



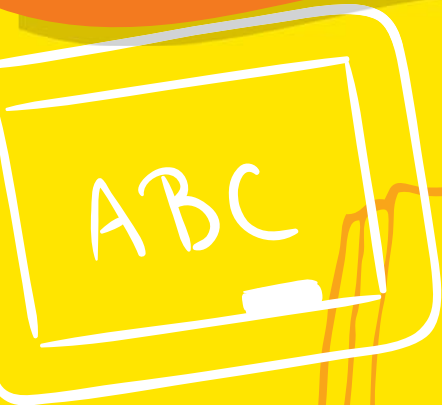
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Reading and Writing with Your Child

Kindergarten to Grade 6

A PARENT GUIDE





Ontario

Reading and Writing with Your Child, Kindergarten to Grade 6
is an update of the Ontario Ministry of Education's ***Helping Your***
Child with Reading and Writing: A Guide for Parents.

Produced by the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat in
partnership with the Parent Engagement Office. New to
this edition: links to games and activities on TVOKids.com.

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The greater the support that families provide for their children’s learning and educational progress, the more likely that their children will do well in school and continue on with their education.

Karen Mapp and Anne Henderson, 2002

*A New Wave of Evidence:
The Impact of School, Family, and Community
Connections on Student Achievement*

NOTE TO PARENTS

You are your child's first teacher.

With your support, your child will grow up to become an excellent reader with strong writing skills – and what a difference that will make when he or she enters college, university or the workforce one day! You don't need a lot of special skills to help your child learn to read and write. Just spending time with your child doing everyday activities makes all the difference in the world.

Whether your child is just starting out or can already read and write, there is always room for more learning. As your child grows older, he or she will enjoy new opportunities and new successes because a first teacher – you – took the time at home to actively talk, play and listen. All this helps reinforce what your child learns at school.

We have created this guide to help you support your child. All tips are based on Ontario's curriculum and are connected with what your child is learning in school.

Remember, lifelong success starts with strong reading and writing skills. And that means your child's lifelong success starts with you.

Have fun learning together!

Please note: In this guide, the word *parent* refers to parents, guardians, caregivers and other family members who help children learn to read and write.

HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY CHILD'S LEARNING?

Learning to read and write happens at school AND at home.

This guide contains practical information that will help you support your child with reading and writing at home. It suggests easy and fun activities that you can do with your child – from reading food labels and writing grocery lists, to talking together on the way to sports practice, to discussing a movie with the entire family. All these shared experiences will help develop your child's literacy skills.

The home-school connection is also important to your child's success. When children see their parents working with their teachers, they feel more secure and confident about school. Talk to your child's teacher to help build your child's confidence and to find out more about how you can support your child's learning.

All children change physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially as they grow up. Yet each child brings unique abilities, needs and experiences to learning. By acknowledging – and affirming – your child's unique personal and cultural identity, you will help your child flourish as a reader and writer.

Finally, remember that learning to read and write does not take place all at once. Everyone learns at a different rate. It just takes time, practice and support. Whenever you can, wherever you can, encourage your child and show that you have confidence in his or her abilities.



READING AND WRITING MILESTONES

The best time for children to start learning to read and write is when they are very young. This is when they begin to develop positive attitudes and basic skills. Reading to children and talking to them about their ideas (even if those ideas don't make sense to you right away) helps children reach a deeper level of understanding. If you and your child are more comfortable in a language other than English, please use it! Reading and talking to your child in the language of your home is very beneficial.

Learning to read and write involves a number of stages that eventually lead to reading fluently and writing clearly. The next few pages capture the development of literacy from the early years to the junior grades and beyond.



READING AND WRITING MILESTONES

Before your child begins to read and write

Young children are eager learners and can develop literacy skills in a variety of ways. In this stage, your child:

- Likes to be read to and to look at books or words
- Learns about words by playing with letter blocks, looking at picture books, playing with magnetic letters, singing songs and reading simple traffic signs or logos on food packages
- Begins to understand that his or her own thoughts can be turned into text, whether on paper or on a computer, by using pictures, symbols and letters
- Begins to act like a reader – for example, holds a book or e-reader, or works a computer mouse and pretends to read
- Begins to act like a writer – for example, holds a pencil, crayon or marker and pretends to write, types on a keyboard, makes letters with modelling clay
- Uses both recall and pictures to tell the story
- Is curious and asks lots of questions about his or her world

For some fun things to do, visit www.tvokids.com and click on Ages 2 to 5 for these great games.



Letter/sound recognition (phonics)

Magic Mailbox ABC's

Click on the mailbox to hear the different letter names of the alphabet.

www.tvokids.com/games/magicmailboxabcs

Letterella (Beginner Level)

Learn the different letter sounds of the alphabet.

www.tvokids.com/games/letterella

Reading around us (environmental print)

Sign Match

Match the signs that you see around you.

www.tvokids.com/games/signmatch

Understanding what we read (reading comprehension)

Out of Order

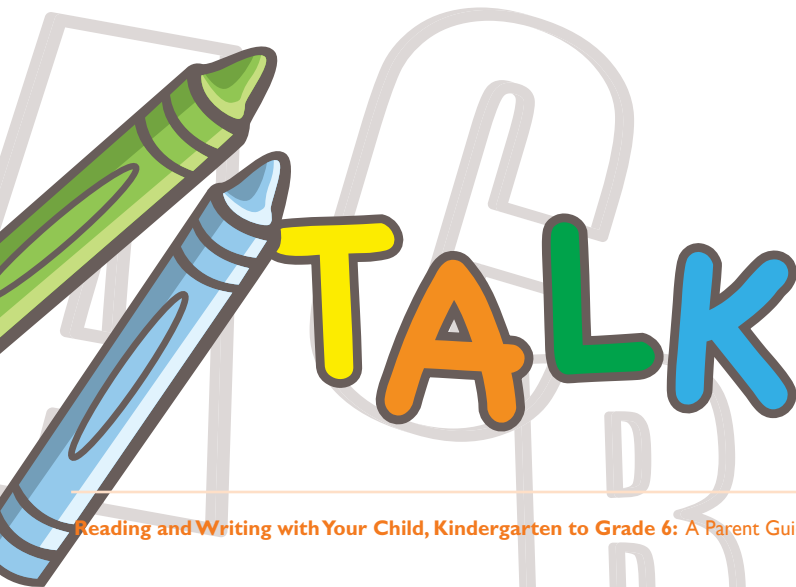
Put the story pictures in order.

www.tvokids.com/games/outorder

Gisèle's Big Backyard Book Club

Listen to great stories!

www.tvokids.com/activities/gisèlesbigbackyardbookclub



READING AND WRITING MILESTONES

When your child is first learning to read and write

When children are first learning to read and write, it is important to talk about the ideas they are reading about. This will help build their comprehension skills. In this stage, your child:

- Begins to match written words to spoken words and to see relationships between sounds and letters
- Begins to experiment with reading and says words out loud when reading
- Finds pictures on the page or screen helpful in understanding the meaning of words
- Begins to experiment with writing – for example, writes symbols that resemble letters, writes groups of random letters and then eventually writes real words
- Asks questions about what he or she would like to learn (encourage this interest!)



For some fun things to do, visit www.tvokids.com and click on Ages 2 to 5 for these great games.



Letter/sound recognition (phonics)

Alphabet Goop

Learn all about the beginning sounds of familiar words.
www.tvokids.com/games/alphabetgoop

Letterella (Pro Level)

Learn all about the beginning sounds of familiar words.
www.tvokids.com/games/letterella

Rhyming: nursery rhymes and rhyming words

Loosey Goosey Rhymes

Learn all about words that rhyme in nursery rhymes.
www.tvokids.com/games/looseygooseyrhymes

Rhyme Time

Watch, click, learn and listen to these fun nursery rhymes.
www.tvokids.com/games/rhymetime

Words we often see: sight words/high-frequency words

Melvin's Marvellous Words

Learning sight words helps you become a better reader.
www.tvokids.com/games/melvinsmarvellouswords

Melvin's Marvellous Stories

Learning sight words helps you become a better reader.
www.tvokids.com/games/melvinsmarvellousstories

READING AND WRITING MILESTONES

As your child learns to read and write

With regular practice, children develop fluency in reading and writing. At the same time, they will also learn to think more deeply about the stories or information that they read. In this stage, your child:

- Is able to adapt his or her reading to different types of reading materials, recognizes many words, knows how to make sense of words and is willing to try reading new things
- Writes simple sentences by using real letters, spaces between words and some punctuation
- Enjoys writing and shows interest in writing in different ways – for example, writes grocery lists, short emails or text messages
- Starts to be aware that media are used for different purposes – for example, to educate, to convey a message or to sell something



For some fun things to do, visit www.tvokids.com and click **Ages 11 and Under** for these great games.



Spelling: spelling familiar words

Word Hunt

Hangman the tvokids.com way. Play the winter version too!
www.tvokids.com/games/vikingwordhunt and
www.tvokids.com/games/vikingwinterwordhunt

Word Magic

Practise spelling by yourself or with another player.
www.tvokids.com/games/wordmagic

Understanding what we read (reading comprehension): describing objects

Bump-A-Word

Use describing words in your writing to make it more interesting.
www.tvokids.com/games/tumbletownbumpaword

Grammar: parts of speech

Big Escape

Learn about nouns, verbs, adjectives and many other grammar goodies. (Be sure to check out all four chapters of The Big Escape.)
www.tvokids.com/games/bigescape

READING AND WRITING MILESTONES

As your child becomes a more fluent reader and a clearer writer

Fluent readers think about what they are reading in the context of other experiences they have had. In this stage, your child:

- Connects ideas and experiences in print to his or her own knowledge and experience
- Predicts events in a story
- Values reading and does so on his or her own initiative
- Extends reading skills to writing and begins to:
 - Use a variety of strategies to spell words correctly
 - Use a variety of types of sentences
 - Write about things he or she cares about (it could be your family, a video game or a pet)



For some fun things to do, visit www.tvokids.com and click Ages 11 and Under for these great games.



Word fun: spelling, comprehension, word games

The Amazing Spelling Fleas

Fun with grammar, spelling and reading comprehension.
www.tvokids.com/games/amazingsspellingfleas

Spelling: spelling unfamiliar words

Spot and Spell

Try to spell all the words correctly.
www.tvokids.com/games/spotandspell

Reading Round-Up

Word search the tvokids.com way!
www.tvokids.com/games/readingroundup

Reading: book titles and reviews for all levels

Tumbletown Reads Book Club

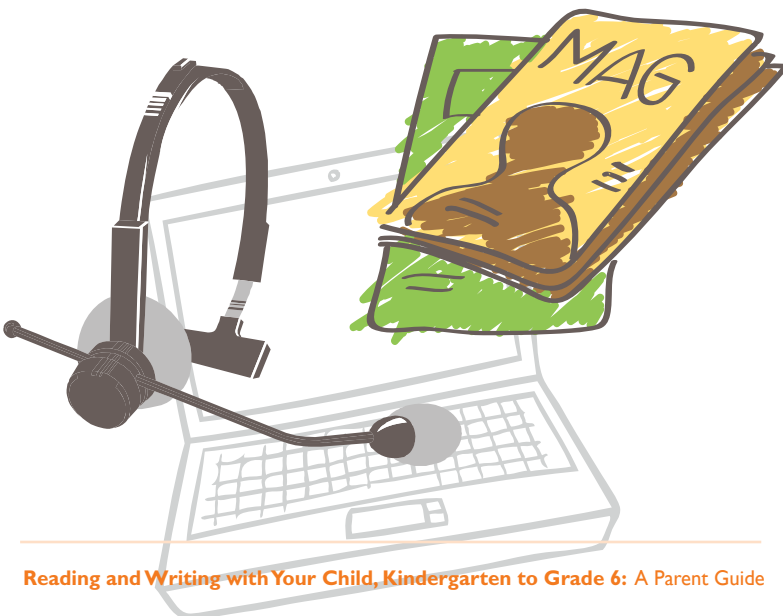
Read book reviews written by kids.
www.tvokids.com/activities/tumbletownreadsbookclub

READING AND WRITING MILESTONES

As your child continues to grow as a reader and writer

Critical literacy is the practice of examining and discussing the underlying messages in print or in other media in order to understand the world in which we live. Children are practising critical literacy skills when they think about the purposes for writing and talk about how texts (that includes books, websites, magazines, posters and so on) represent different points of view, beliefs and perspectives. In this stage, your child:

- Is able to read and understand different types of texts more precisely and quickly and with expression
- Is able to read, write and create a variety of media to express opinions and points of view (such as creating and watching videos, blogging, and reading graphic novels)
- Is interested in the social aspect of reading and writing and enjoys sharing thoughts and ideas about the texts he or she chooses (such as by sharing ideas in discussion with friends, on social media sites and through instant messaging)



For some fun things to do, visit www.tvokids.com and click Ages 11 and Under for these great games.



Word fun: spelling, comprehension, word games

The Amazing Spelling Fleas

Fun with grammar, spelling and reading comprehension.
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Reading Round-Up

Word search the tvokids.com way!
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Reading: book titles and reviews for all levels

Tumbletown Reads Book Club

Read book reviews written by kids.
www.tvokids.com/activities/tumbletownreadsbookclub

FOUR TOP LITERACY TIPS FOR PARENTS

TIP ONE TALK WITH YOUR CHILD



Learning is a result of listening, which in turn leads to even better listening and attentiveness to the other person. In other words, to learn from the child, we must have empathy, and empathy grows as we learn.

Alice Miller, 2002
For Your Own Good

It may seem obvious, but it is as important to listen to as to talk with your child. Children develop the skills for reading and writing through both talking and listening.

You help your child learn about how words work when you:

- Sound out letters in print, such as signs on the street
- Sing word games in which your child replaces beginning sounds to make new, funny words
- Invent spelling by using the letters your child knows to spell new words

Talk also builds your child's capacity for understanding new things. This kind of talk goes beyond telling your child something (such as, "It's time to brush your teeth," or "Wash your hands before dinner") to having a conversation with him or her. Here are some ways to get this kind of talk going in your home:

- **Talk with your child about problems and solutions.** Talk about how you might manage day-to-day problems, such as finding time to make dinner, so that you will be ready to watch a favourite TV show or go online together.

FOUR TOP LITERACY TIPS FOR PARENTS

- **Make sure your child has time to think.** It sometimes takes time to think of what to say next. Be ready to wait for what your child has to say. If he or she says, “I don’t know what I think,” wait for a better answer – there’s one in there somewhere!
- **Talk with your child in his or her first language.** Children transfer their knowledge of one language to another very well. Speaking in your first language will help your child with English and French and other languages as well. It will also give your child opportunities to learn more about his or her own cultural history.
- **Ask questions that will lead your child to talk about his or her ideas.** Instead of telling your child something, try to ask a question that will lead your child to talk about what he or she thinks. For example, instead of telling your child how you are planning to celebrate a family event, ask for ideas about making a plan. (Be ready for creativity and to help your child follow through with the plan!)

It is very important both to listen to children read aloud and to continue to read to them even after they become independent, fluent readers. There are many different ways of reading together: taking turns reading pages, reading in unison and stopping to talk throughout the reading. Children choose books about topics that interest them, and your interest in the same books will lead to rich conversations that will build talking and listening skills.

If you’re stuck, here are some “talk starters” to get your conversation going:

- What did you notice about ...
- What else could you have done ...
- What would you do if ...
- What would happen if ...
- How do you know that?
- Convince me about that!

As you are listening

- If it’s a book being read, show your child that you are enjoying the book by being curious and asking questions.
- Make connections to what he or she already knows.
- Rephrase what you are hearing.
- Be patient. Make sure your child has enough time to figure out tricky words.
- After reading, talk about interesting and puzzling parts of the book.

FOUR TOP LITERACY TIPS FOR PARENTS

TIP TWO BUILD HABITS OF UNDERSTANDING



The more that you read, the more things you will know.
The more that you learn, the more places you'll go.

Dr. Seuss, 1978

I Can Read with My Eyes Shut!

You can help your child to learn about himself or herself and the world through reading – what teachers call “to read with understanding” – by trying out some strategies, such as these:

- **Asking questions.** When reading with your child, ask such questions as “Why is this happening?”; “What might happen next?”; “Does this make sense?”; or “Was it fair when ...?” Such questions help children make connections between parts of a story.
- **Reading “between the lines.”** To make inferences – to discover meaning that is not directly stated – your child needs to learn to use information both from the story and from his or her own knowledge and experience. This strategy of reading “between the lines” involves gathering clues and using them to “create” meaning.
- **Putting it all together.** You can encourage your child to put it all together first by talking about all the information he or she has read, then summarizing the important points and putting those points together like pieces of a puzzle.
- **Figuring out difficult words.** Allow your child time to figure out what a word might be or to recognize a mistake. If a mistake doesn't affect the meaning, let it go. Your child can use various tactics to figure out a word he or she doesn't know:
 - Sound out the word.
 - Look at the pictures.
 - Divide the word into smaller parts.
 - Reread the words before and after the difficult word.
 - Skip over the word for the moment and read on further.
 - Talk about what he or she has read so far to check understanding.
 - Ask a brother or sister for the answer.

FOUR TOP LITERACY TIPS FOR PARENTS

Your child is growing up in a media-rich, technological world. Changes in society are happening so quickly that children need time to think about the underlying messages in print or in other media. Here are some ways you can help to foster critical literacy skills:

- Help your child understand the speaker’s viewpoint or perspective.
- Discuss the fairness of the message and look for the misleading effects of missing information.
- Talk about how language is used to persuade people – for example, talk about the powerful effects of language in advertising.
- Ask if your child has learned something new that prompts new questions. Does it change what your child thinks about the topic? How can he or she find out if it is accurate?

To encourage your child to read critically, ask questions:

- What is this book about? Why are you interested in reading it?
- What does the author of this news article want us to know or think?
- Does the writer want us to believe something?
- What does this magazine’s theme say about children, teenagers and parents?
- How has the author used words and images to communicate the message?



FOUR TOP LITERACY TIPS FOR PARENTS

TIP THREE READ EVERY DAY



... children in my ideal kingdom would learn to read easily, long before they came to school ... So please, I beg you all to read superb books aloud to your children! Begin on the day they are born.

Mem Fox, 2005

“If I Were Queen of the World”

Try to read with your child every day. All family members can help. (It’s like breakfast – it shouldn’t be skipped!) It is the single most important thing you can do to help your child learn to read and write and to succeed in school. Children who are read to when they are young are more likely to love reading and to be good readers when they are older. Start reading when your child is very young. There is no downside!

You are your child’s most important reading role model, so make sure your child sees you reading and writing for your own purposes. (It doesn’t have to be the Great Canadian Novel – maybe it’s just an email from a friend who has moved far away.) As your child’s first teacher and role model, your involvement and support can influence lifelong attitudes and interests, as well as achievement in reading and writing.

Here are some reading and writing activities that you may want to share with your child in your busy daily schedule:

- Read traffic, store and restaurant signs.
- Read food labels, schedules, maps, instructions, advertisements, flyers and brochures.
- Browse online for recipes, the meanings of words and places on a map.
- Write shopping lists and telephone messages.
- Write the date and time of appointments and activities on a family calendar.
- Read and write greeting cards, thank you notes or letters (printing, cursive handwriting or using a keyboard are all fine) and email and text messages.

FOUR TOP LITERACY TIPS FOR PARENTS

Children respond well to routine, so if possible, make reading together something that you and your child look forward to every day. Here are some ideas about how to make the most of this time together:

Create a daily reading time:

- Set aside a special time each day when you can give your full attention to reading with your child.
- Find out what your child is passionate about and learn as much as you can about this topic.
- Go to the library together or browse online for material.
- Use books featuring your child's favourite character from a specific TV show.
- Use great websites from home or your local library (like the ones in the back of this guide) to read online.
- Include a spot for games, puzzles, comics or software.
- Read books and other materials in your child's first language. This will help your child with reading in English and French and other languages as well.



FOUR TOP LITERACY TIPS FOR PARENTS

TIP FOUR MAKE IT FUN, MAKE IT MATTER



...make [reading] fun. It shouldn't be like homework. Make reading entertaining – make funny sounds and act it out together – kids really like that!

Robert Munsch, 2005
“A Moment with Munsch”

Cracking the Code

When children enjoy reading, they read a lot. And in reading a lot, they become good readers. They also read to understand things and to learn more about themselves and the world. (Or maybe they're motivated to read up on that video game they're stuck on!) They don't get bogged down by the mechanics of language because they have cracked its code. At that moment, a whole new world opens up for your child.

Choose what you're going to read together:

- Look online for ideas, perhaps based on themes that interest your child.
- Make a trip to the library or bookstore to browse for titles.

Choose all kinds of books, all kinds of reading material:

- All kinds of non-fiction – perhaps early reader books about Canada or other places in the world, wild animals or dinosaurs
- Books or articles that contain positive or powerful ideas about the world
- All kinds of fiction – action, fantasy, science fiction, funny stories
- Stories that reflect how they see themselves: adventurer, hero, princess, animal lover (early veterinarian in the making!), detective, caregiver and more
- Books in a series (children like to identify with familiar characters)
- Newspapers, magazines, e-subscriptions
- Comic books and graphic novels, cartoons, jokes, baseball cards, game scores, brain teasers
- Song lyrics or scripts that appeal to their musical and artistic tastes

FOUR TOP LITERACY TIPS FOR PARENTS

Make the story come alive:

- Use different voices for different characters in a story.
- Use your child's name instead of a character's name whenever it appears in the story.
- Compare characters in the story with people you both know. Talk about what they have in common with real people.
- Make puppets and use them to act out the story.
- Encourage your child to draw or paint characters and scenarios. Talk about the idea that "every picture tells a story."
- Reread your child's favourite stories as many times as your child wants to hear them.

Make it relevant:

- Help your child understand that most stories express a particular point of view or perspective. (You could talk about how the story would change if one of the other characters was telling it.)
- Check for respect and social and cultural fairness in the story. Are characters in the story represented fairly?
- Talk about why the author might have written the story, especially if the story conveys a social message.
- Explore different opinions about things going on in the world by looking at letters to the editor, editorials and columns in the newspaper.



EXPECT THE BEST OF YOUR CHILD

We hope you have found this guide helpful in supporting your child on the exciting journey to reading fluently and writing clearly. With high expectations, patience and thoughtful interaction, your child will blossom into a reader and writer.

Partnering with your child's teacher to support reading and writing at home is one of the most powerful choices you can make for your child's future. University of Toronto professor and author Jim Cummins says we can support children to learn in four key ways:

1. When we make learning social and interactive
2. When we ask questions and explore the answers in depth together
3. When we encourage choice, give them opportunities to grow and let them establish their own voice
4. When we encourage them to question and take risks (while keeping them safe)

While expecting the best for your child

1. Praise successes.
2. Don't dwell on mistakes.
3. Encourage your child to ask a teacher for help.
4. Help your child keep track of how he or she is doing.



ONLINE RESOURCES

TVOParents

This site is a comprehensive resource for videos and other tools to help parents learn about and support their children.

<http://tvoparents.tv.org>

TVOKids

This website is home to more than 170 educational games, more than 4,500 videos and the TVOKids Homework Zone.

www.tvokids.com

KidLit

KidLit lets kids publish their work online and have people comment on it. Kids can also send in their own reviews of their favourite books.

<http://mgfx.com/kidlit/>

Be a Great Parent

The Regional Municipality of Niagara's campaign focuses on answering parents' questions about effective communication, guidance and relationships with their child or teen. Useful poster resources and fact sheets.

www.beagreatparent.ca

Canadian Wildlife Federation

This site provides resources and runs habitat programs. Inspires children of all ages to learn more about the value of wildlife and healthy habitats.

www.cwf-fcf.org/en/educate/ed_resources/kids-corner/

Canadian Geographic Kids

Children can explore Canada through its woolly wildlife, giant geography and fun facts. Hosts games, homework help and much more.

www.canadiangeographic.ca/kids/

Kayak: Canada's History Magazine for Kids

The site introduces children to the who, what, when, where, why and how of Canada's past and how it connects to today. Published by Canada's National History Society, *Kayak* is designed to catch the imagination of children from ages 7 to 11.

<http://resource.canadashistory.ca/kayak/>

Ontario Education Resource Bank (OERB)

This online library has activities and resource materials for students of all grades. Students can participate in online exercises and activities that they can do at home to reinforce learning.

www.edu.gov.on.ca/elearning/bank.html

BBC Kids

This commercial-free channel airs programming for children, from pre-schoolers to teens. Mainly from Britain but some Canadian content as well.

www.bbckids.ca

Parents Matter

This website houses tools and links to help parents be more involved in their children's learning and development.

www.parentsmatter.ca/index.cfm

Discovery Channel School

This site offers a broad range of free classroom resources and learning tools to help children take charge of their own learning with. Designed with busy teachers and parents in mind.

www.discoveryeducation.com/teachers/

ONLINE RESOURCES

National Geographic Kids

This children's magazine is published by the National Geographic Society. Suitable for children between the ages of 6 and 14.

<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/>

PBS Kids

This colourful collection of websites is based on favourite TV shows, such as *Clifford the Big Red Dog*, *Teletubbies*, *Reading Rainbow* and *Sesame Street*.

Kids will enjoy seeing their favourite characters online, playing games with them and learning early reading strategies.

<http://pbskids.org/>

4Kids.org

4Kids.org is a team of educators, writers, technology specialists and students that produces weekly articles and links demonstrating how online learning can be a safe, fun and adventurous activity.

www.4kids.org

Sample virtual field trips

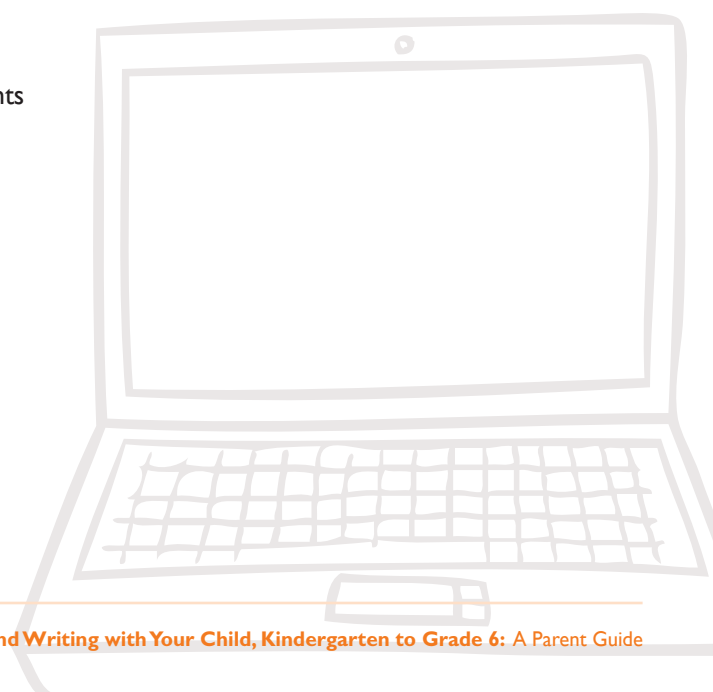
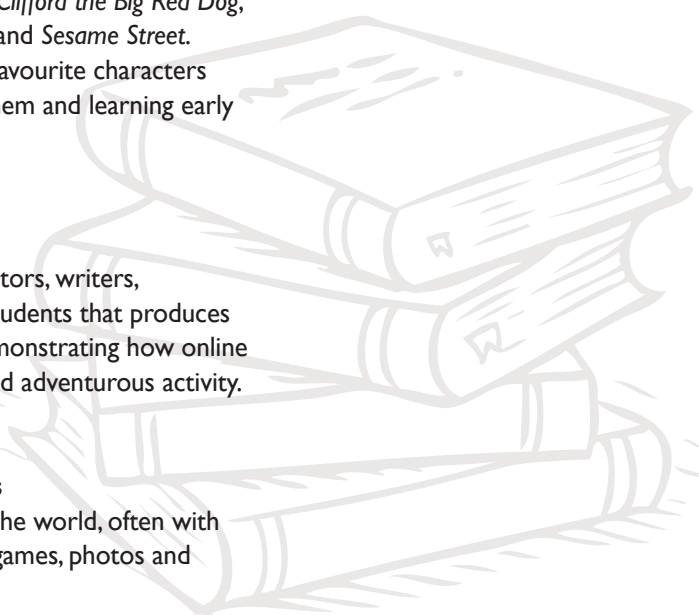
Visit various places around the world, often with webcam access or through games, photos and videos.

www.theteachersguide.com/virtualtours.html

United Nations Cyberschoolbus

Visit the UN's information centre for both students and teachers.

<http://cyberschoolbus.un.org>



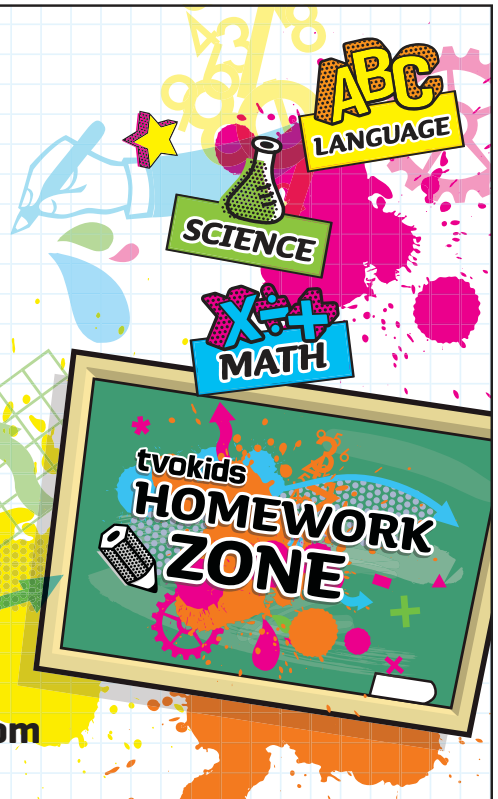
HOMWORK ZONE

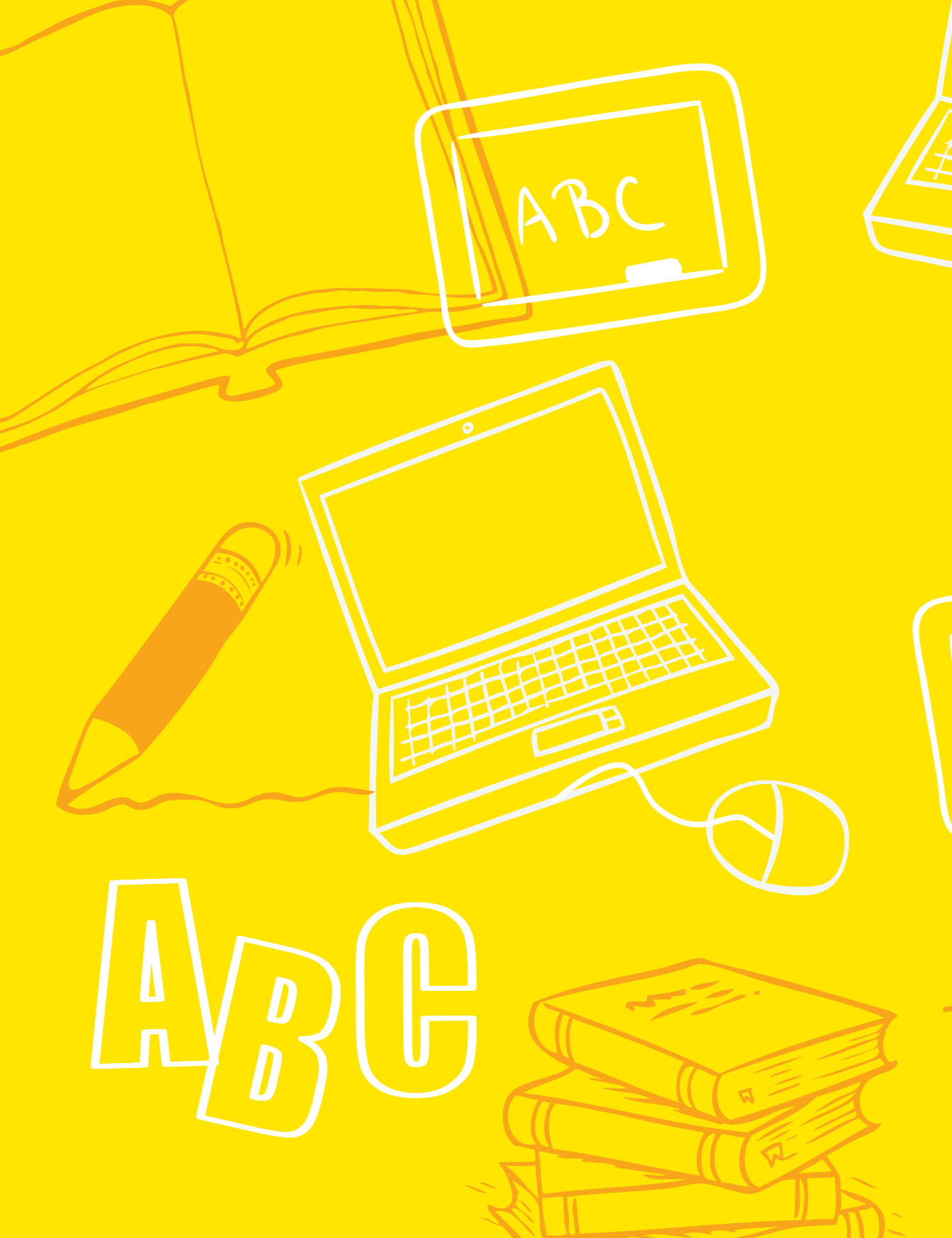
The TVOKids Homework Zone is an easy-to-navigate environment in which kids can practise concepts they've learned in school and get support for the three core areas of the Ontario curriculum: math, science and literacy. It includes teacher videos, TVOKids shows, web games, printable worksheets, interactive practice tools and study tips. The Homework Zone gives you the opportunity to see how concepts might be taught in class and how you can support your kids' learning at home.

**Visit TVOKids Homework Zone
for free curriculum-linked
videos, games and activities
to help your child with literacy
development, math
and science.**



homeworkzone.tvokids.com





ABC

Ontario Ministry of Education

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