This *Pocket Book of Children’s Rights* is a summary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Convention says what governments must do so that children grow as healthy as possible, can learn at school, receive protection, have their views listened to, and are treated fairly.
Article 1
Everyone under the age of 18 has all the rights in the Convention.

Article 2
The Convention applies to everyone: whatever their race, religion or abilities, whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from.

Article 3
The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all things that affect children.

Article 4
Governments must do all they can to make sure every child can enjoy their rights.
Article 5
Governments must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents and carers to direct and guide their children as they grow up, so that they can enjoy their rights properly.

Article 6
Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to make sure that children survive and develop to their full potential.

Article 7
Every child has the right to a legal name and nationality, as well as the right to know and, as far as possible, to be cared for by their parents.

Article 8
Governments must respect every child’s right to a name, a nationality and family ties.
**Article 9**
Children must not be separated from their parents unless it is in their best interests (for example, if a parent is hurting a child). Children whose parents have separated have the right to stay in contact with both parents, unless this might hurt the child.

**Article 10**
Governments must act quickly and sympathetically if a child or their parents want to live together in the same country. If a child’s parents live apart in different countries, the child has the right to visit both of them.

**Article 11**
Governments must do everything they can to stop children being taken out of their own country illegally or being prevented from returning.
**Article 12**
Every child has the right to have a say in all matters affecting them, and to have their views taken seriously.

**Article 13**
Every child must be free to say what they think and to seek and receive all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.

**Article 14**
Every child has the right to think and believe what they want and to practise their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Governments must respect the rights of parents to give their children information about this right.
Article 15
Every child has the right to meet with other children and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.

Article 16
Every child has the right to privacy. The law should protect the child’s private, family and home life.

Article 17
Every child has the right to reliable information from the media. This should be information that children can understand. Governments must help protect children from materials that could harm them.
Article 18
Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their child and should always consider what is best for the child. Governments must support parents by giving them the help they need, especially if the child’s parents work.

Article 19
Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.

Article 20
If a child cannot be looked after by their family, governments must make sure that they are looked after properly by people who respect the child’s religion, culture and language.
**Article 21**
If a child is adopted, the first concern must be what is best for the child. All children must be protected and kept safe, whether they are adopted in the country where they were born or in another country.

**Article 22**
If a child is a refugee or is seeking refuge, governments must make sure that they have the same rights as any other child. Governments must help in trying to reunite child refugees with their parents.

**Article 23**
A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and independence, and to play an active part in the community. Governments must do all they can to provide support to disabled children.
Article 24

Every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must work to provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that children can stay healthy. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

Article 25

If a child lives away from home (in care, hospital or in prison, for example), they have the right to a regular check of their treatment and the way they are cared for.
Article 26
Governments must provide extra money for the children of families in need.

Article 27
Every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical, social and mental needs. Governments must help families who cannot afford to provide this.
Article 28
Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free. Secondary education must be available for every child. Discipline in schools must respect children’s dignity. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

Article 29
Education must develop every child’s personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child’s respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.

Article 30
Every child has the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family, regardless of whether these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live.
Article 31
Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.

Article 32
Governments must protect children from work that is dangerous or might harm their health or education.

Article 33
Governments must protect children from the use of illegal drugs.

Article 34
Governments must protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation.
Article 35
Governments must ensure that children are not abducted or sold.

Article 36
Governments must protect children from all other forms of bad treatment.

Article 37
No child shall be tortured or suffer other cruel treatment or punishment. A child should be arrested or put in prison only as a last resort and then for the shortest possible time. Children must not be in a prison with adults. Children who are locked up must be able to keep in contact with their family.
**Article 38**
Governments must do everything they can to protect and care for children affected by war. Governments must not allow children under the age of 15 to take part in war or join the armed forces.

**Article 39**
Children neglected, abused, exploited, tortured or who are victims of war must receive special help to help them recover their health, dignity and self-respect.

**Article 40**
A child accused or guilty of breaking the law must be treated with dignity and respect. They have the right to help from a lawyer and a fair trial that takes account of their age or situation. The child’s privacy must be respected at all times.
Article 41
If the laws of a particular country protect children better than the articles of the Convention, then those laws must stay in place.

Article 42
Governments should make the Convention known to children and adults.
Rights Respecting Schools in Canada

Across Canada, schools are working with UNICEF Canada to transform their school environments using an innovative, rights-respecting approach. Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) uses the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as a basis for building an inclusive and respectful school culture.

The initiative is based upon the understanding that in order for children to want to learn and do well in school, they have to feel included, that they belong and that they matter. It helps children see the importance of respect for oneself and for others, in the school community and in our interdependent world.

For more information, visit rightsrespectingschools.ca.

The Convention in Canada

Rights are what you should have or be able to do to have the best start in life. These rights are listed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention).

Canada ratified (agreed to follow) the Convention on December 31, 1991. That means the Canadian Government has to make sure that every child has all the rights in the Convention.

The Convention has 54 articles in total. Articles 43-54 are about how adults and governments work together to make sure that all children get all their rights.

UNICEF is the only organization (other than the UN itself) whose name appears in the Convention.
EDUCATORS: Try this fun activity!

Access more children’s rights activities through the Rights Respecting Schools initiative: rightsrespectingschools.ca.

Picturing Rights

OBJECTIVE

• Introduce or reinforce learning of children’s rights and the Convention.

MATERIALS

• Collect chart paper, markers and masking tape.
• Refer to the articles of the Convention.

ACTIVITY

• Explain that this activity will act as a fun and energizing introduction to some of the articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention).

• Divide the group into teams of 4 to 6 participants. Distribute markers, chart paper and masking tape to each group. Ask each team to tape their chart paper to the wall and sit gathered around it.

• Explain the activity as outlined on the next page. Make it clear that this is a race. Then carry out the activity.
• Position yourself at the farthest point from the teams. Use the selected children’s rights in the list below. They are the easiest rights to illustrate.

### Children’s Rights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The right to a home</th>
<th>The right to nutritious food</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The right to express yourself and be listened to</td>
<td>The right to a clean environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The right to play</td>
<td>The right to safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The right to an education</td>
<td>The right to live with your parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The right to healthcare</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

• When you call for the first team member, one member from each team will run to you. Whisper the first right to these team members. They will return to their teams and draw the children’s right on the chart paper.

• The other team members will guess which right is being drawn. When the right has been guessed correctly, another team member will run to you for the next right.

• The game will end when one of the teams has guessed all of the rights correctly.

**Source:** This activity was adapted from *Draw it Right in the Equitas Play it Fair Toolkit* (2008): equitas.org/en/what-we-do/children-and-youth/play-it-fair-canada/play-it-fair-toolkit

*Picturing Rights* is excerpted from the UNICEF Canada Rights Respecting Schools educational resource: *Creating a Rights Respecting Classroom: Engaging Activities and Tools for Grades Kindergarten to Four.*
UNICEF is the world’s leading organization working for children and their rights. We are the only organization (other than the UN itself) whose name appears in the Convention. The Convention is the basis for all our work for children.

UNICEF helps build a better world for children. Our focus is children who need the most help. We also help when emergencies, like earthquakes and wars, affect children.

Check out UNICEF Canada’s information for children and youth at unicef.ca.

This is a summary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. For the full text, please visit unicef.org/crc.

For more copies of this Pocket Book of Children’s Rights, please contact the UNICEF Canada Global Classroom Team at globalclassroom@unicef.ca.

Find other UNICEF Canada educational resources at unicef.ca/globalclassroom.

Find out more about UNICEF Canada’s Rights Respecting Schools initiative at rightsrespectingschools.ca.

Every child. Every opportunity. No exceptions.