

Family Literacy Things To Do



Published by:
The PEI Literacy Alliance
(902) 368-3620
www.pei.literacy.ca

With support from:
PEI Literacy Initiatives Secretariat
Department of Innovation and Advanced Learning

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About This Book

This book is divided into sections. Each section talks about a set of skills:

1. Reading, Writing and Spelling
2. Family Math
3. Talking
4. Thinking

Each section has activities for children of different ages and different levels of ability. There are fun things for preschoolers, school-aged kids, and teens.

There are no rules about how to use this book. Any family can use any activity. For example, some five-year-olds might be ready to play a board game or read simple words, and some may prefer playdough and nursery rhymes.

Some activities in this book involve reading aloud or writing. Either you or your child can do the reading or writing. As your child gets older and gains ability and confidence, he can do more.

Every person learns differently and at their own pace. So take your time, learn with your kids, and have fun!



Raising Readers

There are lots of things you can do together that will help your child become a reader and stay a reader.

- √ **Start right away!** Read to your child from birth. Even tiny babies love to be read to.
- √ **Talk to your child.** Explain what you are doing. Name different things around you.
- √ **Listen to your children.** Ask questions about their day.
- √ **Take your child to different places.** The grocery store, the library, concerts, nature trails and the art gallery are all places that will help your child learn.
- √ **Let your child see you read.** Seeing you read will help your children learn to value reading.
- √ **Read the things you see to your child.** Colours, shapes, pictures and words we find around us every day can be read. While driving or walking point out signs, symbols and ads and talk about their meaning. At breakfast time talk about the words and images on your child's cereal box.
- √ **Tell your child stories.** Most children love to hear stories about when you were little or about when they were younger.
- √ **Turn off the TV.** Children and teens benefit from family time playing games, talking or watching a movie together and discussing it.



1. Reading, Writing and Spelling

Reading, writing and spelling are the skills we usually think of when we talk about literacy.

a) Playdough

Children like playdough because they can hold it, shape it, and change it to make what they want.

Using playdough is one way for children to learn their letters and numbers. Children can move, shape, and change playdough as they make letters and other things.

First, make a batch of playdough with your child. Invite him to help with the measuring and mixing.

How do I get my child involved?

Engage your child in making things. You might say:

"Let's make playdough pizza together. I'll make the pepperoni. What would you like to make?"



Watch what your child is doing and offer help if you think they needs it. Praise his work, no matter how different it is from the real object. Take part in the game.

After reading a book with your child, you can make characters with playdough and talk about the story. You could also make the letter that begins the name of a character.

You and your child can make letters, words, and numbers. These should have some meaning for your child, like the first letter in his name, the number of toes he has, the name of the family dog, etc.

What guidelines or limits should I set?

Encourage your child to take responsibility for cleaning up after using the playdough. Children can be responsible for looking after what they have made.

You might want to pick a special spot for using playdough so that it is not all over the house. You can put down a plastic tablecloth or placemat.

Keep the playdough in a plastic container with a tight lid and it will last a very long time.

How can I adjust this activity for kids of different ages?

Very young children may use the playdough or watch you make shapes and letters. Older children can make characters and act out a story.

On the next page are two playdough recipes. The quality of the cooked playdough is better. However, the uncooked playdough recipe may be easier for your child to help make.



Uncooked Playdough

Dry Ingredients:

- 2 cups flour
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup salt
- 2 tablespoons cream of tartar
(in the spice section at the grocery store)

Wet Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon oil
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water
- food colouring



Directions:

- Mix dry ingredients together.
- Mix wet ingredients together.
- Mix dry and wet ingredients and knead until mixture is smooth and thick like bread dough.
- Store playdough in a container with a tight lid.

Cooked Playdough

Dry Ingredients:

- 1 cup flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup salt
- 2 tablespoons cream of tartar
(in the spice section at grocery store)

Wet Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons oil
- 1 cup water
- food colouring



Directions:

- Add food colouring to water.
- Put all ingredients together in a pot.
- Cook on low to medium heat while stirring. Cook until dough forms into a ball and does not stick to your fingers anymore. Dough should be smooth, thick and rubbery.
- Remove from heat and let cool.
- Store playdough in a container with a tight lid.

b) Activities for preschoolers

- **Read aloud every day.**
Talk about the pictures and the story.
- **Play with letter or number magnets on the fridge.**
Name the letters and make their sounds.
- **Use bath crayons or foam letters in the bath.**
- **Draw, paint and do crafts.** Young children love to use crayons, fingerpaint and glue. You can keep it simple too. Sit down with your child and use pencils and paper.
- **Rhyme!** All the time! The car, the kitchen and the dinner table are all great places to make rhymes.
- **Visit the library regularly.** Find out about activities and story times.



c) Phonics

Phonics is a way to learn to read words using letter-sound relationships.

Same Starting Letter

Make lists of people, places, flowers, or animals that all start with the same letter or sound.

Riddles & Games

Say, "I'm thinking of a word that means unhappy and begins with the sound *Sa...* or, "I spy with my little eye something that starts with *P*."

Loony Lines

Make silly sentences of words beginning with a certain letter:
"Silly snakes slither slowly down the sidewalk."

Starter Words (word patterns)

Write three different starter words across the top of a page and challenge your child to see how many different words she can make in each column by substituting the first or last letter:

cat	bag
hat	bat
mat	ball

Vowel Sounds (word patterns)

Help your child learn vowel sounds by teaching them as patterns. She will see that "a" usually sounds the same in one pattern ("rate, date, fate, hate...") and makes a different sound in another pattern ("ball, call, fall, hall").

d) Spelling

Word Bank

This is a special notebook or scribbler where your child collects words that he can spell and read. These words can be organized in a variety of ways like alphabetically or in the order in which your child learned them. You can help him illustrate the words with drawing of pictures cut from magazines.



Parts of the Whole

Break larger words into different parts. You can also do this with compound words, like “birthday” and “newspaper”.

Spelling Anchors

Ask your child to say a word aloud three times, noticing syllables, prefixes, the root, or doubled letters. Ask her to close her eyes and visualize the word, like she is seeing it on a piece of paper. Ask her to write the word. Check if it is right and repeat the steps if necessary. Help her add these words to her Word Bank.

Pinups

Write important words on sticky notes and attach them to objects, like a chair, bathroom or mirror.

Spell Checker

The spell checker on the computer is a good tool because it gives a variety of correct words to choose from. Emphasize that this is a not a foolproof method. The computer sometimes chooses the wrong word for you!

e) Reading activities using the newspaper

Headliners

Read only the headlines and try to guess the subject and details of each story. Then read the story and decide if the headline matches the story. If it doesn't, think of a new one.

Cutlines

Clip the captions from some newspaper photos and ask your child to match them or write new captions or put word balloons on pictures of people.

Match-up the Articles

Clip four or five stories (use only two different stories the first time to teach this activity). Try to match the stories with the headlines. Encourage your child to search for the main idea in each story.



f) Some other ideas

Read aloud

Read aloud to your child, no matter how old he is. Older kids also like to be read to. Read whenever you have a chance or pick a special quiet time. Just 15 minutes a day of reading and listening will help improve your child's learning skills.



Have your child read aloud to you

Take turns reading a story or a chapter book.

Talk about the story

When you're reading together, talk about the story. Guess what is going to happen next. Share your ideas. Explain that stopping to think about what you are reading is something that all good readers do.

Make meaning of your reading

Ask your child to read just one or two sentences, then ask him, "What did you just read? Did it make sense?" If he says no, tell him to read it again.



Make reading a daily routine

Let your child choose a book that you can read together as part of your bedtime routine.

Captions

Put closed captioning on the TV or DVD and ask your child to read the text.

2. Family Math

There are opportunities all around us for practicing math skills. Baking together involves measuring, counting, and reading a recipe.



a) Baking together

Kids love to bake! Try this recipe together:

Chocolate Chip Cookies

Ingredients:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cups white sugar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cups packed brown sugar
- 1 cup soft butter
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- $2\frac{1}{4}$ cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt
- 2 cups chocolate chips



Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. Mix the sugars, butter, vanilla and eggs in a large bowl.
3. Stir in the flour, baking soda and salt.
4. Stir in the chocolate chips.
5. Make spoonful-size balls with dough and place on ungreased cookie sheet two inches apart.
6. Bake about 8 or 9 minutes.
7. Let cool and remove from cookie sheet.
8. Eat.

How do I get my child involved?



- **Read the recipe out loud first.** If your child can read, have him read it to you. Then count the ingredients and gather them together.
 - **Have your child help with measuring.** Count the number of cups of flour together. Let him pour each ingredient into the bowl.
 - **Let your child do the mixing** as much as possible. Talk about each step of the recipe as you do it.
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- **Let your child drop the dough onto the cookie sheet.** Very young children might need help. Try not to worry about the mess or the shape of the cookies. This is part of the fun and you can clean up together later.
 - **Make different shaped cookies.** Kids may want to make cookies in different shapes, or make giant cookies. (Giant cookies take longer to bake.) You can also make number-shaped cookies.
 - **Ask your child to guess** how many cookies will fit on the cookie sheet, or how many cookies you can make with the dough you have.

How can I adjust this activity for kids of different ages?

Very young children will need lots of help. But they can still count along with you and pay attention as you describe what you are doing.

Older children may be able to do most of the baking alone with you standing by in case they need help. They can also practice more complicated math, like the fractions in measuring cups. Try doubling or halving the recipe and have your child do the math calculations.

b) Some other ideas for family math

Board Games

We usually have to count when playing board games. Encourage even very young children to count out the spaces themselves when playing, and to read the dice. Board games like Candyland and Snakes & Ladders are especially designed for children who aren't reading yet.



Cards

Cards are inexpensive and there are many games you can play with just one deck. You can find instructions to games online. *Crazy Eights* is a good game to teach your child if she is learning card games for the first time. Instructions on the next page tell you how to play this game.

Gardening

Gardening is a fun way to use math and reading skills. Kids can help plan the garden, count the furrows, and count out how many seeds to plant in each spot. You can do this inside as well, with house plants or seedlings you plan to put outside.

Budgeting

Many children get an allowance. You can start teaching basic math by coaching your child in budgeting. Some kids might want to save up for a special toy. Others might want to save a percentage of their allowance to give to a charity of their choice.



2 or more players

Object of the game: Be the first player to get rid of all your cards.

Setting up the cards:

- Deal five cards to each player. If there are only 2 players, deal seven cards to each player.
- Place the rest of the deck face down on the table to make a stockpile.
- Turn the top card over and place next to the stockpile. This starts the discard pile.

Playing the game:

The player to the dealer's left begins. She must either play a card onto the discard pile or take one from the top of the stock pile. Then it's the next player's turn.

To play a card it must match either the number or the suit of the card on the top of the discard pile. For example, if the top of the pile is the 6 of diamonds, then a six or any diamond may be played. If it is the king of hearts, then any king or a heart may be played. If you can't play, you have to draw.

Eights are wild (and crazy!) and may be played on any card. The player who plays an eight must state the suit which must be played next. For example, if you play an eight you can say, "hearts", and the next player must play a heart. If he is unable to play a heart, then he must draw from the pile.

The first player who gets rid of all their cards wins.

3. Talking

Talking with your child might not seem like a learning activity, but it is one of the most important things you can do to help your child learn and listen.

Talk with your child, ask questions, and listen to what she is saying. She will learn new words and how to take turns in a conversation. Best of all, your child will feel great about being the focus of your attention.

a) Grocery shopping

Grocery shopping is a chore for most adults, but kids love it. Babies enjoy the many colours and sounds.

Things to talk about while shopping

- With very young children, notice and point out the colours and shapes of signs, food packages, fruits and vegetables. As they get older, they'll start naming shapes, colours and objects on their own.
- Preschoolers can pick out letters and numbers on signs and price tags. They can also “read” food labels by looking at the pictures. Help them make the connection between the picture and the printed words on the label.
- Count the aisles, the number of apples in a bag, or how many juice boxes are in a package.
- Let your child help weigh the vegetables and fruits.



- Older kids can help you compare prices on items. They can also help you add up the cost of your groceries using a calculator as you shop.
- Older kids can also begin to understand budgeting. Explain how much money you have to spend and let your child help to plan the grocery list and menu. Allow them to choose some of their favourite meals to put on the list.

Hands-on activity

Choose a recipe or a whole meal menu with your child. Make a grocery list of items you will need. You can also include a budget if you want.

Go shopping for the food and make the meal together. For tips on cooking together, read the Family Math section. Sit down with the entire family and enjoy the food.

Children in families who sit down to eat together regularly feel better about themselves.



4. Thinking

Thinking is a skill we use all the time for reading, writing, math and all other daily activities.

a) Fingerplays for young children

Clap hands

- Open, shut them; open, shut them. (Open and close your hands.)
- Give a little CLAP, CLAP, CLAP! (Clap your hands.)
- Open, shut them; open, shut them. Lay them in your lap, lap, lap. (Clap hands on your lap.)
- Creep them, creep them slowly creep them (Creep your fingers up your arm.)
- Right up to your chin! (Stop your fingers at your mouth.)
- Open wide your little mouth... (Open your mouth wide.)
- (QUICKLY SING) But do not let them in! (Race your fingers down your arm.)

I Have Ten Little Fingers

I have ten fingers (hold up both hands, fingers spread)

And they all belong to me. (point to self)

I can make them do things - Would you like to see?

I can shut them up tight (make fists)

I can open them wide (open hands)

I can put them together (place palms together)

I can make them all hide (put hands behind back)

I can make them jump high (hands over head)

I can make them jump low (touch floor)

I can fold them up quietly (fold hands in lap)

And hold them just so.



Pat-a-Cake, Pat-a-cake Baker's Man

*Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake baker's man,
Bake me a cake as fast as you can!
Roll it and pat it and mark it with 'B'
And put it in the oven for baby and me.*

b) Games for the whole family

Scrabble

Scrabble is a word game that teaches people to look for word patterns. Play this as it is or develop new rules and strategies for the level of your child. There is Scrabble Junior for kids. There are other games you can buy, like Boggle or Bananagrams, that have playing pieces or dice with letters on them. Or you can make your own letter tiles.

Sorting Words

Mix up names of people, animals, cars or other objects and ask your child to sort them into groups. Some may belong in more than one group.

Memory

Play a memory game with homemade word cards (two of every word). Place the cards face up and ask your child to look at them carefully. Turn the cards face down and ask your child to find a pair by turning over only two cards. If your child finds a pair, let her have another turn. If not, go on to the next player. This is a good game for two or more. You could also have your child arrange the word cards in alphabetical order.

Map

Make a map of your home and label all the parts together with your child. What else could you make a map of?

Cartoon Balloons

Use liquid paper to cover up the speaking words in a cartoon. Enlarge the cartoon on a photocopier and invent new dialogue.

5. A word about older kids

We often think that once our kids no longer want a bedtime story, there is nothing else we can do to help with literacy. But older children, including teenagers, can still enjoy activities that promote learning. Here are a few ways to “sneak” literacy into daily life.

- **Magnetic poetry** is a set of word magnets that you stick to your fridge or any metal surface. Most people get a kick out of making up short poems or funny little stories.
- **Board games** make for great family time. Try Scrabble, Boggle, Risk, Monopoly and Cranium, to name a few.
- **Discuss current events** from the newspaper or online news sources. The car and the dinner table are great places for this. You might want to try doing the daily crossword puzzle, too.
- **Computers:** Most older kids spend a lot of time on computers. Computer time involves a lot of reading.
- **Movies and TV** are a big part of life for most teens. Make sure you watch together sometimes, and talk about what’s on. This develops critical thinking and verbal communication skills.
- **Music** is also important to teens. Listening to music helps brain development. Better yet, learning a musical instrument or joining a choir enhances math skills, since written music is mathematical.
- **Comics count!** And so do lots of other reading materials, like websites, magazines, school newspapers, graphic novels, computer manuals, sheet music, music lyrics, emails, and text messages.

- **Read in front of your kids.** It is still important for your older children to see you reading. When you model reading, especially for relaxation and enjoyment, you show your kids that reading is fun.
- **Don't forget to talk and listen to your teen!**

6. Resources

Online word games

This site has many online word games. We suggest you try Book worm. www.popcap.com/allgames.php?p=online

A Parent's Guide

The PEI Government has created a parents guide called *How to Help Your Children Learn to Read and to Love Reading*. You can view it online at peireads.com

Activities for Early Literacy in Natural Environments

This website has many activities you can do with your child. www.wlearning.com/Parent-Preschool.html

Libraries in PEI:

Visit www.gov.pe.ca/infopei to find a library near you. Click on *Education and Learning* from the left column, then click on *libraries* from the list.

Prince Edward Island Public Libraries Bibliothèques publiques de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard

