

# EARLY LEARNING AT HOME

## TIPS FOR NEW PARENTS



QUEBEC CITY READING COUNCIL

**QCRC**

ADULT & FAMILY  
LITERACY CENTRE

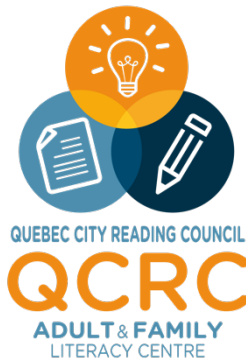
# About the Quebec City Reading Council

Quebec City Reading Council Adult and Family Literacy Centre (QCRC) is a community group funded by the Ministry of Education Quebec (MEES) to provide English literacy services to residents of the Quebec City region.

The QCRC promotes learning in the home, at school and in the community through free programs and services for adults and families.

For more information about our programs and resources, see the last page of this booklet. This booklet along with several other early learning resources, can be found on our website.

**Feel free to contact us directly for more information.**



**Phone:** 418.681.1258

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# Congratulations!

You are on your way home with a special little bundle of JOY! You have prepared the nursery with diapers, a baby crib, a highchair and plenty of impossibly tiny baby outfits. Perhaps you have already childproofed your home to make it a safe place for Baby to explore and flourish.

There's just one more important item to have for Baby:

*Their very own bookshelf!*

Mom and Dad, you will be Baby's first and most important teachers!



**In the following pages, we provide some tips to help you nourish Baby's mind and encourage Baby's natural curiosity.**

Happy Reading and Learning!

# Parents are Teachers, Too!

When you read to your child...

you are teaching *essential reading skills*.

When you introduce your child to different kinds of books...

you are teaching *reading*.

When your child sees you reading for fun...

you are teaching *reading*.

When you take your child to the library...

you are teaching *reading*.

When you have books and reading material in your home...

you are teaching *reading*.

When you encourage your child to read to others, (even if they just read the pictures), you are teaching *reading*.

## Take 20!

Taking time every day to read or do a learning activity is crucial to a child's development, improves a child's literacy skills and can even help parents improve their own skills. All you need is 20 minutes to make learning together part of your every day! It's a great way to have fun with the entire family!

Make learning part of your  
everyday!



# Language Development

Language is so important to your baby's development. Babies are like little sponges – they eagerly soak up new words and experiences. Try these tricks to help develop Baby's vocabulary.

Greet Baby in the morning with simple words. such as, "*Good morning \_\_\_\_\_* (insert child's name)," and ask questions, like, "*Did you have a good sleep?*"

Talk to Baby as you go about regular tasks. For example, tell your baby, "Now we will go have breakfast." Continue talking as you proceed: "Shall we make breakfast?", and so on.

The more words your baby hears, the larger their vocabulary will be. Your baby will soon connect sounds to the people and objects they represent.

This is the first and best pre-reading step for your child. These simple conversations have a very positive effect. Babies learn vocabulary that will help them express themselves and understand the stories that are being read to them.

## Don't forget to listen to Baby!

Babies are eager to communicate, too. Encourage Baby's coos, growls and gurgles. This is Baby's first steps toward speech.

Your baby will love it when you respond back to them with your own "coos" and babbling.

The more baby practices, the better they will be able to express their needs.



# Give Baby an Appreciation for Reading!

- **Develop a daily routine (and make reading a part of it):** Routines can sooth a baby, and lets Baby learn to predict what will happen next. Establish a routine for reading aloud with your child every day for at least 15 minutes. The ability to predict is important when your child is older and is reading independently.
- **Make reading together a special time:** Give your child your undivided attention. When you hold your baby close and look at a book together, your baby will connect the feeling of being safe and secure with looking at a book, building your baby's confidence and love of reading.
- **Encourage your child to build a library at home:** Make sure books are easy to reach, hold and look at.
- **Let your children see you reading and enjoying it:** Reading together as a family shows reading is fun for everyone!
- **Fill your home with reading materials:** Keep books, magazines, maps or a globe, catalogues and comics, around the house.

## Again, please!

As your baby gets older, they may want you to read the same story over and over again! Take heart! Children learn through repetition.

To make it seem new to you and them, try leaving out a word here or there, underline the missing word with your finger as they "read" it for you.





# Reading Activities for Baby

To encourage Baby to make reading an important part of their life as they grow, create a special area at home for Baby's collection of books. A comfy chair, a warm blanket, and a loving adult who enjoys reading their favorite stories again and again, will be sure to foster a love of reading in the years to come!

**Unborn child:** Studies have shown that babies in the womb are active when mom is active. When mom is sitting quietly behind a desk or putting her feet up in the afternoon, baby rests too. When mom is busy running errands, baby is active. This pattern sometimes continues after birth. Babies tend to be colicky and fussy between 6:00 pm and 10 pm – not a coincidence!



Before the baby is born, mom should try to put her feet up for at least half an hour after a busy day. Use the time to read a story to baby. Continue to do so after the birth to establish a routine of calm and enjoyment.

**Birth to 6 months:** Consider interactive books with puppets, mirrors or peepholes. The more fun you can have, the better!

**7 to 12 months:** Baby may start to grasp some of the words read to them. The most meaningful words are things from their everyday life. Say the name of the object while pointing to it. This will help baby connect the illustrations to real things.

## This little piggy

Babies to one-year love it when you play finger, toe, and body word games with them. Babies just love to hear your voice!

# Reading Activities for Older Readers

As your child grows, so will their taste in books!

**12 to 24 months (Young Toddlers):** Sturdy board books are easy for little hands to carry. Look for books that show photos of children doing familiar everyday activities like going to daycare, jumping in puddles and playing games. At this age, books should have very few words and lots of pictures.

**24 – 36 months (Toddlers):** Look for books with paper pages, rhymes and repetitive words they can memorize. Choose books about familiar objects and people: books about children, families, making friends, food, pets or animals and A to Z picture books.

**2 – 5 years (Older Toddlers to Pre-schoolers):** Choose books that tell stories using simple text. Books with simple short stories and beautiful, colorful pictures are easy to follow and eventually easy to read.



# Keeping Baby's Attention

Baby's ability to focus on an activity is limited. Baby can focus better when both of you are relaxed. Do your best to calm them before and during an activity that requires their undivided attention.

## Relax with your baby while learning

Gently massaging their back, hands and feet. While you are doing this, you can recite rhymes and sing songs.

## Stop reading if baby fusses.

It's ok if baby seems to have lost interest. Pay attention to how your baby reacts to the book you are reading. Baby will direct you on what Baby wants to do.

## Sing. Read. Repeat.

Read favorite stories and sing favorite songs over and over again. Repeated fun with books will strengthen language development and positive feelings about reading.

## Let them give a hand.

Encourage your baby to pick up crackers or peas, touch noses and toes, point to pictures and grab toys. The muscles in those little hands will grow strong, agile, and ready to turn pages.



These simple exercises are not only soothing for you and Baby but starts Baby on the wonderful journey of language and literacy.

## “Active” Learning

Babies like to explore. It’s how they learn about the world around them.

Provide Baby with different textures to explore. Sensory boards are great but not necessary. Let Baby feel the carpet, the grass, wood floors, and cushions.

Practice tracking toys and people. Lay Baby on the ground and gently roll a ball in front of them. Let them track the ball with their eyes.

Use Baby’s name when you are talking to them. Sing songs using their name. It will be the first word they will begin to attach a meaning to.

## Baby's Own Cupboard

Choose a kitchen cupboard near the floor that can be used by your baby. Put items into the cupboard for them to play with, such as pots and pans and plastic measuring cups. Make sure that these items are not breakable!

Let your child play while you are working in the kitchen (avoid handling hot items which could be spilled or dropped on Baby!)

Label each shelf (i.e. bowls, spoons, pots and pans). These words will eventually become sight words that your child will recognize. This will also teach your child ordering and sequencing skills that will be helpful when they begin school.



# Teach Baby Letters and Sounds!

One part of learning to read starts with getting to know letters and the sounds they make. Young children may not realize that the letters of the alphabet make sounds. To help them make this connection:

**For Baby:** Gently draw the letters of the alphabet on baby's back with your finger and repeat the letter emphasizing the sounds each letter makes.

**Sing the Alphabet song:** Help you child learn the names of letters by saying the whole alphabet. Singing is always a fun way for baby to hear your voice!

**Point to letters on things you see every day:** Talk to Baby all day and point to words and letters you see in common situations — in a story, in the grocery store, on signs, cereal boxes and more!

**Focus on several words that start with the same sound.**



*What does the Cow say?*

Ask your child questions that help them make these sound and letter connections together with you!

# Nursery Rhymes for Baby

Young children usually love the repetition and rhythm of nursery rhymes! Rhyming games are an excellent way of teaching children to recognize sounds and letters.

For baby, they are melody-filled pieces that soothe your baby and are educational and informative. Nursery rhymes help babies to focus better at a young age.

As your young one gets older, encourage them to fill in the rhyme as you "read" them together.

*Help your child through this short children's rhyme:*



# Super Simple Songs!

Take a bath, put on your pajamas, brush your teeth, and read a book as you sing this bedtime song.



## This is the Way We Go to Bed

This is the way we take a bath,  
take a bath, take a bath.

This is the way we take a bath.  
We do it every evening.

This is the way we put on our pajamas,  
put on our pajamas, put on our pajamas.

This is the way we put on our pajamas.  
We do it every evening.

This is the way we brush our teeth,  
brush our teeth, brush our teeth.

This is the way we brush our teeth.  
We do it every evening.

This is the way we read a book,  
read a book, read a book.

This is the way we read a book.  
We do it every evening.

This is the way we say, "Good night,"  
say, "Good night," say, "Good night."

This is the way we say, "Good night."  
We do it every evening.

This is the way we go to sleep.

# Developing Number Awareness

As your child gets older, help them understand the concept of numbers. Make counting part of your everyday activities.

- Count stairs, cookies on a plate, fingers and toes, and so much more!
- Make flash cards of numbers to help your child see the number.
- Teach your child nursery rhymes that contain numbers



*Fold down one finger and continue with "Four little monkeys," and so on.*

*Ask your child how many monkeys are left after each one falls off the bed.*

*Keep counting until there are no more monkeys jumping on the bed!*

# The Parent's Toolbox

In addition to having books, books, and more books; you can help your child learn by keeping other tools handy, as well:

- Stickers
- Playdough (you can make your own!)
- Paper (with lines and without lines)
- Colored paper (card stock, construction, printing)
- Colorful pencils, markers and crayons
- Washable watercolor and finger paints
- Colorful string or pipe cleaner (chenille stems)
- Glue, glitter, and craft tape (Washi tape)
- Index cards
- Large erasers
- Scissors (kid-safe scissors and paper edger scissors are fun)
- Magnetic letters and alphabet charts
- Dictionaries, a world map, globe or atlas

Encourage your child to play with these materials, providing supervision and support when appropriate.

*Creative, self-directed play is important for development.*

Cutting, gluing, painting, and other such activities are key for developing fine motor skills. Plus, encouraging children to amuse themselves provides parents with some time to attend to other responsibilities.

# Your Baby's Caregivers

You may not be able to spend all day, every day with your child. In order to help them learn when you are not with them, ask your child's caregivers to read to them or do a learning activity every day.

Visit your caregiver's home or the daycare center, and ask yourself these questions:

*Are the bookshelves well stocked with books?*

*Is there a regular daily reading time?*

If you answer “no” to these questions, consider making recordings of your child's favorite stories. Your child's caregiver could use these to soothe and reassure your child when you can't be with them.

## Ensure that there is plenty of time for creativity.

Activities such as finger painting, sandbox play, and water tables all help develop your child's fine-motor skills. Children will later use these skills when they begin to hold a crayon or pencil and write their first letters.



# Preparing Your Child for School

Kindergarten teachers wish all children could come to school able to...

1. Dress themselves.
2. Count from 1 to 5 and recognize the numbers 1 to 10.
3. Name these shapes: circle, square, triangle.
4. Name these colors: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, pink, black and white.
5. Cut with scissors.
6. Sing the alphabet song.
7. Draw with crayons.
8. Know their first and last names.
9. Print their own name.
10. Be able to express themselves with words.

But most of all...

Kindergarten teachers wish that all children could come to school loving books!



# Screen Time

To promote child health and development in a digital world, QCRC encourages parents and caregivers of young children to incorporate the best methods that work with their family.

Screen time can be part of a healthy lifestyle for preschoolers when it's balanced with other activities that are good for your child's development, like physical play, reading and socialising. Getting the right balance also includes making sure screen time doesn't interfere with sleep.

Quebec City Reading Council encourages parents and caregivers of young children who wish to learn more about screen time guidelines, to check out the links listed below.



American Academy of Pediatrics. (2018). Kids & Tech: Tips for Parents in the Digital Age. <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Tips-for-Parents-Digital-Age.aspx>

Canadian Paediatric Society. (2017). Screen time and young children: Promoting health and development in a digital world. <https://www.cps.ca/en/documents/position/screen-time-and-young-children>

National Literacy Trust. (2019). Our new research shows that reading both in print and on screens benefits children's literacy. <https://literacytrust.org.uk/news/digital-reading-axe-the-reading-tax/>

Raising Children Network (Australia) Limited. (2019). Preschooler screen time: Tips for balance. <https://raisingchildren.net.au/toddlers/play-learning/screen-time-media/healthy-screen-time-2-5-years>

ZERO to THREE. (2019). Early Learning: Screen Time. <https://www.zerotothree.org/early-learning/screen-time>

# Creative Learning Activities

Every new milestone Baby reaches or new skill Baby learns is a sign of growth: smiling, babbling, holding a spoon, playing, walking. Encourage Baby's development with fun learning activities.

## Mirror on the Wall

Add a baby-safe activity mirror on the side of Baby's crib. Each morning, sing a song with baby's name, such as: *"Mirror, Mirror on the wall, who's the best baby of all?"* Then tap the mirror so Baby glances at it and say, Baby's name! Soon Baby will know it's them in the mirror!



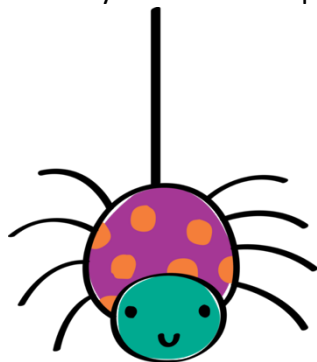
As Baby grows, walk them around the house and point to your reflection and theirs in other mirrors asking, *"Do you see Mommy/Daddy?"* *"Do you see (Baby's name)?"* This helps your baby learn to identify themselves with others!

## Face Time

While baby is alert, awake, and calm place a soft, cushy doll or toy with a face within reach of them. The face will interest Baby and grab their attention. Move the toy (or doll) up and down, left and right in front of them. This helps Baby track objects with their eyes and develop visual focus.

## Finger Play

Sing songs like *"Itsy Bitsy Spider"* and use hand motions as you sing. This helps baby develop language skills, and as they grow, have your child mimic you to improve their motor skills.



# Fun Activities to Do as a Family!

## HOMEMADE PLAYDOUGH

*Recipe & photo from ABC Literacy Canada*

### Ingredients

- 1 ¼ cups of flour
- ¼ cup of salt
- A few drops of food colouring
- 1 cup of boiling water cooled down enough to touch it.
- 1 ½ tablespoons of vegetable oil



### Method

Get a large bowl. Mix the flour, salt and food colouring in a large bowl. Add the water and vegetable oil to the bowl and stir. Mix with your hands for about 5 minutes, until smooth and the dough is all one colour. Put the playdough in a zipper bag to keep it soft for up to 2 months.

Now it's time to be creative!

Have your child make each letter of their name or make a squiggly snake or pretty flower.

## MAKE A VOLCANO!

*Recipe & photo from STEM Little Explorers*

### Ingredients

- Playdough
- A small container (a beaker works great!)
- Baking sheet or plate with edges
- 2 tablespoons of baking soda
- 1 spoonful of dish soap
- A few drops of food colouring
- 30 ml vinegar



### Method

Add everything except the vinegar to the container. Carefully shape a volcano around the container with the playdough and place on the baking sheet. Once the volcano is complete, start your countdown! Pour the vinegar and watch the eruption! Add more dish soap and vinegar and give it a stir, if needed.

*Sparkling volcano:* add glitter to the mix for a dazzling effect.

*Snow volcano:* replace the playdough with snow and you have an easy craft for winter with very little clean up!

# H2Whoa! Painting with Ice Cubes

Creating art doesn't have to be expensive. With mom and dad's help, painting with ice is fun sensory play which lets Baby experience temperatures. This is a great activity for outside as it can get messy!

## Materials:

- Water
- Ice cube tray
- Food coloring gel (a few colors)
- Popsicle sticks
- Pen
- Paper
- A Freezer
- Spoon (one for each color)

## Method:

1. Fill an ice cube tray with cold water and set gently on a flat surface.
2. To each of the cubes: add some food coloring gel and swirl the color around with the end of a spoon. Make sure there is a lot of color in each cube, as it will affect how bright the color is when painted with. Use a different spoon per color to avoid mixing colors.
3. Once the squares all have color, gently place the tray on a shelf in your freezer. Leave it in for 1 hour.
4. Meanwhile, label your popsicle sticks with the names of the colors that you have used, one for each cube.
5. After an hour, open the freezer. The top layer of each ice cube will have just frozen over. With your popsicle stick gently crack this layer and position it as upright as you can manage. Each ice cube should have its own popsicle stick.
6. Close the freezer and leave for another two hours (larger trays may take up to six hours). Be sure the ice is frozen solid before removing it from the freezer.
7. Once frozen, take the tray out and leave it on the counter for 5 minutes to loosen the cubes enough to pull them out of the tray.
8. Get your paper ready because it's time to paint with your ice cube "paintbrushes" and start creating!

# QCRC Programs and Services

Quebec City Reading Council's services and activities are free of charge and in English.

## Family Programs

- **Lending Library** at Take-A-Break is a small free library for parents and their children, offered in partnership with Jeffery Hale Community Wellness Centre (first and third Fridays between November and May).
- **Travellin' Toddler Time** is a free English-language activity for children 3-4 years of age and their parents, grandparents or guardians. Children sing songs, enjoy stories, make crafts and socialize with other children. (Once a month from September to May, excluding January).

## Adult Programs

- **Volunteer opportunities** associated with all programs and occasional community events.
- **One-on-one tutoring** for adults 16 years and over who are working to improve reading, writing, math and/or computer skills
- **Lifelong Learning Program** for individuals aged 50 and older, is an on-going series of interesting, informative and informal learning opportunities to encourage idea exchange and active participation.

**Please contact the Quebec City Reading Council directly if you would like to participate, volunteer, or have any questions.**



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## How to get to Quebec City Reading Council

QCRC is located on the second floor of the Eastern Quebec Learning Centre (EQLC) located off Chemin St. Louis in Sainte-Foy.

**Buses:** The 13 and 25 passes near the EQLC; the 11, 800 and 801 leave you within walking distance.

**Parking is free** at the EQLC but pay attention to parking signs.