



**READ TO ME PROGRAM
RESOURCES
FOR NEWCOMERS**



Introduction

Read to Me is a non-profit, hospital-based early reading promotion program. We give a free bag of books and reading information to every baby born in Nova Scotia to encourage all families to read, talk and sing to their baby from birth.

The foundation for language and literacy is laid in infancy, through positive and repeated interactions with parents and caregivers. The act of putting books into the hands of families has a tremendous impact on the health and wellbeing of babies. Research also shows that the simple act of giving books in a health care setting communicates to parents and caregivers that reading, talking, and singing plays a key role in their baby's brain and language development.

Families are visited within 24 hours of birth at the hospital bedside by a Read to Me representative, who provides guidance on how to use the books and resources to support their baby's early literacy through fun, daily activities.

Each Read to Me bag contains high quality board books and reading resources, and is available in Arabic, English, French, Gaelic, Mi'kmaq and Simplified Chinese.

If a family has another language, Read to Me offers individual books in over 26 languages. Twins and triplets each receive their own bag, with their own unique books. Special materials are also available for families who are hearing or visually impaired.



Home Language



A home language is the language heard by a child at home and used by parents for daily communication. It is also the language of the heart of the family.

Not only does one's home language play a critical role in attachment with family members and in the formation of a strong cultural identity, parents speak more fluently and expressively in their home language(s), encouraging increased and complex language development in their baby. When parents speak in their home language(s), they are modelling a rich and diverse vocabulary, linguistic and grammatical structures, and promoting fluid and natural exchanges in everyday activities.

Oral storytelling, singing and rhymes are encouraged for all parents, and particularly for parents who lack proficiency in reading. Storytelling is equally impactful as reading books in supporting brain and language development in the early years.

Key Messages About Home Languages & Bilingualism

It is important for parents to view their home language(s) as an asset, and a welcome part of their baby's identity

Parents shouldn't feel pressured to speak a second language for fear that they are risking their child's language development, success in school, or integration into Canadian society.

Consistent and frequent exposure to home language(s) is needed, ideally from family and caregivers, to ensure a child's optimal language development.

Bilingualism does not cause a delay or linguistic confusion for children.

Children can pick up a second or additional language more easily if they have a strong first language base. Learning a second language can happen at any age.

If you meet an expectant parent, let them know that they will receive a free bag of books and reading information from Read to Me at the hospital, when their baby is born. They can request a bag in one of 6 main languages offered and can have an additional free book in their language, if available.

On occasion, patients are discharged from the hospital before a Read to Me representative can give them their bag. In this case, a bag can be requested on Read to Me's website: www.readtome.ca

Languages Available From Read to Me

American Sign Language	Kanyen'kehà: Ka	Simplified Chinese
Arabic	Korean	Somali
Bengali	Kurdish	Spanish
Burmese	Malayalam	Swahili
Dari	Mi'kmaq	Tagalog
English	Nepali	Telugu
Farsi	Punjabi	Tigrinya
French	Pashto	Turkish
Gaelic	Plains Cree	Ukrainian
Hebrew	Polish	Urdu
Hindi	Portuguese	Vietnamese
Japanese	Russian	Visit readtome.ca to see the most up-to-date list of languages available.

Free Multilingual Resources

Some newcomers may lack access to books in their home language, which can contribute to the loss of their language. Having access to reading tips and books in one's home language allows parents the opportunity to read with their children and encourage their literacy development. Unfortunately, some languages can be very difficult to source in physical formats. In this case, online books and reading resources can be invaluable in helping a family preserve a connection to their language.

If you work with families, encourage registration for a free library card to access books and programs. Some newcomers may not be familiar with the concept of a library, or may come from a country where library services have an associated membership cost to use them. The Read to Me bag includes information about public libraries in Nova Scotia, and a brochure listing services for each library region in the province.

Below are links to organizations that have free reading resources in a variety of languages. Click on the organization name to visit each website.

[Global Storybooks Portal](#)

This is a free multilingual literacy resource for children. Books are available to be read online or printed off for free in a variety of formats. You may be interested in printing off paper copies of books in difficult-to-source languages. There is a specific portal for African languages as well: <https://www.africanstorybook.org/>

[Reading Rockets](#)

Reading Rockets provides free resources about teaching children to read and helping kids who struggle with reading. This link leads to multilingual tips for reading to children at a variety of ages.

[Colorín colorado](#)

This is a bilingual (Spanish/English) site for educators and families of English learners. This link leads to tips for reading to babies and toddlers in Tagalog, Haitian Creole, Hmong, Korean and Vietnamese.

['Talking is Key'](#)

This site features videos for parents that explain how children from 3 months to 5 years learn language, and gives tips for parents to encourage language learning. The videos are available in English and 11 other languages

[Mama Lisa's World](#)

Features a collection of songs and rhymes from around the world. Rhymes, songs, and lullabies can be searched by continent, country, or language.

Children's Books For & About Newcomers

Explaining the challenges of being a newcomer can be difficult. Children's books have a way of getting to the heart of an issue, raising empathy and awareness, and inspiring deep discussions. They can also raise cultural competency and allyship. Reading children's books about newcomers and refugees has been shown to generate an increased positive response to immigration, and the importance of welcoming newcomers.

Children's books can also be helpful to newcomer parents as they settle their children in Canada. Books can familiarize families with new cultural norms and aspects of Canadian life such as weather, food and school, in a fun and non-didactic way.

Read to Me encourages those who work with newcomers to display children's books where they can be seen and explored. Having a prominent 'welcome genre' display of books sends a message of welcoming and belonging to everyone. These books will inspire curiosity in adults and children alike. You can find many of these books at your local library, bookstore, or online.



Read to Me Book Lists

Read to Me has collected book titles for young children into useful categories on Pinterest. These booklists are great sources of interesting content for parents, teachers, and early childhood educators. Those who work with newcomers and refugees may be interested in sharing books about specific topics. Below is a sample list of Read to Me's Pinterest boards. Follow the links to view each booklist online. [Click here to view all Read to Me Pinterest book lists.](#)

[Afrocentric Kids Books](#)

[Afrocentric French Books](#)

[Antiracism for Kids](#)

[Arabic Books](#)

[Asian Representation in Kids Books](#)

[Bilingualism and Dual Language](#)

[Cooking and Eating](#)

[Disability in Books](#)

[Diversity and Inclusion](#)

[Diwali](#)

[Dressed for Winter](#)

[Food Insecurity*](#)

[French Books](#)

[Hindi Books](#)

[Human Rights](#)

[I Like My Hair, I Like Your Hair, Too](#)

[Indigenous Children's Books](#)

[LGBTQ+ Kids Books](#)

[Lunar New Year](#)

[Mi'kmaq Books](#)

[My Name](#)

[Pronouns and Gender Kids Books](#)

[Ramadan and Eid, Books About](#)

[Refugees, Books About*](#)

[School, Preschool and Daycare](#)

[Simplified Chinese Books](#)

[South Asian Representation](#)

[Spanish Books](#)

[Ukrainian Books](#)

[Winter, Books About](#)

[Wordless Books](#)

*Please note: Always review books from these two boards for age-appropriateness and potential upsetting content before sharing them.



Contact Us



For more information about Read to Me visit:
www.readtome.ca

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