

Supporting Teens with Literacy: A Guide for Parents

A brochure developed by the

MANITOBA READING ASSOCIATION

Provincial council of
INTERNATIONAL LITERACY ASSOCIATION

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For more information, please go to www.readingmanitoba.org

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1) WHAT IS LITERACY?

Literacy is the ability to receive and to communicate thoughts, ideas, needs, and feelings. We do this by reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, representing, and thinking to create meaning. Literacy also helps us to solve problems.

Literacy is part of what we do every day in our lives. We use literacy at home, in stores and restaurants, in our work and in all school subjects.

Literacy is a process of learning how to communicate in meaningful ways. Literacy learning begins in infancy and continues throughout life. We develop our literacy skills and strategies in different ways and at different rates. Literacy is a journey, not a race.

Parents teach literacy by:

- ❖ Modelling the love of reading.
- ❖ Sharing culture and family stories.
- ❖ Having conversations about books, pictures, ideas, stories, and information.
- ❖ Exploring the community together and talking about it.
- ❖ Cooking, baking and creating together.
- ❖ Making regular visits to the library.

2) HOW CAN I HELP MY TEEN BE A SUCCESSFUL LITERACY LEARNER?

- Make time for daily reading in your home.
- Tell stories about childhood or family experiences.
- Encourage your teen to talk about what they are reading.
- Ask them questions about what they are reading.
- Visit the public library regularly. Talk about the books, audiobooks and videos they borrow.
- Discuss books you have read. Listen to your child talk about a favourite book.
- Talk about choices when viewing or using media and devices, such as television, computer, tablets, and phones.
- Be open to assistive technology to support literacy skill development.
- Engage in conversations with your teen's teachers.
- Play word games (e.g. Scrabble etc.) to improve vocabulary acquisition.

3) CONVERSATION STARTERS TO HELP YOU TALK WITH YOUR TEEN ABOUT READING

- What are you reading?
- What are you reading in school right now?
- What is your favourite genre?
- What do you like about reading?
- What do you dislike about reading?
- What are you curious about? What would you like to learn more about?
- Do you prefer fiction or non-fiction books? Why?
- Where is your favourite place to read?
- Can you recommend any books for me to read?
- What would you like to improve about your reading?

4) HELPING MY TEEN CHOOSE AND EVALUATE/CRITIQUE SUITABLE READING MATERIAL

Consider your teen's interests when helping them choose reading material. These can be in print or digital formats. Encourage your child to read a variety of genres of books, while honouring their interests and preferences.

Reading material can be:

- Traditional or graphic novels
- Audiobooks
- Poetry and books in verse
- Nonfiction texts
- "How-to" guides
- Magazines
- Comics
- Apps
- Newspapers
- Websites
- Blogs
- Social media posts
- Multimedia texts (music, videos, etc.)

5) HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY TEEN IN DEVELOPING GOOD LEARNING & STUDY SKILLS?

- **Be active and positive about your teen's learning and schooling.**
 - Emphasize the importance of school and lifelong learning.
 - Talk with your teen's teachers about what is being taught and your teen's strengths and needs.
 - Keep in regular communication with your teen's teachers.

- **Show interest in what your teen is learning at school.**
 - Ask about learning highlights and lowlights (disappointments or setbacks) of the day.
 - Preview the next day and review their agenda.
 - Talk with your teen about topics they are learning and researching.
 - Share what you know, what you would like to know, and how you could learn more.

- **Help your teen develop long-lasting study habits.**
 - Pick a regular time for study and quiet reading.
 - Set a quiet, bright place for working with appropriate supplies.
 - Encourage regular review in preparation for tests.
 - Talk about major projects. Help them assess online sources. Visit the library to do research.
 - Help set up timelines and deadlines. Break up large tasks into smaller chunks and monitor progress.
 - Help your teen set realistic goals that are:
 - **Achievable**
 - **Believable** and
 - **Controllable**, with
 - **Deadlines**

- **Tips to Improve Memory**
 - Count the parts, items, or facts to be memorized. Look for patterns and relationships. Make sticky notes and cue cards your friends.
 - Make mental pictures or visualize the information.
 - Make simple, labelled pictures or diagrams.
 - Say the information aloud to yourself. Quiz yourself using cue words and questions.
 - Make associations and personal connections.
 - Use music, chants and rhymes to learn information.
 - Teach someone else the information.
 - Use acronyms (nouns) or acrostics (sentences) to help remember key words
 - e.g. H.O.M.E.S. = Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior

6) Digital media and reading

Television shows, videos and the internet can be important sources for your teen's learning.

- Discuss cyberbullying and respectful digital behaviour.
- Watch television and videos with your teen and talk about what they see and hear.
- Voice your opinions about commercials and advertisements. Discuss the ways advertisers try to convince people to buy their products.
- Discuss how media shapes values, the way we see the world and our opinions.
- Show them how to read carefully and evaluate information from the internet.
- Help them distinguish between credible and unreliable sources.
- Discuss how social media affects our opinions and identity.

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