

Ideas to use at home

Helping your child
in year 7
with literacy
and numeracy

**national literacy
and numeracy week**

Celebrating literacy and numeracy

What is literacy?

Literacy is the ability to read and use written information and to write appropriately in a range of situations. It involves the integration of speaking, listening and critical thinking with reading and writing.

What does literacy mean in high school?

In Year 7 your son or daughter will be working with different teachers in different subject areas. Each subject has its own literacy demands, e.g. writing up an experiment in science is quite different to writing about an event in history. Subject teachers teach students how to read and write in their own subjects.

Your son or daughter's learning in all subject areas will be supported by:

- talking and listening
- reading
- writing.

Parents have a key role in supporting their children to further develop and practice literacy skills. Here are some ideas that you can use at home. They do not rely on knowledge about the school subjects.

High school classroom talking and listening

In high school, classroom talking & listening involves:

- listening for main ideas
- defending or supporting a point of view
- understanding other people's different points of view.

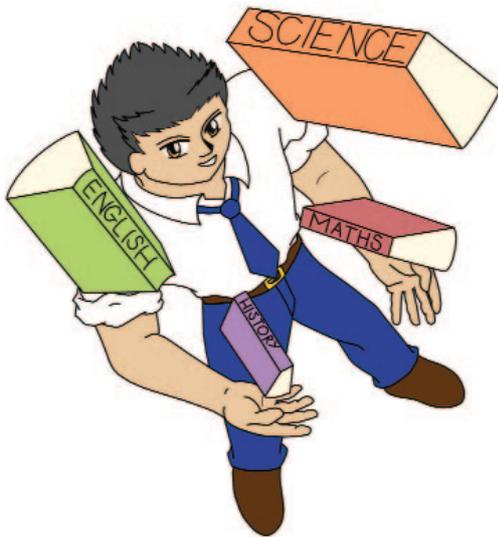


Illustration by Fernleigh Adams, Year 11.

What can you do at home?

Talking and listening helps people to express and further develop ideas. Through talking with and listening to your son or daughter you can show that their opinions and ideas are valued and acknowledged. Talking and listening in your home language will also help your son or daughter's English literacy development.

- When listening to your son or daughter, focus on the messages being shared with you. Find out more by asking questions such as:
 - “What makes you think that?”
 - “What if...?”
 - “How could this be different?”
 - “Are there other possibilities?”
- Ask your son or daughter to explain homework tasks to you. Talking about tasks can help your son or daughter clarify what needs to be done.

High school classroom reading

In high school, classroom reading involves:

- reading widely to gain information, e.g. in visual arts, using a variety of sources to find out about an artist and their work
- reading for specific detail, e.g. in history, locate details about where and when an event occurred
- reading in a questioning way, considering any hidden messages in texts such as stereotyping or bias, e.g. how a particular group is represented in an advertisement will affect people's opinions about that group
- reading a wide range of texts and reading texts closely for critical analysis, enjoyment and pleasure.

What can you do at home?

In high school, your son or daughter will need to read widely for different purposes across subject areas. Students have to be able to work out what is being said and read between the lines to work out what is not directly stated. Effective readers need to make judgements about information and ideas included in texts, the way the ideas are presented and what information has been left out.



Before reading

- Ask your son or daughter to explain their reason for reading, e.g. for enjoyment, to find specific information, to be able to make or do something.
- Ask your son or daughter to tell you what might be included in the text. This helps them to think about the topic before they read.
- Talk to your son or daughter about what information can be found directly in what they are reading. What information can be worked out from what they read, but is not directly stated?
- Ask your son or daughter to tell you about the information presented in graphs, diagrams or images. Why is this information presented in this way?

After reading

- Ask if it is the most useful thing to read. What else could be used? Is it helpful?

High school classroom writing

In high school, classroom writing involves:

- producing organised, well-written pieces of writing that respond to a task
- producing a paragraph of writing in response to a question.

What can you do at home?

Through writing, students express their understandings of new learning, opinions and ideas in different subject areas. The way a text is written depends on the reason/s it has been written.

For example, in English, students may write short stories, responses to books and films, and descriptions of characters. In geography, students may write descriptions of different environments, explain how

landforms are created and transformed and write arguments about issues from different points of view.

- Help your son or daughter to understand information read from reference materials by talking about the information, then deciding what the main ideas are. These ideas can then be written down in point form.
- Read your son or daughter's writing and talk about a few things they have done well, e.g. clearly organised information, easy to follow, accurate spelling. If something is unclear, ask your son or daughter about it. It can be helpful to have someone different read your work.
- Encourage your son or daughter to re-read their writing to check for wording, spelling and punctuation. Sometimes it is easier to find ways to improve the writing when it is read aloud.

What is numeracy?

Numeracy is the capacity to use mathematics in everyday situations at home, at work and for participation on community life. This involves applying mathematical knowledge such as when estimating, measuring and interpreting information presented in text, tables and as graphs.

What does numeracy mean in high school?

In Year 7 your son or daughter will be working with different teachers in different subject areas.



Illustration by Fernleigh Adams, Year 11.



Each subject may draw upon specific mathematical ideas, e.g. creating a graph in geography, reading or developing a timeline in history, measuring an ingredient accurately in food technology.

There are some aspects of numeracy that support learning in all the subject areas. These include:

- making calculations and working out simple number problems
- estimating and measuring
- reading and creating graphs and tables
- critically interpreting information presented as graphs.

Parents have a key role in supporting students to further develop and practise numeracy skills. Here are some ideas you can use at home. They do not rely on knowledge about the school subjects.

In high school, making calculations and working out simple number problems involves:

- solving number problems using efficient mental and written methods. For example, to multiply 299 by 3, an efficient method is to calculate 300 by 3 and then to subtract 3.

What can you do at home?

- Show your son or daughter short cuts to solving number problems, like rounding off numbers to make the problem easier, then adjusting the final answer.
- Talk to your son or daughter when you are solving everyday number problems such as:
 - how many kilometres left in a journey
 - how much change to expect after paying a bill
 - working out a discount on the cost of an item
 - comparing the cost of two items.

This will help show the connections between what is learnt at school and how this can be applied in daily life.

- When you are working out a number problem, discuss the method you used so that your son or daughter can see how you approached the problem. There is usually more than one way of solving a number problem and you may have a different method from those used at your son or daughter's school.

In high school, estimating and measuring involves:

- knowing when to be accurate (with information such as dates, times and measurements) or when using an approximation is sufficient.

What can you do at home?

- Talk about words such as approximately, about, nearly, and the fact that this means the information is not exact, e.g. approximately 50 people, about 200 years ago, nearly everyone. Discuss why these words are used at different times.
- Discuss situations where it may be vital to be accurate with measurements or numbers, e.g. in medicine. Think about other situations when a high level of accuracy might not be needed, e.g. estimating how much wrapping paper is needed for a gift.
- Ask your son or daughter to use the scale on a map to estimate the distance to be travelled.

In high schools, reading and creating graphs and tables involves:

- representing information in different ways
- interpreting information from tables, such as on a train timetable, or finding information from graphs such as when interpreting the annual rainfall represented visually on a graph rather than as text.

- Encourage your son or daughter to consider graphs and tables as a way of presenting information in each subject, e.g. if a survey is completed for homework, talk about the best way to present this information.

What can you do at home?

- Show your child different examples of graphs and tables. Newspapers, magazines and advertising brochures often contain a variety of graphs and tables. Talk about what information is given in the graph or table. Ask why the information has been presented like this.
- Ask questions to help your son or daughter to explore the information in a graph or table, e.g. What facts can be gathered from this graph? What information is not included on the graph?

In high school, questioning information involves:

- developing skills in questioning numerical information to see if it is valid
- checking that the source of information is reliable.





What can you do at home?

- Encourage your son or daughter to ask questions about advertising, e.g. if a sale sign says up to 70% off, does this mean that everything is 70% off, or does it mean that many items may only be 10% off, with a few items 70% off? This type of information is often deliberately left out.
- Use newspaper, television and advertising examples where numbers are used. Look for details about where the information came from, e.g. in opinion polls or surveys, how many people were asked? How were these people chosen? Would the results be different if different people were asked?
- Talk about information used in advertising food products, and why the company has chosen to show this information. Does it make the food look healthy? Is the company trying to hide something? For example, a product advertised as 97% fat free is low in fat, but may have high levels of sugar and salt. This information may not be highlighted.

- Council of Catholic School Parents
Phone (02) 9287 1590
Fax (02) 9264 6308
roger.osullivan@cecsw.catholic.edu.au



- Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW
Phone (02) 9360 2481
Fax (02) 9361 6835
mail@pandc.org.au



- NSW Parents' Council
Phone (02) 9955 8276
Fax (02) 9954 4429
office@parentscouncil.nsw.edu.au



Translations of this brochure are available at
www.nlnw.nsw.edu.au



Australian Government
Department of Education,
Science and Training



Funded by grants from the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training as part of National Literacy and Numeracy Week.