



Ideas to use at home

Helping your child with

literacy and
numeracy:

Pre-school to Year 6



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**national literacy
and numeracy week**

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Ideas for literacy and numeracy activities while:

- shopping
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Developing literacy and numeracy skills can be fun and enjoyable.

A child who is a skilled reader and writer and who can understand mathematics and solve problems will be able to enjoy an active place in Australian society. He or she will have the ability to communicate confidently, think imaginatively and make informed decisions. These skills will help him or her to continue life-long learning.

Children learn by copying adults. They also learn by playing and doing things themselves. They learn to talk by listening and they learn about reading through listening and by practising. Mistakes are part of their learning.

Encourage your child to listen, talk, read, write, think, view and problem-solve. There are close links among these skills along with a child's growing knowledge, understanding, values and attitudes.

These develop as you go about your everyday life.

Building literacy and numeracy through shopping:

Pre-school to Year 2:

- Look at the signs and read them aloud.
- In the fruit section, ask your child to count out the fruit you want. For example, you could ask for 3 oranges, 5 apples and 3 bananas, etc.
- Ask your child to add the numbers of the fruit that you have chosen.
- Ask your child to match the fruit or vegetable with the price sign.

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- How many bottles are in the trolley? How many cans are there? Packets? Can you make up a game or a rhyme together?
- How many red or blue or green packs are in the trolley? Say the colours in your home language as well as in English.
- Which pack or bottle of milk holds the most milk?

Years 3–6:

- Make a shopping list with your child before going shopping.
- Discuss 'specials' in shopping catalogues.
- Which brand is the best buy for quantity?
- Follow a street directory as you travel to the shops and find the best way to avoid traffic lights.
- Check your docket for goods and correct prices. Practise counting in your home language as well as in English.
- Estimate the weight and then use the scales to weigh fruit and vegetables.
- Give your child little problems to solve. For example, imagine that you are having seven people to a barbeque. You want to cook three sausages each for them. How many sausages will you buy? What would you do if sausages only come in packs of eight?
- Imagine that you have a budget of \$30 and you want to have a three-course dinner for four people of your own culture. What could you buy and cook? What games or stories from your culture can you bring into the evening?

Building literacy and numeracy when using the computer:

Pre-school to Year 6:

- Families can use the computer as an interactive learning tool. You can shop online, book a holiday, find a phone number and do research.
- Children can learn to send and receive emails and visit web sites of family interest. (It's important to have parental supervision when using the computer for such communications.)
- Create cards for family cultural celebrations, birthdays or a menu for a dinner party using a publishing program.
- Research a sporting hero, an interest or a hobby, a favourite singer or group.
- Research interesting people from your home culture.
- Research the origin of favourite foods from your culture and their ingredients.
- You can use the computer for reading. Research a favourite author in your culture and read more about different books he or she has written.
- Use the computer for listening to songs from your culture and practise them by singing along.



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Building literacy and numeracy when using the local library:

Pre-school to Year 2:

Read to your child daily for pleasure. Show that you enjoy reading and that your use of reading for information is also important.

Try selecting shows from a TV guide and encourage discussion about the values and attitudes in the program both before and after viewing. It is so important to read in your home language as well as in English.

Listen to your child read every day. Here are some ideas to use now and then, but remember some reading should just be for pleasure:

- look at the cover, title, pictures and talk about what the book might be about
- talk about the story so far and what might happen next
- after reading, talk about the story and ask questions
- talk about the pictures and how they add meaning to the text
- take turns when reading a harder book.

Remember the three **Ps** for new words: **pause, prompt, praise**. That is, allow your child time to work out the word (pause), use clues taken from the context (prompt) and praise your child for trying.

If necessary, however, simply tell your child the word.

Talk to your child's classroom teacher or the principal for further help and advice.

The activities above could be extended and talked about in later years by considering such things as: web sites, advertisements (on TV or in magazines) and travel brochures.



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Years 3–6:

- Talk to your child about the choices an author or filmmaker might make to create a book, play or film in a particular way.
- Talk about language choices and why characters look or behave in certain ways. Remember to not lecture, but ask questions and encourage thinking. There aren't always right or wrong answers.
- What is the purpose of the writing or film? Does it change the way you feel or think about a certain subject? How do the issues in the writing or film meet with the values and attitudes in your home culture?

Strengthening your child's writing:

Pre-school – Year 6:

- Read your child's writing or have him or her read the writing to you and comment on the positive aspects. For example, "I really like the way you've described this."
- Read and talk about the writing that your child brings home from school.
- Praise your child for using neat and legible handwriting.
- To help develop spelling and vocabulary, play word games such as I Spy, Scrabble, Boggle, Scattergories and crosswords.
- Parents should contact their child's teacher for support or advice.
- Try using different spelling strategies, such as sounding out the sounds of the word; breaking a word into parts (syllables) and spell each part; seeing if the word looks right.
- Have your child label things that he or she designs or makes.
- Make a photo album or scrapbook with your child and have him or her write captions for the photos and pictures or encourage your child to keep a diary of a special event, e.g. a holiday diary.
- Make the writing of notes, letters and stories a normal part of family life.



Building literacy and numeracy when organising family activities:

Pre-school to Year 2:

- Ask your child to count the number of plates, cups and pieces of cutlery used to set the table.
- Count with your child the number of buttons as you do up a shirt or blouse.
- Play dominoes, card games and board games involving one or two dice. This will help your child to recognise number patterns.
- Encourage your child to count the number of pegs you use to hang out the washing.
- Count the number of eggs in a carton and again after you remove some.
- Count how many steps it takes to go from the front door to the back fence. Can your child make up a song or rhyme while playing?
- Play a game of Snakes and Ladders. Use two dice and encourage your child to add the two numbers rolled.
- Try using dice that have numbers instead of dots to help your child read and recognise numbers.
- Give your child different-sized plastic cups and a larger container to play with in the bath. Encourage your child to guess how many of each cup it will take to fill the container. Can your child make up a song or rhyme while playing with this measuring?
- Put sand in a large plastic tub so children can fill containers with sand. Sieves, colanders, plastic spoons, old clean margarine tubs, plastic bottles and funnels are useful for playing with and measuring sand.
- Have children weigh themselves. Weigh other objects and family pets.
- Your child can record his or her growth on a height chart.




- Use modelling dough to roll out two 'snakes' of different lengths. Talk about one snake being shorter and the other longer.
- Mark special family and cultural events on a calendar and talk about how many days until the event and which day of the week the event will be on.
- Talk about the position of an object when putting it back on a shelf, e.g. "The ball is next to the car." "Let's put the book on top of this box."
- Look for objects inside or outside that are shaped like a circle, triangle, square or rectangle. Look for different sized shapes or shapes in different positions.
- Fold paper to make shapes: a hat, boat or plane. Talk about the shapes you are making.
- Borrow a book from the library about origami (Japanese paper folding) and make new shapes.
- Make your own jigsaw from a picture in a magazine. Cut them into specific shapes, e.g., make one all triangles and another squares. Count the pieces and discuss the images and colours in the picture.
- Make biscuits using cookie cutters or pretend biscuits from modelling dough. Talk about the shape of each biscuit.

Years 3–6:

- Read a recipe at home and write a list of the ingredients to buy. Measure the ingredients when at home. Enjoy making the dish together.
- What is the total number of cups and tablespoons that the ingredients add up to?
- Talk about events in terms of time. For example, "It's going to take about three minutes to cook this, so you might have time to set the table."
- Talk about the route you are taking when walking to school or to the park.

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If you are used to speaking a language other than English at home, it is important that you continue to support your child in maintaining the home language. This will also help your child with English.

The following suggestions apply to all languages, including English:

Pre-school to Year 2:

- Sometimes ask your child questions that require more than a simple answer or a very limited response like “yes” or “no”.
- Show by your behaviour that you are listening, not just hearing. Build on your child’s responses. Interact with them. Ask questions, add information and make links between ideas.
- Talk with your child about the ideas and events in stories as you read books together.
- Listen to your child as he or she tells you about events that did not involve you. This helps children clarify their ideas and prepares them for writing.

Years 3–6:

- Ask your child to discuss with you a wide variety of topics. Encourage your child to talk more deeply about a topic, so ask for more information.
- Discuss different ways to solve problems. What would happen if...?
- Ask your child to give reasons for his or her choices when making a decision. Listen and respond in ways that encourage further thinking aloud, rather than ending the conversation with your opinion.
- Provide opportunities for your child to listen to and share ideas with a range of people from various backgrounds and age groups.
- Talk at a normal pace and volume and use adult words.



Building literacy and numeracy when watching television:



Years 3–6:

- Discuss different types of programs (-comedy, soap opera, musical, documentary, drama, lifestyle, thriller, etc.).
- Watch adaptations of favourite books and stories - even cartoon versions. Discuss the similarities and differences.
- Watch advertisements and favourite shows together and discuss why you like them. Discuss some of the values and moral codes in them.
- Ask your child to total the number of hours that each family member views television in a week and discuss the findings.
- Time the advertising during a film or time the intervals between the advertisement breaks. Did this impact on the program at all? How does the advertisement try to persuade you to really want to buy or use the product?



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Building literacy and numeracy when travelling:

Pre-school to Year 2:

- Play licence plate games by making up words from the letters; or add the numbers.
- Count the telegraph poles or signs.
- Play *Spotto* – list twenty items the child needs to ‘spot’ or discover.
- Discuss the shape of road signs. Discuss what different symbols mean.
- Make up stories or histories about street names or locations.
- Guess the colour of the next car to appear around the corner. Change this to every third car.
- Give each child a colour to count and tally the number of cars between two points. Then change it to trucks.
- Listen to stories on a tape or CD or sing songs or clap out the rhythm.

Years 3–6:

- Use public transport and look for times and destinations. Count the number of train stations or bus stops to your destination. Look at the route on a map.
- Estimate how many minutes it will take to reach the next town if you are travelling at 60 kilometres an hour.
- Keep a diary on long trips. Cut out pictures from brochures of each town and record thoughts and reactions about each one.





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Individual brochures on literacy and numeracy are available online in six languages (Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Turkish and Vietnamese) at www.nlnw.nsw.edu.au



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