

YMCA RAISING HEALTHY KIDS WHO CARE QUICK TIPS FOR PARENTS

What?

The *YMCA Raising Healthy Kids* kit helps parents and their kids to:

- Be more active
- Eat healthy food
- Read more together
- Build healthy relationships
- Develop social responsibility

At the heart of the resources is the belief that healthy relationships are founded on positive communication.



Why?

YMCA Canada is committed to building strong kids, strong families and strong communities.

Who?

Parents, children and youth. The materials are designed for parents to use with their children.

Where?

Anywhere, any time. The materials can be used at home, on the road, anywhere children and parents are together.

How?

Healthy, active, happy kids are kids who care about themselves and care about others. Here are some quick tips:

- Encourage your children to share and help. Even very young children can help to set the table or decide what veggies to have for snack.
- Do something together for your community. Get active together and collect litter from your local playground.
- Respect yourself, your partner and your children.
- Say thank you.
- Let your children make choices: “Would you like to go to the park to play or for a bike ride?”
- Read with your children every day.
- Help your children to express all their emotions, even the scary ones like anger and sadness without hurting themselves or others.

Want More?

For much more information, ask your YMCA staff member for the *YMCA Raising Health Kids Resources*:

- **YMCA Raising Healthy Kids Starter Kit**
- **YMCA Raising Healthy Kids Growth Chart**
- **YMCA Raising Healthy Kids Daily Calendar**
- **YMCA Raising Healthy Kids On-The-Go Cards**
- **YMCA Raising Kids Who Read Booklet**
- **YMCA Raising Kids Who Read Tip Sheets**



Tip Sheet #1

MAKING TIME FOR READING TOGETHER

We have many demands on our time. We have to get the groceries and prepare the meals. We have to be sure the laundry is washed and the homework is done. It can be hard to find time to read with a child. We want to, but so many things demand our attention.

Reading with a child is a gift we give both to ourselves and to the child. Children who are familiar with books and like to read are prepared to succeed in school and to entertain themselves. Adults who read with a child are building shared memories along with reading skills.

But where can we find the time? We might think that a "perfect" parent makes time every night to read with their child for twenty minutes before bedtime. In reality we sometimes have to get creative to make a time for reading that fits into our busy schedules. Here are some ideas:

- Is there an older child who plays a sport? Do you find it challenging to keep a younger child entertained while you wait in the bleachers? Maybe "waiting time" becomes that special "reading time."
- Do you ride the bus together in the morning? Start the day together with a story. Driving? Maybe a book-on-tape becomes a treat you both can look forward to.
- Do you have two or more children to guide through bedtime routines? Although they might not admit it, an older child might enjoy listening to a picture book along with the younger child. And a younger child might enjoy listening to a chapter book picked out by the older child as you read it to both of them. Maybe they both get to read a picture book to you. Children's listening skills are stronger than their reading skills until about eighth grade, so continue to read aloud.
- Are you all early birds? Maybe breakfast time is story time.
- Maybe every other Tuesday afternoon is when you schedule a visit to the library. New books can add excitement to read-aloud time.



Whatever time you decide on, try to make it predictable. Children look forward to story time with you. Make a promise to yourself to put reading time near the top of your list of important things to do. Remember, you are not only raising a kid who reads, you are raising a reader who will remember to make read-aloud time a priority when they grow up and have children of their own.

Raising Kids Who Read tip sheets are brought to you by the YMCA, serving over 500,000 children across Canada. YMCA Canada is a member of the Abundant Assets Alliance, a partnership of YMCA Canada, the YMCA of the USA, and Search Institute, working together to ensure that young people have the 40 Developmental Assets® they need in order to thrive. "Reading for Pleasure" is one of the 40 Developmental Assets. This series of tip sheets and the booklet *Raising Kids Who Read* were created by YMCA of Canada to help adults develop a love of reading in young people. To download any of these resources, go to http://www.ymca.ca/eng_ycdaresources.htm#Res6.



Tip Sheet #2

READ-ALoud TIPS

“Reading aloud is the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading.” (*Becoming a Nation of Readers*, Anderson, et. al)

- **Make reading aloud fun.** Read the story to yourself first. Don't share a book that you find boring. There are plenty of stories you can both enjoy. Create different voices for different characters. Read with enthusiasm.
- **Create a routine.** Read-aloud time can be a great time to connect with your child and relax at the end of the day. Children enjoy the anticipation – “first pajamas, then brush teeth, then a story.”
- **Continue reading even as children get older.** Studies have shown that listening skills are stronger than reading skills until about the eighth grade. 15 to 20 minutes of reading a day helps reading skills continue to develop.
- **Enjoy those favourites.** Children develop “favourite” stories. They enjoy the predictability of knowing what comes next, and they can learn all the words as they hear them again and again. As your child's reading skill grows, they may enjoy reading their favourites to you or read alternating pages with you.
- **Talk about the book.** “What do you think will happen next?” Let your child ask questions about the story too. Save questions for the end if your child is impatient with interruptions of the story. Leave time for children to look at the illustrations and tell you what they see.
- **Visit your public library.** Take your child to the library. Get them their own library card. Ask the librarian to show you where different topics are located. Most libraries have lists of recommended books for different ages that can help you select quality literature for your child. Books on tape or on CD can let you listen to a good story together. Listen to the story and read along in the book.
- **Create a home library.** Select a shelf where your children can begin collecting their own books. Book clubs and library book sales can be an inexpensive way to start a collection.



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Tip Sheet #3

A DAY FULL OF PRINT

You are your child's primary role model. Take time to share how reading is important to you. Your support helps your child develop a lifelong skill that will help him or her in many ways.

Show your child how important reading is in everyday life. Talk about the many things you read during your day which helps you. For one day, have your child help you look for the many places that labels and printed words can be found. Here are some examples. Add to the list together:

- Read the labels and instructions on foods you eat.
- Read the temperature forecast for the day in the paper or on the TV screen. Talk about how that helps you plan for the day (umbrella? boots? hat and mittens? plan or cancel a picnic?).
- Share an interesting story from the newspaper, or read the scores for yesterday's sporting events, or share a comic strip you both enjoy.
- If you drive or ride public transit, notice the stop signs, street names and other words and symbols that help drivers and riders move around safely.
- Ask your child about what they read at school – ask them which doors have signs on them to tell what the room is used for. Ask where the lunch menu is posted. Ask what signs use numbers (clocks, room numbers, calendars). Ask what signs use words (room names, books, worksheets, labels on shelves.) Ask what signs use pictures. (bathroom doors, for example.)

List the ways that reading helped both of you during the day:

WHAT I READ TODAY	HOW IT HELPED ME
<i>(example: weather report)</i>	<i>Helped me decide what clothes to wear.</i>

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Tip Sheet #4

READING OLD FAVOURITES

As parents or guardians, we are excited when our children take their next leap in reading – from listening to someone read to them, to reading on their own; from reading picture books to reading chapter books. Children enjoy these leaps forward as well. But if reading for pleasure is going to become a lifelong habit, children need to read some books that aren't at the upper limit of their new-found reading skills – books they can enjoy without having to work hard at it.

Ask your child to name a favourite story "from when they were little." If it is a book they have, read it again together. Take your cue from them. Would they like to curl up in your lap and listen to you read it to them? Are they excited about reading it to you?

If it is a book you do not own, make a trip together to check it out at your local library so you can share it again.

Let them know it is fun for you to share an old favourite with them. Is there a book you really enjoyed reading to them when they were younger? Is there a favourite book you remember from your childhood? Talking about favourite books is one way to make reading fun. If you haven't done much reading together, it is never too late to start!

Tell them about choices you make in picking your own pleasure reading. We all read some materials because we have to, but when we are reading for pleasure, we can choose mysteries, science fiction or novels. We can choose books about hobbies or interests – cooking, sewing, sports, music. Adults sometimes choose to revisit old favourites as well.

Jot down your child's favourites from when they were little. Make it a point to invite your child to revisit these favourites, and to add new ones to the list.



MY FAVOURITE BOOKS FROM WHEN I WAS LITTLE ...

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Tip Sheet #5

BOYS AND BOOKS

Some boys take to reading right away. Other boys are reluctant readers. Jon Scieszka, a former teacher and author of many children's books that appeal to boys, started a web site (<http://www.guysread.com>) to help adults who want to raise boys to be readers.

Why are boys slower to dive into reading?

- Boys are slower to develop than girls. They may struggle with writing and reading skills in the early grades.
- Boys like action and movement. Reading makes them sit still and focus.
- Boys do not see many male role models around them reading for pleasure.

What can you do to encourage a boy who is a reluctant reader?

- Select books that appeal to boys. Some that have been voted as favourites include:
Flat Stanley by Jeff Brown
The Stinky Cheese Man by Jon Scieszka
Jumanji by Chris Van Allsburg



Ask your librarian to suggest books boys will like. Librarians are happy to help you. Many libraries also have computerized lists of books on all sorts of topics.

Laughter makes reading fun. Find joke and riddle books. Keep one in the kitchen or car.

Some boys find facts more interesting than fiction. Encourage boys to pick books and magazines on non-fiction topics that they care about. If they love cars, your librarian can help you locate material on hot rods, sports cars, classic cars, all kinds of cars. If they are interested in rocks, stars, or animals, there are many books that can help them explore those interests. Don't forget books on sports and the sports pages of the newspaper. A strong interest in a topic can pull a reluctant reader into books.

Encourage men to read to boys. Fathers, uncles, grandfathers, and older brothers can all read with boys. Some schools invite male school administrators, police officers, fire fighters and others throughout the community to come into the classroom and read their favourite children's books to students – increasing the number and type of adults that children can see as role models for reading for pleasure.

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