# Family Literacy Nights

Turnkey Package

for Districts

The Family Literacy Guides for Learning contain a summary of key points, specific tips for families, and links to resources. The department offers some suggestions for using these guides:

* Districts and community partners can email these to families after they attend the Family Literacy Night.
* They are meant to be sent weekly, *not all at once*. This will keep the topic front of mind and prevent information overload.
* Districts and community partners can use these as examples to create their own guide with district- and region-specific resources.

Family Literacy Guides for Learning

[**Tip Sheet 1**](#_Family_Literacy_Guides)

[**Tip Sheet 2**](#_Family_Literacy_Guides_1)

[**Tip Sheet 3**](#_Family_Literacy_Guides_2)

[**Tip Sheet 4**](#_Family_Literacy_Guides_3)

## Family Literacy Guides for Learning: Tip Sheet 1

In our first tip sheet, we want to give a summary of what we talked about at our Family Literacy Night. Also, we want you to have links to all the great resources to help your children grow as readers.

**Summary of Our Family Literacy Night**

**Birth to Age 8**

Help your children develop their oral language and vocabulary by:

* having rich conversations and
* reading books in an interactive way.

**Kindergarten to Grade 2**

Begin with sounds; break the code; build the knowledge!

**Foundational skills**

Begin with Sounds—Sounds come first!

* Children learn to break words down into small parts just by listening. Letters come later.
* This is called phonemic awareness.

Break the code—Connecting the sounds to letters.

* Children learn the letter combinations that make all the sounds of the English language by the end of 2nd grade!
* This process is called phonics.
* They can practice this skill by reading decodable books.
* As this skill develops, children start to read books faster and with more expression, a skill called fluency.

**Knowledge—For all ages**

Build the knowledge—Learning vocabulary that helps them *understand* what they read.

* In the classroom, children will read and listen to stories and informational books about science, social studies, and other topics to build their understanding.
* Children also write about the topics studied in class.

**Grade-Level Learning**

All children should have access to appropriate instruction for their grade. In your child’s classroom, you should:

* look for everything mentioned above, and
* make sure your child is learning content according to the grade that they are in. See [TN English Language Arts Standards](https://www.tn.gov/education/instruction/academic-standards/english-language-arts-standards.html) for more specifics.

**Resources**

**Links for the At-Home Decodable Reading Series**

[Decodables Home Page](https://www.tn.gov/education/decodables.html)

[At-Home Decodable Reading Series Order Form](https://decodablerequests.powerappsportals.com/decodable-requests/)

[Reading 360 Decodables Digital Sample Version](https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/reading-360/Reading%20360%20Decodables%20Digital%20Sample%20Version.pdf)

Video: [How to Use Decodables: Free Reading Resources for Tennessee Families](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lm0Rt8lGyMk)

**Other Recommended Resources**

The [Governor’s Early Literacy Foundation Family Reading Time at Home Guides](https://bestforall.tnedu.gov/binder/governors-early-literacy-foundation-family-reading-time-home-guides) provide one-page help sheets to make reading time together at home more fun. Once on the webpage, scroll down to see different grade levels.

The [Literacy Foundational Skills Online Tool](https://bestforall.tnedu.gov/course/foundational-skills) has free literacy lessons that are designed to be a resource for all students, parents, and teachers to further develop students’ reading skills. 

[Ready4K](https://www.tn.gov/education/news/2021/1/11/140-000-families-across-tennessee-enrolled-in-ready4k-texted-based-program.html) is a weekly text messaging program that sends facts, tips, and activities on how to help children grow. Depending on your school district, families of students in pre-K–3rd grade may be able to participate. Click [here](https://governorsfoundation.org/over-100000-families-across-tennessee-enrolled-in-ready4k-text-based-program/) for a list of participating districts.

[Starting with Sounds](https://www.pbs.org/show/starting-sounds/) features children’s books and songs presented by local and national artists, athletes, and more. The project was created by the Tennessee Department of Education in collaboration with Tennessee PBS.

The [TN Department of Education STE(A)M Resource HUB](https://bestforall.tnedu.gov/resource/steam-resource-hub) features challenges and activities to try at home that build knowledge in the areas of science, technology, engineering, the arts, and math.

## Family Literacy Guides for Learning: Tip Sheet 2

In the next three tips sheets, we’ll share tips and tricks with you for supporting your children as they learn to read. In Tip Sheet 2, we give some suggestions for setting up spaces in your home for reading success. We also give specific tools and tips for supporting a struggling reader.

**Set Up Your Home for Literacy Success**

* Have at least 10 children’s books or magazines where your child can easily reach them. (You don’t have to buy books! Try the public library or register with [Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library](https://imaginationlibrary.com/check-availability/).)
* Create a reading nook in any corner or closet of your home using some pillows, a blanket, and a favorite stuffed animal.
* Keep some paper, a pencil, and a box of crayons in a basket on the kitchen table for writing or drawing.
* Time-saving trick: If you have more than one child, find books to read aloud that work for all ages. Ask a librarian or teacher for suggestions.

**Helping a Struggling Reader**

* Home-School Connection: Communication is key! Reading through papers that are sent home and attending open house nights can help you establish a relationship with your child’s teacher.
* Stay connected to your child’s teacher to make sure they are getting instruction in skills as well as grade-level content.
* Reinforce foundational literacy skills with sounds first activities at home. See the following videos for examples: [Syllables in Longer Words](https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=3-aZu0f2BRQ&feature=youtu.be), [Folding Towels: Rhyming Words](https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=ZwQhx7jeqm4&feature=youtu.be) and [Beginning Sounds of Everyday Objects](https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=3UDI_dB_x_Y&feature=youtu.be).
* For fluency practice, read the [TN Decodables](https://www.tn.gov/education/decodables.html) aloud together and ask your child to match his or her voice to yours.

## Family Literacy Guides for Learning: Tip Sheet 3

We’re excited to continue sharing tips and tricks with you to support your children as they learn to read. In Tip Sheet 3, we share tips on helping your children develop their oral language skills. We also share ways you can support foundational literacy skills, including games to play in everyday situations.

**Oral Language Development**

* Use the [Family Reading Time at Home Guides](https://bestforall.tnedu.gov/binder/governors-early-literacy-foundation-family-reading-time-home-guides) to interact with your child while reading a great book together.
* Talk about everyday things using questions and new vocabulary. For example, play a guessing game using adjectives, or talk about money and food at the grocery store.
* Sing along with your child and talk about the stories presented in [Starting with Sounds](https://www.pbs.org/show/starting-sounds/), a collaboration of Tennessee PBS and the TN Department of Education.
* Check out a “wordless picture book” from the library and ask your child to tell you the story.

**Foundational Literacy Skills**

* Home-School Connection: Check your child’s folder for decodable books or other readings to practice together on weeknights. Also, ask your child’s teacher for creative ways to practice spelling.
* Order the [At-Home Decodable Book Series](https://www.tn.gov/education/decodables.html) for your kindergarten, 1st, or 2nd grade student. Look for the “Step-by-Step Reading Tips” and “Reading Skills in this Booklet” at the front of each book. Practice with a [sample book](https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/reading-360/Reading%20360%20Decodables%20Digital%20Sample%20Version.pdf).
* While driving in the car, play fun games for reading readiness, such as clapping the number of syllables in words or playing “I Spy” using words that begin with a sound, like “I spy something that begins with /s/.”
* Try some of the fun word games and sounds first activities shown in these videos: [Cleaning up the Toys: Ending Sounds](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0czqNHpgX40), [In the Kitchen: Making New Words](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ur_ZcFJzUM0), and [Grocery List: Separating Sounds in Words](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6YNji8vAbno).

## Family Literacy Guides for Learning: Tip Sheet 4

Thank you for joining us on this journey as we all work toward a bright future for our children! Today, we’re sharing more tips and tricks with you to help your children as they grow as readers. In Tip Sheet 4, we’ve got some great tips for building your children’s background knowledge and vocabulary so that when they read, they understand more.

**Building Knowledge**

* Home-School Connection: Ask your child’s teacher for topics that are studied throughout the school year and put the list on the fridge. Ask your child specific questions about the topics they are studying and let your child teach you!
* Prioritize a weekly trip to the public library and check out at least 5 new children’s books every visit. Try storybooks (picture books or fairytales), informational books (non-fiction), easy readers, and audio books.
* Find at least 15 minutes a day for reading aloud to your child. You could read for 5 minutes in the morning and 10 minutes at night. Just get in those 15 minutes!
* Try some of the STE(A)M (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) activities found in the [TN Department of Education STE(A)M Resource Hub](https://bestforall.tnedu.gov/resource/steam-resource-hub).