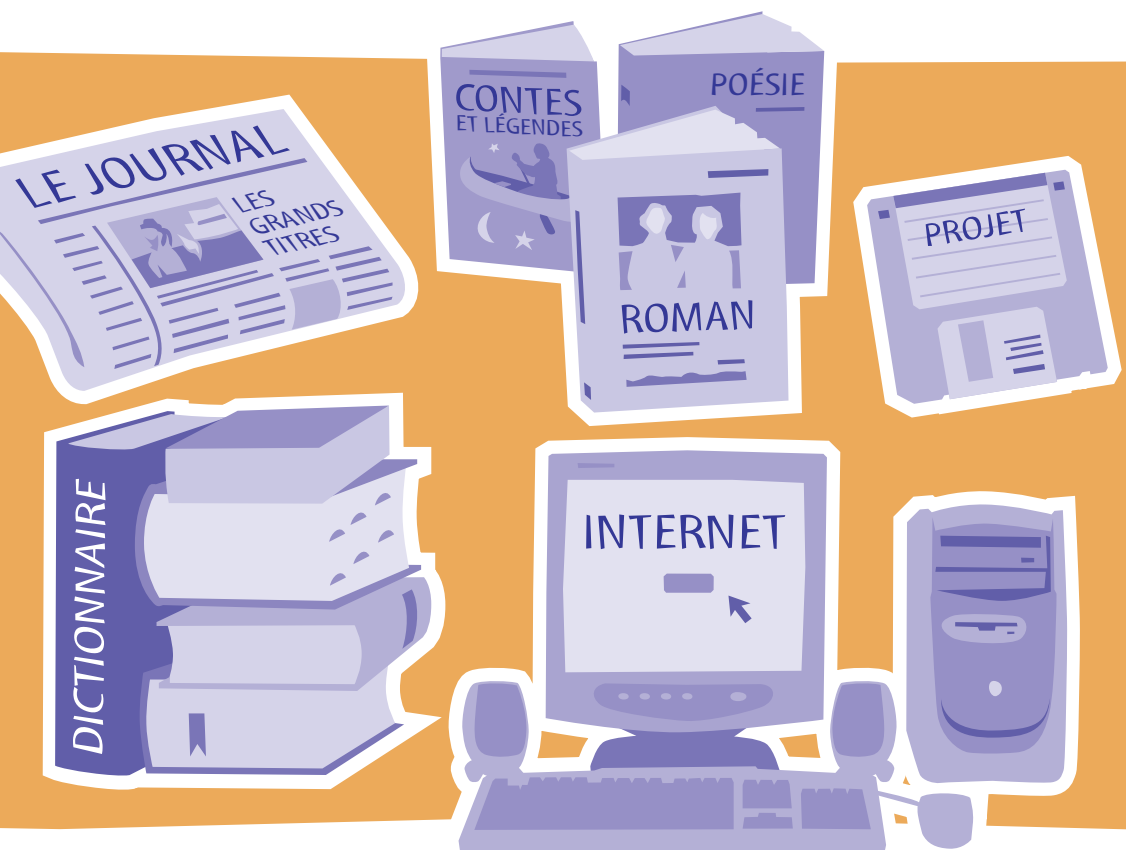


# Mot de passe :

# littér@tie

## A Booklet Intended for Parents



Fondation d'éducation des provinces atlantiques

This booklet was developed with the financial support of the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation (APEF) and the Departments of Education of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador as well as Canadian Heritage.

APEF would like to acknowledge the contribution of parents in the development of this booklet.

In this document, the masculine represents both genders.

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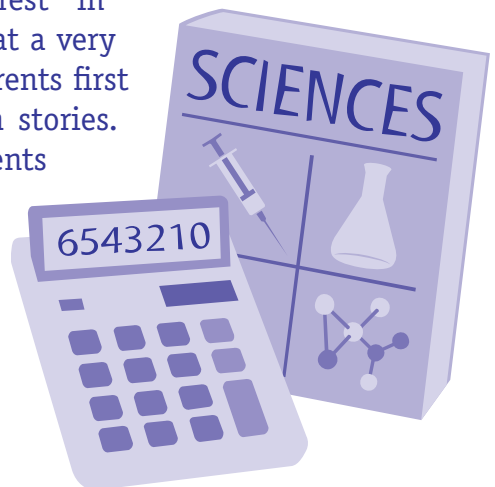
## Password: Literacy



The ministers of Education of the four Atlantic Provinces view the development of literacy in our children as a priority. Being literate means being able to understand and transmit spoken, written, visual and auditory information. Literacy provides the skills required to understand and effectively solve problems in school, at home or at work. Reading is one of the keystones of literacy.

Family, school and community all play important roles in children's reading development. In Atlantic Canada, we are exposed to both official languages. French is, to varying degrees, the minority language in each of the four provinces. The home is the principal environment in which children learn language. It is also where they discover books and reading.

Children's interest in reading is piqued at a very early age when parents first begin to tell them stories. Little by little parents can lead their children to discover the existence of books and the world of words. As they grow, children begin to



understand that there is a connection between the printed characters in books and the stories they love to hear. They start to recognize common words, like their name and “Mommy” or “Daddy”. Children begin to learn the alphabet and discover that sentences in books are read from left to right and from top to bottom. Eventually, they come to realize that they can have access to wonderful stories any time they want if they learn to read. This realization provides them with motivation.



English-speaking parents often ask about the process of learning to read in French. “What is my role in my child’s learning to read in French and how does it differ from the school’s role? What can I, as an English-speaking parent do to facilitate this process and how can I help my child when I, myself, speak little or no French?” In order to answer these questions, we must first consider how learning to read evolves in children.



The purpose of this booklet is to provide concrete strategies for English-speaking parents that they can use to ensure that their children become capable readers in French. As role models, parents play a vital role in helping their children develop a love of reading in French that will last a lifetime.

## Reading at Home

### *Before Entering School*

It is at home that your child first acquires the skills and the attitudes that are the determining factors in his reading development. In many ways you can help him realize the importance of reading

by awakening in him the pleasure of reading and the desire to read.

Even if much of this happens in English, your child will still come

to appreciate the importance you place on reading. To help your

child recognize the value you place on reading in French,

ensure that you have French-language

books, magazines and board games

in your home.



Early in childhood, you can encourage your child's interest in reading. He tries for example to imitate you when you read a book or a newspaper. He asks you to tell and retell the same stories and he begins to understand that symbols, i.e. the letters he sees on the paper, correspond to words.

Encourage your child to discover the alphabet by giving him alphabet books, letter magnets and educational games. Also, encourage your child to recognize letters and words on signs, on packaging and other print found in his environment.



The importance of reading aloud to your child cannot be understated. It stimulates the imagination, promotes communication and creates an intimate moment between parent and child. Reading aloud in French provides a child with an opportunity to improve his spoken French. It also helps him to develop a positive attitude towards reading. It is never too early (or too late!) to begin reading aloud to your child. Your spouse, an older brother or sister, or other family member can read to your child in French. If you read only in English rest assured that those intimate moments you share with your child will help him to appreciate the importance and pleasure of reading no matter what the language. To ensure that you and your child share these precious moments in French as well, you can obtain books that come with an audiotape.

Even if you do not understand the content of the cassette, your child can retell the story to you.



It is never too late for you to start speaking French with your child. Your proficiency in French is not as important as your openness to the language and your efforts to speak it. Your child can be exposed to more French in the home if you encourage him to watch French TV or select French-language movies or videos. French courses are available for parents wishing to improve their own skills in French. You may be interested in joining a French reading group or book club. As you become more confident, your spoken French will improve and so will your child's. At the same time your child will understand the importance that you place on the French language and culture.

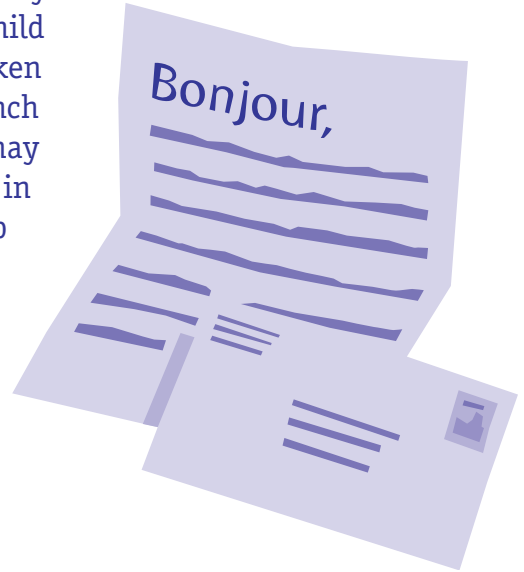


Improving a child's spoken French will have a positive impact on his ability to read in French. It is also true that reading helps improve the quality of a child's spoken French. The more a child reads, the richer and more complex will be his use of spoken language. Through reading experiences, a child learns new words and new phrases. He learns how to speak French well and is less likely to resort to anglicisms. Reading can help your child improve his vocabulary and develop a more sophisticated oral French that may have been absent in his early years. He will begin to use his growing repertory of words and structures in both his reading and his oral French.

The knowledge and skills your child learns in English in an English-speaking home environment can be transferred to French. As an English-speaking parent you may have fears that because your child has not heard French being spoken frequently or has not spoken French himself in his early years, he may have difficulties learning to read in French. However, with your help and the support and assistance he will receive at school, your child can successfully learn to read in French.

### *Once Your Child Enters School*

In their first school years children continue to read books containing many illustrations with only a little printed text. Gradually they develop the ability to read more complex books that have few, if any, illustrations. As your child advances through school, you may come to feel that your French is not strong enough for you to be able to help him in his studies. Yet there are many things you can do and many people that you can call upon for assistance.



To help your child enrich his vocabulary, continue to provide him with French language videos and audiotapes of books. Encourage older siblings to read to the younger ones. This has the advantage of helping both the older and the younger children. Be sure to provide your child with a French dictionary as well as a French-English dictionary. Take advantage of activities outside the home (visits to museums, libraries, etc.) to introduce him to new experiences and vocabulary.



Help your child explore the many applications of written language in everyday life. Encourage him to read letters, follow written instructions, prepare a recipe or read a road map. Many museums, libraries, local and provincial governments and other public places publish brochures in French on a wide range of topics. These brochures provide excellent resources for the older student when doing projects.

There are wonderful books for every taste and every interest. Because the pleasure of reading is not limited to make believe and fantasy, guide your child through the exploration of a wide variety of books on various topics. In the early and mid-elementary years, your child remains open to your suggestions about reading material. So help him

to identify books that suit his tastes. You know your child's interests better than anyone else. But if you need help in selecting books in French, don't hesitate to ask your child's teacher, a librarian or another parent for help.

## *The Teenage Years*

The child who develops strong reading habits in his early years will continue to read throughout his teenage years. By the teen years, he should have mastered basic reading techniques and be able to apply them to the learning process in all school subjects. At this age your child is most likely choosing his own reading materials. Because of the impact the English language media has on your child's life, you may find him reading less and less in French. To balance this tendency, continue to give your teenager French language books and teen magazines as gifts. You can strengthen your relationship with your child at this point in his life by continuing to talk to him about the books he is reading, his tastes and interests and by sharing with him, at a more adult level, your own interests in reading.



## Types of Readers

As a parent, you know that your child has his own way of learning. The American educator Howard Gardner defines seven ways that children learn which can be used as a guide in selecting appropriate reading materials for your child:

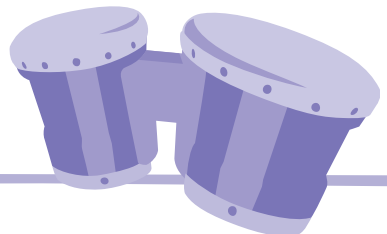
A child is sensitive to language structures. He enjoys reading, speaks easily, enjoys telling and hearing stories, and has fun playing with words.

This child has little difficulty learning to read and is attracted to a wide variety of books.



A child is sensitive to music and rhythm as well as sounds. He often hums, taps to the beat, sings and dances when he hears music. He is sensitive to the emotional power of music and can easily pick up foreign accents.

This child is interested in other languages and peoples. He enjoys listening to and composing music.



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A child easily develops relationships with others, has numerous friends, enjoys group activities and derives pleasure from conflict resolution.

This child tends to discuss and seek reading materials that will help him better understand the people and situations around him.



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A child moves with ease, refinement, and sophistication. He expresses himself through movement, has abilities in building and repairing objects, and enjoys sports.

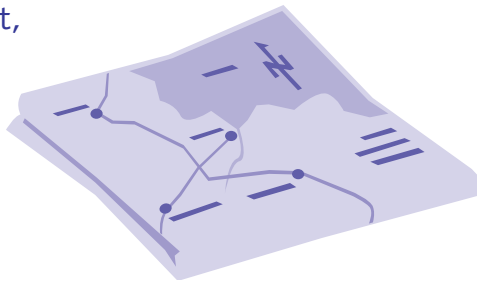
This child prefers books on crafts, sports techniques, dance or figure skating.

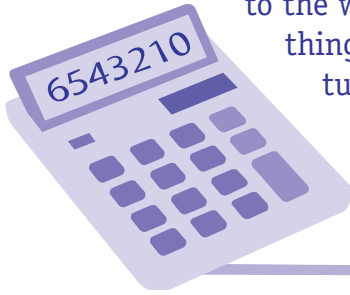


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A child is aware of the three-dimensional visible world and easily develops mental images. He has a good sense of orientation, enjoys various forms of art, and can read charts and road maps, diagrams and graphs without difficulty. He can solve puzzles and easily organizes his own space.

This child enjoys books about art and drawing techniques.





A child thinks, calculates, reasons, and brings order to the world. He enjoys things that are structured; he wants to solve problems and explain everything.

This child has good mathematical skills and enjoys books that stimulate his reasoning abilities, such as mystery novels.

A child has a good knowledge of his strengths, weaknesses, qualities and abilities. He enjoys solitude, knows how to motivate himself, likes to read, and sometimes keeps a personal diary.

This child is attracted to books that may contain answers to his questions about the meaning of life.



“A book always has two authors:  
the one who wrote it and  
the one who reads it”

(Jacques Salomé)

As an English-speaking parent, it is not always easy to identify resources and texts which are appropriate for your child. You might organize a support group consisting of francophone teachers, families and friends who are able to help you find and select books. The following helps ensure that your child has access to French books and texts.

## List of Activities and Resources

- Visit with your child your public library or the closest bookstore.
- Encourage your child to select books from the school library.
- Attend fairs, exhibits and book sales in your region.
- Subscribe your child to French-language magazines.
- Obtain catalogues from publishing houses and book clubs or look them up on the web. Discuss book descriptions with your child.
- Exchange books with other families.
- Encourage children to read books to each other.
- Check out web sites of organizations promoting literacy, such as APEF's (<http://apef-fepa.org/lecture>).



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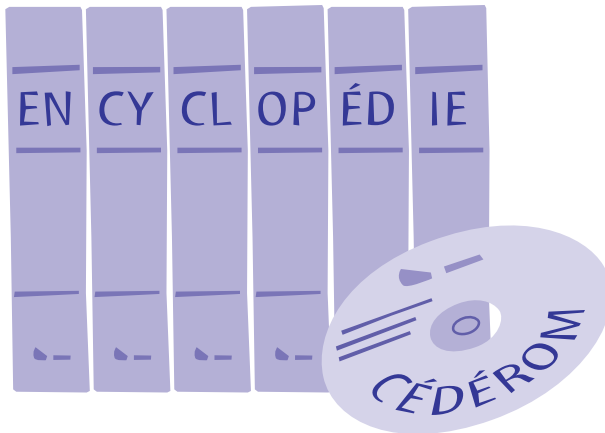
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The Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation is an agency of the Council of Maritime Premiers. It is composed of the Ministers of Education of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador. Its goal is to promote regional cooperation in education.

APEF's web site contains a section on literacy at the following address: <http://apef-fepa.org/lecture>

« Mot de passe : littér@tie » is a series published by the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation for the purpose of educating and providing tools to various literacy partners. Also in this series:

- Livret destiné aux parents
- Livret destiné au personnel enseignant
- Livret destiné aux directions d'école

