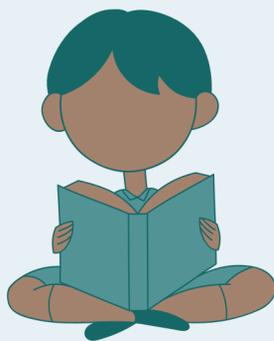# Literacy and Technology: Making the Connection

Almost half of Canadians struggle with literacy. About one in five (17%) have extremely low literacy.

What is literacy?

"Literacy is ... a means of identification, understanding, interpretation, creation, and communication in an increasingly digital, text-mediated, information-rich and fast-changing world." - UNESCO[i]

Technology as a learning tool

Technology can be used to
- find information and learning tools; schedule classes around work, family, and other obligations
- connect tutors and learners, especially now
- assist people with disabilities (e.g., speech-to-text)
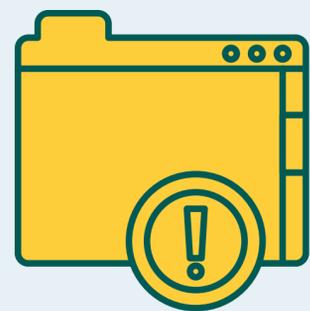
Strong literacy skills help people to...

- navigate the internet, phone applications, computer programs, and other tech-based materials
- find employment in an increasingly tech-based world
- avoid computer viruses, tech-based deceptions (e.g., email fraud), and hoaxes
- complete practical tasks (e.g., online banking)

Risks of using technology to teach literacy

The use of technology as a teaching tool is enormously helpful but not without its risks, including the possibility of:
- loss of deep reading and critical thinking about text [v]
- reduced attention span and working memory in adults [vi]
- communities and individuals with limited or no internet access face further isolation

Research shows

- Approximately 17% of Canadians do not have access to broadband internet. [ii]
- Technology can strengthen Indigenous economies and empower Indigenous educators and learners. [iii]
- Unequal access to digital learning is especially challenging for people in remote, rural and Indigenous communities [iv]

Frontier College

Frontier College is a national charitable literacy organization leading Canada's transformational literacy movement. We work with volunteers, partners, and communities to ensure that everyone has access to effective, literacy-based learning that empowers them with the capabilities and confidence they need to realize their goals.

frontiercollege.ca

[i] United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (en.unesco.org/themes/literacy)
[ii] ACORN Canada. (2019). Barriers to Digital Equality in Canada. Retrieved from https://acorncanada.org/resource/barriers-digital-equality-canada
iii]First Nations Technology Council (2018). Indigenous framework for innovation and technology. Retrieved from https://technologycouncil.ca/advancementframework/
[iv] UNESCO. (2020). Education: From disruption to recovery. Retrieved from https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse
[v] Wolf, Maryanne. Reader, come home: The reading brain in a digital world. New York, NY: Harper, 2018.
[vi]Wolf, Maryanne. Tales of Literacy for the 21st Century. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016. Page 80-81.