV, too! (Barron, 36)

### 37. Video Replay

Though movies and tv can sometimes get a bad reputation as a babysitter, there are some great ways to encourage language and reading in front of the tv. Videos of children's books are a great way to add a new dimension to a favourite story.

Some short but terrific animated children's favourites include:

- *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*, by Judith Viorst (30 minutes);
- *Chrysanthemum*, by Kevin Henkes (12 minutes)
- *The Hockey Sweater*, by Roch Carrier (10 minutes)
- *The Cat in the Hat*, by Dr. Seuss (26 minutes)

Television is also a great way to introduce language to children in a social context. Try this: while watching a program, turn the sound down on the TV and ask your child to narrate what is happening. Encourage your child to tell the story on behalf of the characters, instead of listening to the characters themselves speak.

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## Imagination Station



### 38. What Would You Do if You Were...Who? ■ ●

This is a great activity to fill in waiting time during a grocery store or bank teller line, waiting for a bus, or walking to a park.

- Choose a character from a book. Ask the child, “What would \_\_\_\_\_ do if (s)he were here?” Encourage the child to imagine that he or she is a character from a favourite story, but in the place where you are right then. “If you were the Big Bad Wolf walking to the park, how do you think you’d walk? What would you say if you saw the three little pigs playing on the swings when you got there?”
- Then, choose a different character for the same situation. “And what if you were Little Red Riding Hood, walking to the park? What would you do if you saw the three little pigs playing on the swings then?” (Barron, 69)

### 39. Giving a Story Words ▲ ■

Wordless picture books are available in public libraries. They can be in the form of board books with sturdy pages for young children, or in hardcover or paperback form. The neat thing about wordless books is that it is up to the reader to use the pictures to develop a story.

- start by looking through the picture book—just look!
- then begin again, and tell the story (what’s happening in the pictures) as you go through the book
- go through the story again, but ask the child what’s going to happen? Does he/she tell the story as you told it, or a little differently? Talk about the pictures, and about what could be happening.
- talk about what will happen after the story ends: what does the child think will happen next? (MTSB, 27)

### 40. Books without Words? ■ ●

Wordless books aren’t just for toddlers! They can offer a direct route into imaginary play and storytelling for older children as well. Choose a wordless book and have a child tell you the story in his/her own words. Or, use pictures from magazines and have a young storyteller craft his/her own wordless book. Remember, a picture is worth a thousand words!

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Three amazing wordless books for older children include:

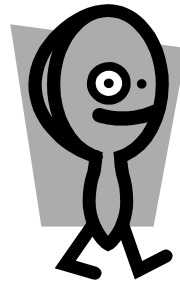
- *Oink*, by Arthur Giesler
- *Ben's Dream*, by Chris van Allsburgh
- *Tuesday*, by David Wisniewski

As well, Chris van Allsburgh has another wordless book (also available as individual posters) called *The Mystery of Harris Burdick* that is often used by upper elementary teachers in creative writing activities.

#### 41. A Word from Our Sponsors ■ •

This is a great way to incorporate imagination and active play into a reading activity, but will likely work better for school-age children. This also works well with two or three children, if they can all agree on one title.

- Does the child have a favourite (well-read) story book? If so, start with that one!
- Choose a story that the child likes and knows well. Take a few minutes to look at the book together
- Work out a commercial to advertise the book that will encourage other people to read it. What's the best part? Is it funny? What would the characters sound like?
- Have the "actors" practice the commercial? Who says what? Who stands where? Who will be doing the actions? Is there music? Clapping?
- Then allow the child(ren) to "advertise" their chosen story. Let them know at the end whether or not their commercial made you want to buy/read the book! (MTSB, 34)



#### 42. Spoon Puppets ▲ ■ •

This is a simple craft that can be used with even young children to act out favourite stories, or to create their own story worlds.

- the key to spoon puppet success is to use the materials that you currently have. Look around the house in advance and collect scraps of material, paper doilies, cotton balls, leftover ribbon, or even used tissue wrap. Anything can be used in spoon puppet construction!

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- plastic spoons can be decorated with mini pom-poms, glitter glue, construction paper cut outs, small googly eyes or even markers for this simple craft. Keep in mind though that the plastic is slippery: sometimes, it takes a “grownup hand” to fix googly eyes or pom-pom hair on properly.
- younger children can also use double sided tape or photo tabs to attach eyes or hair to their puppets. The tape is much easier to handle and a lot less messy than all purpose glue.
- design spoon puppet kits for children’s birthday parties or school activities that include three spoons and an assortment of materials in a zipper seal bag.
- make a miniature puppet theatre by cutting a little hole in a styrofoam or paper cup. Tiny hands will be able to stick their hands inside the cups in order to act out the show (Burton et al, 79).

#### 43. Panto-mime ▲ ■ ●

Acting without words gives kids the opportunity to consider other methods of expression, including verbal and physical cues and the use of props and costumes. It’s a great way to encourage kids to pay attention to environmental cues and body language.

- older kids might welcome the opportunity to be a Mime! Baby powder patted onto a bit of skin lotion can whiten their faces, and their “costumes” can be black pants and tops.
- with younger players, more than one player can play, provided a “narrator” is reading the story. Remind the players that they are telling the stories without sound and without words. Invent or choose a story that includes lots of simple activity, such as washing dishes, climbing stairs, going to bed, etc. An easy one to start with is “Goldilocks and the Three Bears.”
- older players may want to develop the Pantomime into a form of Charades, where a narrator or reader tells the story as it is mimed out. Or, players can randomly choose a “must mime” from a series of brainstormed ideas, and then mime it out while other players try to guess (Burton et al, 229).

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## Write On!

### 44. Sign Me Up ■ •

Young children love to write, even if they don't know how to form words or even letters. This is a great game to play at home with a package of sticky notes or with paper, pencil and masking tape.

- Decide first what you will label. It can be anything: body parts, kitchen furniture, laundry or toys. Remember, the most fun thing to label will be the other player!
- Start by identifying one item. Say, "This is a chair."
- Write a label that says "chair," or, have the child write it. It doesn't matter if the word is spelled properly or if the child is using invented language.
- Have the child attach the label to the object, and then have him/her read the label back to you.
- Continue until you've labelled ten or more objects. Read them through again with the child, and have the child "read" from the label while doing so.
- You can make this more complex by labelling parts of larger objects with older children (ie., the refrigerator has a door, a crisper, a meat drawer, shelves, a light bulb, a plug, etc.) (Barron, 105).

### 45. Family Matters ■ •

Everyone loves getting mail! Collect different scraps of paper (colours, textures, etc). Write short notes for family members and leave them in surprise places: lunch boxes, bathroom mirror, dresser drawer, shoes. Encourage children to reply, even in invented writing, or in picture form. Older kids will respond with delight to a "treasure hunt" of clues that lead them from one place to another in search of a special note (MTSB, 40).

### 46. Create a Design Using Letters •

Children can use a stencil or cardboard cut-outs of letters to make different designs. Older children can also use a thick marker and draw free-style. Four suggestions:

1. Design a card for Mother. Put together the letters M, O, M, and then turn them upside down to get W, O, W. By making a "mirror image" children can create a neat pattern with letters and a unique design.

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2. Design a card for a friend, by fitting letters of the friend's name together in odd geometric shapes. Flip the letters around or backwards in order to have the letters fit snugly together.
3. Put together N and O to create funny NO-NO designs.
4. Put together H and A for what looks like a lot of laughing.

Play with certain words to try and make them fit their geometric shape. Some suggestions: square, circle, heart, tree, flower, fish or hammer (Kenda and Williams, 125).



46. Create a design using letters

47. Secret Messages in Code ■ ●

Use a secret code to send funny notes to a child or to add some mystery and adventure in a lunch box!

Assign a number to each letter of the alphabet: ie., A=1, B=2, C=3, etc. For younger children, provide a code legend on the bottom of the page where the “secret message” is recorded. For older children, you can start the code at a higher number, or midway through the alphabet, and provide one “letter=number” combination as a clue (Kenda and Williams, 170).

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48. An Ancient Egyptian Code ■ •

The ancient Egyptians used a code based on familiar symbols to represent numbers. In the same way, some story books use “rebus” or pictures of things to represent specific words. Simple shapes and symbols can also be used to create a “hieroglyphic” looking code:

A = )	H = <	O = ◆	V = ↑
B = ))	I = >	P = □	W = ↓
C = ●	J = ^	Q = ○	X = ✓
D = ◇	K = (	R = ⊙	Y = ⊗
E = ~	L = ◐	S = ☆	Z = ●
F = *	M = ◑	T = ←	
G = #	N = ◒	U = →	

(Kenda and Williams, 175)

49. Tell a Mystical, Magical Fortune •

The ancient Greeks used numbers/letters to tell fortunes and to predict their luck. This is a way to do the same thing, though it’s not the way the Greeks did their predictions, and it’s just for fun.

- decide on the question to be asked in making the prediction. For example, “When will the Toronto Maple Leafs win the Stanley Cup?”
- write down the person’s name, and underneath it, another important name related to the question.

Maple Leafs  
Stanley Cup

- use a number code to switch your names to numbers. (ie., A=1, B=2, etc)
- Maple Leafs becomes 13-1-16-12-5                      12-5-1-6-19  
Stanley Cup becomes 19-20-1-14-12-5-25              3-21-16
- Match the numbers in each set of names. Are there some numbers that are in all four sets?

5 appears three times  
1 appears three times  
12 appears three times

- Now try to find a lucky date. For the numbers above, it could be May 1, 2012; or, it could be in 5112 years! (Kenda and Williams, 181)

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## 50. Creative Cards ■ ●

Make greeting cards out of scrap pieces of gift wrap, used greeting cards, empty cereal boxes and other craft materials on hand.

- using the cereal box as the card material will mean it is strong and sturdy and will stand up on its own
- use a greeting card to trace the card shape onto the cereal box, and to trace a decorative covering for the cardboard out of gift wrap. Use the greeting card to also trace the card shape on a piece of white paper that can be glued to the cardboard inside.
- practice writing messages for the inside of the cards, and then use markers to write your messages on a piece of white paper.
- decorate the cards with stickers, cut out shapes from gift wrap, ribbon, rubber stamps, markers or other craft materials.
- like all artists, remember to sign your creation! (Burton et al, 25)

## 51. Rebus ▲ ■ ●

Use simple pictures to create stories, cards, letters and puzzles for friends. Rebus writing uses pictures, objects or symbols that sound like the words they represent. Rebuses are fun and easy “secret codes” for friends to share. Family stories can also be re-told or illustrated by using a sheet of like stickers. For example, to retell the story of Little Red Riding Hood, use a sticker of a wolf instead of writing out “The Big Bad Wolf. Rebus books are a great way to encourage young readers to pay attention to the text of a story, because there will be certain words (as pictures) that anyone can read.



Children can also use themselves to act out a rebus story. This can be done with a sound (ie., clapping for rain, whooshing for wind), an action (ie., skipping to act out Little Red Riding Hood on the way to her Grandmother’s house) or as a “statue” (ie., arms up and out over head to be a tree). Language and stories have a greater staying power in a child’s imagination if they are read, talked about, and acted out (Burton et al, 39).



51. A simple rebus

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## 52. Bookmarks the Spot ■ ●

This is an activity that readers of all ages and stages can participate in. For younger children, prepare the covered cardboard bookmark in advance and allow them to decorate the cards however they choose. For older children, encourage them to find passages from favourite stories or other fun phrases that they can copy onto one side of their bookmarks.

- cut 2x5 inch strips of card stock as the base of the bookmark, or, use cardboard from cereal or Kleenex boxes. You can also use different coloured file folders or inexpensive foam sheets as well.
- if using cardboard, cover both sides of the bookmark with giftwrap or coloured paper as the bookmark's background;
- if desired, use a hole punch to put a hole in one end, so that ribbon or yarn can be added as a tassel
- use stickers, markers, crayons, cutouts from magazines or photographs to add a creative touch to the bookmark
- make bookmark kits as giveaway treats for parties or activity days. Stock a zipper seal bag with some pre-cut cardboard, some stickers, a marker or coloured pencil, pre-cut foam shapes, yarn, buttons, ribbon, or what ever craft supplies you have available (Burton et al, 81).

A few suggested captions for bookmarks:

1. "Ssshhh! I'm reading."

2. Books to the ceiling,

Books to the sky,

My pile of books is a mile high.

How I love them! How I need them!

I'll have a long beard by the time I read them.

Arnold Lobel

3. Outside of a dog, a book is man's best friend. Inside of a dog it's too dark to read.

Groucho Marx

4. Never judge a book by its movie.

J. W. Eagan

**Symbols for Age Levels:** ▲ = preschool (toddler to JK) ■ = primary (K- grade 2)

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5. “Today you are You, that is truer than true. There is no one alive who is Youer than You.”

Dr. Seuss

6. “The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go.” Dr. Seuss.

7. This book belongs to...

8. Paws off! I'm reading this book!

9. g-READ-ings, Human! I've come to Earth to read a good book!

### 53. All Mixed Up ■ ●

This is a fun activity to do with kids of primary and intermediate ages; younger children might enjoy drawing their own “comics” which can then be used for the activity, while older kids might enjoy the challenge of figuring out what goes where by using comics or stories that are new and unread.

- the Saturday morning comics work best for this because they offer some comics with five or six frames; however, for younger children, choose simpler comics or pictures that clearly show something happening in each frame.
- while old story books can be used, they can sometimes be confusing, as pictures are often on both sides of the page. If using something like that, be sure to select simple pictures and then attach them to a plain backing to avoid confusion.
- choose a comic strip, and cut apart the story frames. Mix up the pieces, and try to put them back in the correct order.
- the same activity can be used with common rhymes, verses or songs that are familiar to players. For a real challenge, “hide” one of the lines or one of the frames of the comics and see if players notice what's missing.
- the single frames of the comics can also be used as story starters for creative writers, who can be encouraged to write their own stories based on what they observe in the frames (Burton et al, 104).

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● = intermediate (grades 3-5)

#### 54. One-two-Ten ■ ●

Children enjoy the creative challenge of writing and illustrating their own books. This is a simple activity that can be adapted for young children and for beginning writers.

- to make the book, fold three pieces of paper in half and staple down the fold. This will provide the author with 12 pages to work with. The outer two pages will become the front and back of the book. Authors can title their books immediately, or wait until they've completed their work for inspiration
- have authors number each page inside from one to ten. There should be one page for each number.
- children can then decide on a theme for their number book. Would they like to draw animals to illustrate their numbers (ie., one dog, two cats, three birds)? What about a family-themed book (one brother, two parents, three fish, four grandparents, five friends, etc.)?
- draw and colour an illustration on each numbered page to match that number. Beginning writers can also include simple sentences incorporating their number facts ("I have one brother named David.") (Burton et al, 125)

#### 55. Word Pictures ■ ●

Children in the later primary grades love to play with letters and cursive writing. This is another way for them to get creative with words. This may also be a great way to introduce a young writer to a thesaurus.

- some words say a lot more than others! Think of an everyday word such as big, little, hot, or cold.
- look up the word in a thesaurus, and choose a synonym, a different word that means the same thing, that sounds even more grand! For example, instead of "big," the choice could be "enormous," and instead of "wet," the choice could be "drenched."
- print the word out carefully on a blank piece of paper. What are the ways to make the word even more descriptive? For example, enormous can be written out in GIANT letters, with some big, tall buildings, or even King Kong, standing on top of the letters. The word drenched can be written with squiggly lines, to look like waves, or with little water drops shooting everywhere.
- think of other things that can be used to describe the word. Turn the word into a picture of descriptive things (Burton et al, 160).

**Symbols for Age Levels:** ▲ = preschool (toddler to JK) ■ = primary (K- grade 2)

▪ ● = intermediate (grades 3-5)



55. Word pictures bring GIANT ideas to life!

56. Secret Message Making ■ •

This is a household equivalent to “invisible ink.” Children will need a parent to help the message appear, but can use the following “ink ideas” to design letters, messages to friends, fun birthday cards or other creative projects.

- several household products can be used as invisible ink. These include lemon juice, grapefruit juice, milk, or baking powder (a little trickier).
- use a paintbrush or a cotton swab (like a Q-tip) to dip in a small container of invisible ink and carefully write a message. Remember that it will be hard to see the writing, so don’t try to work too quickly!
- place the message paper between two sheets of scrap paper and have a parent iron overtop with a warm iron.
- the heat from an iron brings about a chemical reaction that makes the invisible ink appear (Burton et al, 185).

57. Paper Making ■ •

This is a simple project that is best done with a parent handy, though most of the steps can be completed by a child. Look for a piece of screen at a yard sale or second hand store, as brand-new nylon screen can be expensive. Paper will not be perfectly square, but can be trimmed to square if desired.

- a shallow pan such as a small cookie sheet works best for this project.
- tear up four pieces of tissue and put them into a large mixing bowl. Use coloured tissue paper to add a shade to the paper.
- pour 3 cups hot water over the torn up tissue. Using an eggbeater or whisk, mix the tissue until it forms a smooth, watery mixture. (Or, put the torn up tissue and water in a blender to mix!)
- add a spoonful of starch to the mix to thicken

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 ● = intermediate (grades 3-5)

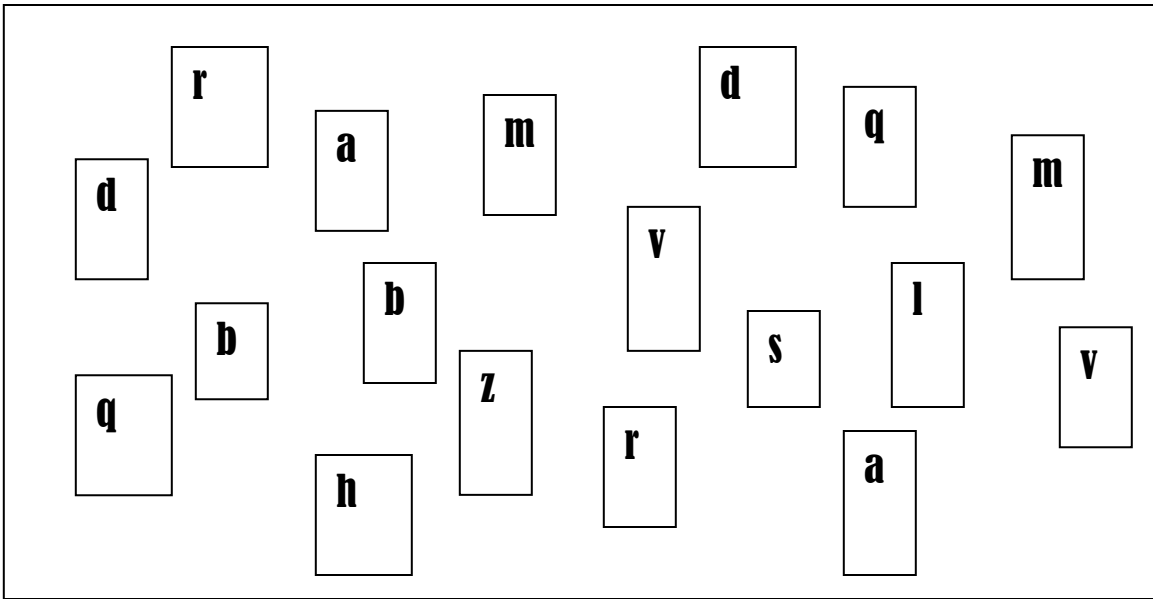
- pour the mixture into the shallow pan. Slide the piece of screen under the paper pulp, and jiggle a little bit to distribute the pulp around the screen. (If the piece of screen is large and flexible enough, it can be placed in the bottom of the pan before the mixture is poured in, which makes this step even easier.)
- lift both ends of the screen up and allow the extra water to drip off the paper pulp. Hold the screen above the pan for a few minutes to allow it to drain.
- transfer the piece of screen, with the paper pulp on top, to a wire rack or a stack of newspaper. Cover the top of the paper with more newspaper (separated by a clean sheet of paper, if the ink may affect the paper colour) If your paper is lying on a flat surface you can also use a rolling pin to squeeze out some more excess water.
- peel the newspaper off the top of the screen, and allow the pulp to dry into paper while remaining on the screen.
- once it is dry, carefully remove the new paper from the screen. Go slowly as the pulp fibres may stick.
- trim the paper into a square or rectangular shape, or use it in crafts, for letters, to design greeting cards or for art projects
- to add a bit of pizzazz to the paper, mix in glitter, flower petals, bits of ribbon or other coloured scraps of paper after the mixture has been blended and before it is transferred to the shallow pan (Burton et al, 209).

#### 58. ABC Crossout ■ ●

Children practicing the letters of the alphabet can use their eyes to search for matches in this game. Other variations can include matching uppercase letters to lowercase letters, or providing a list of words to “find” by crossing out letters one by one.

- this is a simpler variation of a word search, but with a different overall look. Instead of listing letters one beside the other in a grid form, place all the letters in boxes floating on a blank page.
- the player crosses out the letters that match. The game can be played with an equal number of matches (52 squares) or with some extra boxes with letters that can be unscrambled to spell a simple word.

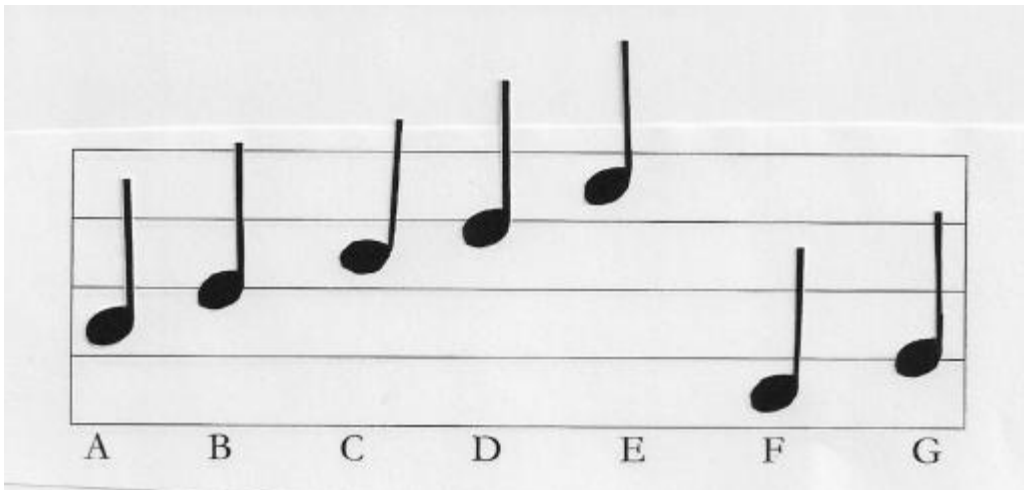
**Symbols for Age Levels:** ▲ = preschool (toddler to JK) ■ = primary (K- grade 2)  
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58. A simple ABC Crossout

59. Music Note Code ■ ●

Music notes are named with letters. Simple words can be written in code by “reading” the notes on the scale.



- easy codes can include words like ace, fade, bead, bed, face or egg.
- draw pictures as clues beside each coded word (Perna, 25).

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## The Great Outdoors

### 60. Chalk Talk Hop ■ •

This is a fun, active rhyming game that kids can use to develop balance and their mastery of words at the same time!

- draw five two-foot squares on cement or pavement using different colours of sidewalk chalk. The squares should touch one another (like traditional hopscotch squares do);
- to play, hop from one square to the next, but, in order to move from one square to the next, players must either write or call out a word that rhymes with the colour of the chalk square.
- so, if square one is pink, a person may call out “sink”, and upon hopping to the blue square, the same person may call out “true.”
- if a player comes to a square and can’t think of a rhyming word, he/she must jump over that square (or, his/her turn can be over);
- if more than one player is hopping, encourage them to think up different rhyming words
- if only one colour of sidewalk chalk is available, or if younger children are playing, choose simple words and write them inside each square (hat, sad, wag, etc.)
- a player can go in any direction, and squares can be drawn with sides touching in any shape (they don’t have to be in a straight line)
- once a player rhymes and lands on all the squares, his/her turn is over and the next player hops (Burton et al, 67).

### 61. Backyard Bingo ■ •

With a bit of imagination, and this can become Book Title Bingo, or Toy Pickup Bingo, or Room Clean Bingo, or Grocery Shopping Bingo...

- Backyard Bingo works best with a group. Trash bag in hand, search a yard or neighbourhood park for bits of trash with the letters “B, I, N, G, or O” printed on them. The first person to collect all five letters and collect the garbage in his/her trash bag wins the game!
- remind children NOT to handle broken bottles, edges of sharp cans, etc., regardless of how close to BINGO the broken items make them.
- this works best with a parent in the lead, and with work or gardening gloves for players.

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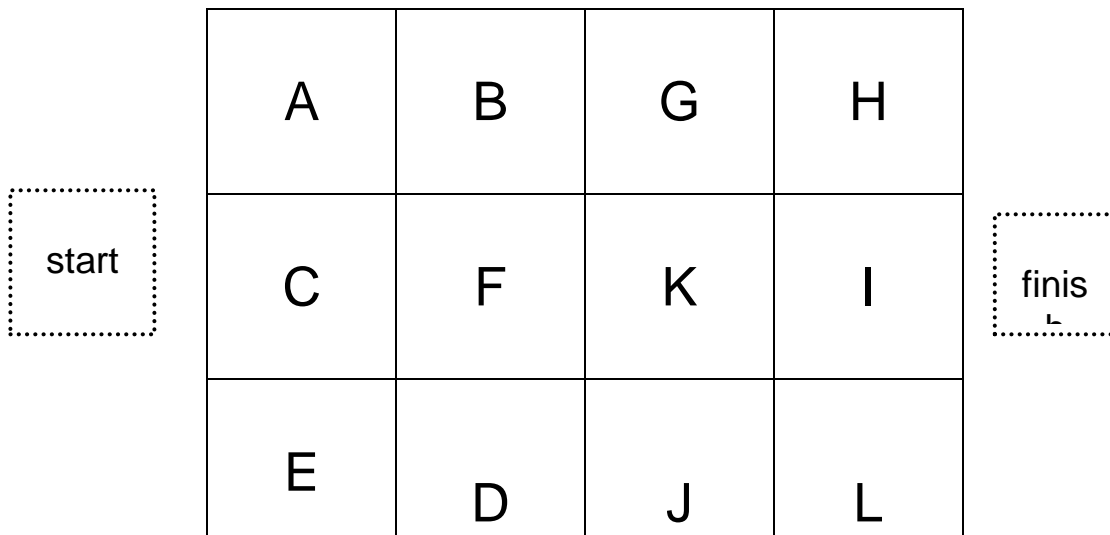
- the same search technique can be used to find books at a local library, to clean up toys in the playroom, or to find items on a grocery list at the supermarket (Burton et al, 86).



## 62. Alphabet Hop ■ •

This version of hopscotch can test alphabet know-how by having players hop their way through the alphabet from A-Z or Z-A.

- using sidewalk chalk, draw a grid of 12 squares, each about two feet wide and two feet high. Letter each square with a letter of the alphabet (ie., from A to L, or, a random assortment, or, every second or third letter, etc. Letters don't have to be in any particular order, but shouldn't be more than one square away from the letter of the alphabet that immediately comes before it)
- Hop on one foot from square one to square two, following the letters of the alphabet from A to Z (or Z to A, depending on what's decided for that game).
- A player's turn ends when he or she accidentally steps out of a square or chooses the wrong square in the alphabetical order.
- If no one misses the easy way, follow the traditional hopscotch play of using a stone to mark one square, and then hopping over that stone.



### 62. Alphabet Hop simple design

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- Players can also move through the hopscotch by calling out a word that begins with the letter of that particular square.

An even more challenging variation of Alphabet Hop: Use the ten letters from Dip Sac Toe (#20) plus two more, and have players spell their way through the grid. Players will have to use at least four letter spaces on the grid (one on each row) in order to get from one side of the grid to the next.

## Out and About

### 63. Drivin' Around Readin' ▲ ■ ●

Begin with young children by pointing out familiar landmarks (hospital, stores, bank, post office, etc.) while you are driving (or walking). This will allow him/her to learn to identify what places are by what they look like, what products they sell, what you do when you go there, etc. Once a child begins to be able to identify certain stores or restaurants, he/she is usually ready for this game. (You can also do this activity in a shopping mall, or on a city bus.)

- Ask the child: “How about you read the signs that are on this road?”
- Wait for the child to identify a gas station, Pizza Hut, or McDonald’s Golden Arches and say, “Great reading!” It doesn’t matter if the child is using architecture or logos instead of reading to figure out what the place is.
- Talk about the signs along the road as if they are newsworthy: “Look! They’re having a sale—see the big, red “Sale” sign in the window?”
- Mention where you are driving/walking as you are going along, including street signs (“That sign says Fisher Street”) or directions (“The Frost Street turnoff is one kilometre away. I wonder how long it will take us to get there”).
- Use signs in the community in any way you can think of. Make a game of looking for specific letters of the alphabet in street signs, or talk about where place names come from: “Why do you think they call it Pizza Hut?” (Barron, 64)

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#### 64. What's Your Sign? ▲ ■ ●

While walking or driving through a neighbourhood, talk with the child about the many different signs he/she sees. Try to name the shapes, colours and messages on the signs (ie., stop, one way, school crossing, no parking, street names, bus stops).

- make copies of the signs that can be used around the house: open, closed, do not disturb, stop, etc.
- encourage the child to think of other signs that could be used in the house: room names, “corners” where rooms or hallways meet, signs at the top of stairs, etc.
- post the signs and “travel” with the child, who can read the signs and indicate what they mean (MTSB, 49)

#### 65. Find Nature Names ■ ●

Many mountains, lakes, rivers, cities and other places are named for their shapes and sizes. Encourage the child to look for examples where he/she lives or while travelling. Street names, lake or river signs, and population markers are a great way to pass the miles (Kenda and Williams, 11).

Some examples from around here:

- Four Mile Lake Road
- Curve Lake
- Trout Lake
- Lake Talon

## Addendum...a few extra play-pleasers

#### 66. Goal 1000/Goal 100/Goal Zero ■ ●

Use a standard deck of playing cards with the tens, jacks, queens and kings removed: this will leave you with 36 playing cards. The symbols on the playing cards will be an extra help for younger children wanting to play. Shuffle the deck, provide each player with some scrap paper and a pencil, and you are ready to play!

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To play Goal 1000, deal each player (up to six players can play with one deck of 36 cards) six cards. The player then picks up the cards and sets them up into a math equation: three cards on top, three cards below. Then, the player adds the two numbers together. The player whose equation equals a number closest to the goal of 1000 is the winner.

For example, a player could be dealt the following six cards: 3, 5, 2, 3, 7, and 1. Here are two possible equations that he/she could come up with:

Equation # 1

3	3	5
2	7	1

---

6 0 6

Equation # 2

7	3	1
2	5	3

---

9 8 4

By building Equation #2, the player has a much better chance at winning the round, as he/she is very close to the goal of 1000.

The game can continue until all the cards are played. Players can keep a running tally of their “score” by adding the answer of his/her round one equation onto the answer of his/her round two equation, and so on. Winners from each round get an extra five points to add on to their scores. Larger groups can also combine two decks of cards so that a full game can consist of four or five rounds.

To play Goal 100, deal out four cards to every player instead of six. The goal then is to make an equation that will add up closest to 100. Again, players can keep a running score of their equations, with an extra five points given to the winner of every round. If younger players aren’t comfortable adding 3 whole numbers, forget about keeping a running score, and just play each round

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separately. Or, give the winner of each round one point (or one marble or one bingo chip or whatever) and have players count up their “winnings” at the end.

Goal Zero is the opposite of Goal 1000 and Goal 100: instead of adding an equation, each player subtracts one number from the other, with the goal of being the closest to reach zero. When tallying scores for this game, the player who has the lowest score at the end of the game will win, so players who have lost each round get five extra points added on to his/her scores, while the winners get none. (Simon, RAFT).

Different rules will add a bit of challenge and interest to the game: “a card laid is a card played,” having to add your equation first without scrap paper (“mental math”), or even having players split their cards into two groups before looking at them. Be sure to set the rules in advance so that everyone is playing fair and square.

#### 67. Silly Sentences •

A “days of the week,” “fill in the blank” poem that can be seriously silly but vocabulary-boosting at the same time!

This can be a “circle game” played out loud, or a game played individually or as a group on paper. A “pass the paper” version that folds each completed sentence from the next player creates a silly poem at the end. An older challenge can have kids choosing a theme (hockey, homework, etc.) and crafting a poem based on that theme. The alliterative verb in each sentence (ie., Monday/**marvellous**/make or Tuesday/**terrible**/tell) can also be left blank for children wanting to use a thesaurus or dictionary to add a bit more of their own flavour to the game.

As a circle game, have each player try to repeat what the previous players have said, so that by the end of the circle, the entire week is being recited. If playing with more than seven children, those who can’t remember the whole poem are “out” while the others continue playing until the end. If this is too tough for players, develop an “echo” response, where every player repeats what the previous player said before or after completing his/her own “day of the week.”

As a pass the paper version, fold the paper in advance, fan-like, so that kids aren’t struggling to fold the paper properly while everyone else is waiting.

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## A Wacky Week

On Mondays it is marvellous to make...  
 On Tuesdays it is terrible to tell...  
 On Wednesdays it is weird to wear...  
 On Thursdays it is tricky to try...  
 On Fridays it is funny to forget...  
 On Saturdays it is silly to say...  
 On Sundays it is smart to spend... (Delaney)



### 68. Rhyming Snap ■ ●

Using index cards or other same sized pieces of cardboard, make a deck of cards with one word written on every card. Think of your deck as similar to a deck of playing cards: but instead of four sets of numbers from 1-13, do four sets of twelve rhymes. If making the game for all ages, be sure to include some simpler rhyming words as well as some more challenging ones (that may rhyme even though they're spelled differently.)

#### 68. Examples of rhymes for Rhyming Snap!

mat	tall	bed
hat	ball	led
cat	call	red
rat	hall	fed
near	hop	slow
fear	top	blow
tear	stop	glow
dear	shop	flow
green	flew	late
seen	chew	rate
queen	blew	mate
been	grew	date
treat	shy	hail
wheat	buy	mail
street	try	tale
sheet	why	whale

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Play the game just as traditional Snap or Slapjack is played. You can also use the deck for a game of single player “rhyme match:” have cards turned over and allow the player to flip two cards at a time to try to find a rhyming couple.

Keep in mind:

- in traditional Snap, players flip at the same time and at the same pace. Who ever notices the match first and says, “Snap!” gets all cards already played. If it’s a tie, then play continues;
- words can rhyme but be spelled differently: this is a great way for kids to learn about homonyms;
- add “wild card” words that don’t have a match—the player who spots which word is a “wild card” first gets the pile. (A wildcard could be a word that’s harder to rhyme, such as “purple,” or “marshmallow,” or “computer.” so that it can be identified during play).

#### 69. Create a Soundscape ■ ●

This is a fun activity that kids of all ages enjoy. While a Soundscape is often used to “ear-ustrate” the sounds of a story or book, it can also be a great way to engage players in a bit of brainstorming and idea sharing.

Tell players first what Soundscape is being created. Explain that every player, one by one, creates a sound that best describes the same setting. Players continue with their chosen sounds as more sounds are added, until everyone in the circle has contributed a sound and the scene is “created” out loud.

If the Soundscape is not related to a book or story familiar to the group, spend a bit of time brainstorming together to come up with sounds that would best describe that particular mood or place.

Sometimes, if players are shy or a little unsure of how the game is played, they will not know what sounds to contribute. Brainstorming will help with this; or, offer to “skip” the player and come back to him/her.

It’s important to have a “conductor” for the Soundscape, to indicate whose turn it is, and to start and stop the game. It helps too if the conductor has a bit of an “advance plan” for a Soundscape that will be easy for players to get involved. This is a great way to bring a story to life or to focus everyone’s attention on a particular theme.

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A Soundscape shouldn't be loud: it's important to remind players that it works best when every sound can be heard clearly. It does take a bit of work, however, to keep players repeating their sounds without getting too loud.



Some Soundscape ideas:

Haunted House: creaking stairs, doors slamming, ghosts whispering, owls hooting, wind howling, cats hissing, footsteps, moans and groans, clock ticking, screams, or cackling witches.

Woods at night: cracking branches, wind whispering, owls hooting, wolves howling, rain falling, waves/water lapping, or crickets chirping

Schoolyard: kids laughing, jumping rope, hands clapping, songs/singing, bell ringing, wind blowing, rain falling, teachers calling out names, balls bouncing or kids running.

## A Note about Sources and Bibliography

Many of the ideas presented in this guide are variations of games and activities developed by others. However, some of the suggested activities included here are directly from the following sources. Note that the author and page number of the appropriate source is listed after each activity throughout the guide, even if the activity was tailored slightly.

When a specific resource or story is well suited to a mentioned game or activity, I've tried to include the title and author of the book in the guide itself. There are several favourites listed throughout *Pass the Play*.

Almost all of the resources mentioned below come from the local Public Library.

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This project was made possible by Great West Life's generous support of Frontier College's Connecting Communities Program.



Simon, Mary. *1000 Wins*. San Jose, CA: RAFT (Resource Area for Teachers), 2004. [www.raft.net](http://www.raft.net) [Liz Delaney also shared this activity in its original form.]

Soundscape: the idea for Soundscape was shared by Anna Keefe, the TD Summer Reading Tent program coordinator for Frontier College. Anna used this game as a fun way to introduce kids to the use of the five senses while reading.

Stock, Claudette, and McClure, Judith S. *The Household Curriculum: A Workbook for Teaching Your Young Child to Think*. New York: Harper Colophon, 1983.

Vail, Priscilla L. *Seize the Meaning! Help Your Child Move from Learning to Read to Reading to Learn*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999, 2002.

**P.S.** Another truly wonderful resource is *The Wonderful World of Words: A Collection of Games to Help Build Language Skills*, by Marlene Pionteck (Frontier College Press). The collection is another Great West Life guide developed by Frontier College staff through the support of Connecting Communities.

This project was made possible by Great West Life's generous support of Frontier College's Connecting Communities Program.