

Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Green Meadow Elementary School
East Greenbush Central School District

Reading the newspaper encourages critical thinking

Reading is one thing. *Thinking* about reading is another. When kids read, they benefit from thinking critically about the material. Here's an easy way to practice. Pull out a newspaper at least once a week. Then:

- **Look through it** before discussing it with your child. What did you especially enjoy? The comics? A theater review? An exciting photo? Choose something age-appropriate and talk about it with your child. Does she find your choice interesting? Why or why not?
- **Scan the paper together.** See what appeals to your child. Guide her to possibilities, such as sports or fashion stories. Talk about what she reads. How does it relate to her life?
- **Start a scrapbook** of favorite clippings. Perhaps you laughed about a headline or debated a certain topic. Make a weekly habit of adding clips to your collection.

Source: Sherrye Dee Garrett, "Developing Comprehension and Research Skills with the Newspaper," Reading Rockets, www.readingrockets.org/articles/30136.



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Encourage strong reading in all school subjects

Children read a lot in school. Yet research shows they don't always apply their reading skills in all their classes. Teachers help with this, but parents can make a big difference at home, too. When your child reads school materials:

- **Have him describe** what he read using his own words.
- **Ask**, "What was the main idea?"
- **Review key words** and any terms that might be confusing.
- **Look through the reading together**, noting interesting details, illustrations and charts.
- **Discuss the purpose of the reading.** Why does your child think the author chose to write about this?
- **Wonder aloud.** For example, did one historical event lead to another? What does your child think about what he learned?

Source: "Reading Across the Curriculum," Wisconsin Online Resource Center, www.wisc-online.com/objects/index_tj.asp?objID=IAT1105.

Simple activities build fluency



You want your child to become a "fluent" reader—someone who reads comfortably, almost as though he's talking. To help with this:

1. **Let your child** choose books he can read well.
2. **Encourage him** to reread sections to build his confidence and success.

Source: Peggy M. Wilber, *Reading Rescue 1-2-3*, ISBN: 076-1529637 (Three Rivers Press, www.randomhouse.com/crown/trp.html).

Create a quiz that lets your child show off



Your child can't stop talking about a book she loved. How can you build on her experience? Ask if she'd like to take a quiz. Write down five true/false questions about the book (ones she'll probably get right). Then let her show off what she knows!

Source: Cindy Bond, "Top Ways to Get Your Kids to Read," FamilyEducation, <http://school.familyeducation.com/reading-fun/parenting/38335.html?detoured=1>.

Read-alouds boost vocabulary



A good way to expand your child's vocabulary is to read aloud, especially books he can understand, but might have trouble reading himself. For example, he might enjoy books about space, but get frustrated with words like *meteorite* and *Saturn*. When you read these words aloud, discuss them. Does the book reveal their meaning? If not, explain them. Then have fun using them at other times.

Source: Jill Frankel Hauser, *Wow! I'm Reading!* ISBN: 1-885593-41-4 (Williamson Publishing, www.idealsbooks.com).

Build your child's reading confidence at home

Does your child read too quickly? Guess at words? Avoid sounding them out? If so, she may have reading anxiety. This makes school subjects and tests more difficult. To reduce stress about reading:

- **Read to your child often.** It's a fun activity that develops her love of books.
- **Don't force your child to read to you.** If she wants to, great! If not, don't make her.
- **Let your child stay up** an extra half-hour to read for fun.
- **Make audio recordings** of materials your child finds especially challenging, so she can read along.
- **Act out plays** to build confidence with words.
- **Be patient and encouraging.** Talk privately with her teacher and ask about ways you can help.

Source: Sylvia Rimm, Ph.D., *How to Parent So Children Will Learn: 3rd Edition*, ISBN: 0-910707-86-2 (Great Potential Press, Inc., giftedbooks.com).

Look around for books your child will enjoy reading

Your child can't get too much practice reading. Children who learn to enjoy reading early will become better readers. And they are more likely to become lifelong readers.

You can encourage your child to read by giving him books he will enjoy. Ask your friends and neighbors for suggestions. Check the book review sections of newspapers and magazines for ideas. Ask your child's teacher. Ask the librarian. And, of course, encourage your child to choose his own books, too!



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"If we encounter a man of rare intellect, we should ask him what books he reads."

—Ralph Waldo Emerson



Q: My child has been assigned her first book report. Should this change how she reads the book?

A: Yes. Before she starts reading, review the teacher's instructions carefully. Then discuss what approaches will help most. Your child might take notes, for example, or make a form to complete as she reads. ("The main character is ____." "The book takes place in ____." "The most important event was ____." "I enjoyed/didn't enjoy this book because ____.")

Do you have a question about reading? Email readingadvisor@parent-institute.com.



For lower elementary readers:

Bread and Jam for Frances by Russell Hoban (HarperCollins). Picky eaters identify with Frances, who prefers bread and jam. But what if a favorite food was served at every meal?

Cinder Edna by Ellen Jackson (HarperCollins). Everyone knows Cinderella. But what about her hilarious neighbor, Cinder Edna? Her trip to the ball has a unique fairy-tale ending.

For upper elementary readers:

The Phantom Tollbooth by Norton Juster (Random House). Life seems boring until something odd appears in Milo's room: a tollbooth. He pays the toll and embarks on a memorable, unusual adventure.

The Cricket in Times Square by George Selden (Square Fish). Oops! Chester accidentally travels to New York in a picnic basket. What will this country cricket teach city dwellers?

Play a game to teach your child synonyms & antonyms



The words *synonym* and *antonym* sound intimidating. But they're not! It's fun to think of synonyms (words with similar meanings) and antonyms (words with opposite meanings). To challenge your child, give him a word, such as *happy*. Can he name a synonym (such as *cheery*) and an antonym (such as *sad*)? Then let him challenge you with a word.

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