



Quick facts on literacy

On adult literacy in Canada

1. 42 per cent of adult Canadians have low literacy skills that do not enable them to cope with the demands of everyday life and work.
2. Of those 42 per cent, 15 per cent function at the lowest level where individuals may, for example, be unable to read the dosage instructions on a medicine bottle.
3. In Canada and the US, adults who score at the two lowest literacy skills levels (the 42 per cent of adult Canadians mentioned above) are about two times more likely to be unemployed for six months or longer, compared with those whose skills levels are higher.
4. Almost half (49.8 per cent) of adult Canadians score in the two lowest skill levels in numeracy, and these people are 2.5 times more likely to be recipients of social assistance, compared with those who scored higher in numeracy.

On workplace literacy

5. The level of engagement in literacy activities in the home and at work has a significant impact on literacy scores.
6. According to The International Survey of Reading Skills (ISRS), it is estimated that employers will receive a 251% rate of return on workplace learning programs.
7. Improved literacy skills among employees bring about numerous benefits, including higher productivity, increased workplace safety, a more engaged workforce and increased competitiveness.
8. Low literacy levels cost businesses \$2.5 billion annually in lost productivity (*Literacy Alberta, 2007*).
9. In 2002, the average lost-time injury in Ontario cost \$59,000 and in 2006, the cost was approximately \$98,000 (*Workplace Safety and Insurance Board*).
10. An organization active in offering education and employment opportunities is more likely to retain its employees.

11. In a workplace literacy study, 90% of employers indicated that employees who took basic skills programs had an increased ability to work independently (*The Impact of Basic Skills Programs on Canadian Workplaces (2nd ed.)*, 1997).

On family literacy

12. Family Literacy refers to the many ways families develop and use literacy skills, from enjoying a storybook together at bedtime and during the day to playing with word games, singing, writing to a relative or friend, sharing day-to-day tasks such as making a shopping list or using a recipe, and surfing the Internet for fun and interesting sites.
13. Reading to children more than once a day has a substantial positive impact on their future academic skills. In addition, research indicates children with early exposure to books and reading are better at performing mathematical tasks.
14. Children aged 2 to 3 who are read to several times a day do substantially better in kindergarten at the age of 4 and 5 than youngsters who are read to only a few times a week or less.
15. Having a parent or other caring person read aloud with their children helps children learn listening skills, vocabulary and language skills, as well as develop imagination and creativity.
16. Some experts say that for 80 per cent of children, simple immersion in reading and books will lead to real, independent reading by school age.
17. Parents should pay careful attention to three potential reading slump times that can hinder a child's reading development: when entering kindergarten; at grade 4; and when entering high school.
18. Family literacy activities benefit the whole family. Reading ability is like a muscle - if you don't exercise it often, you may not be able to maintain the same level of reading ability as you age. Reinforcing reading and writing as a family activity benefits people of all ages! So setting aside time everyday to read with your children, as well as independently, will help keep your mind sharp.

1, 2,3,4,5,6 Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (Statistics Canada and OECD, 2005) 7 Family Literacy in Canada: Profiles of Effective Practices, Adele Thomas (Soleil Publishing Inc., 1998) 8,9 National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, Statistics Canada, 1996-1997 10 Family Literacy Foundation; 2001 11,12 How to Make Your Child a Reader for Life, Paul Kropp (Random House Canada, 2000), © ABC CANADA Literacy Foundation.