

Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Green Meadow Elementary School
East Greenbush Central School District

Cook up reading and math success with your child

What simple activity involves math and reading? Cooking! And it's something you and your child can do together every day. To make the most of it:

- **Take turns reading the recipe.** Ask your child to read the ingredients aloud, for example, while you collect them.
- **Let your child measure.** Set out measuring cups and spoons and teach your child how to use them.
- **Use math terms.** Say things like, "We need to *add* sugar," "Let's *divide* that into *quarters*" or "That's *half* of what we need."
- **Make more—or less.** Take an uncomplicated recipe and double—or halve—it. Do the math together. How many people will it serve?



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"I've never known any trouble that an hour's reading didn't assuage."

—Charles De Secondat

Journaling should be a stress-free habit

Keeping a journal has lots of benefits. In addition to building writing skills, it helps kids sort out feelings and record accomplishments. It can also be a quiet, relaxing activity before bed. Experts suggest that kids:

- **Relax about "writing rules."** Spelling and grammar aren't issues in a journal. Don't worry about them. Your child should just have fun.
- **Write regularly.** There's no pressure to write in the journal. But creating a routine can turn journaling into a habit.
- **Restrict access.** It's freeing to know that the journal is private and won't be read without permission.

Source: "Write On! Help Your Child Start a Journal," Creighton University Medical Center, <http://creightonhospital.staywellsolutionsonline.com/RelatedItems/1,86>.

Fancy fonts make writing fun



Need a way to excite your child about reading and writing? Let her use a computer at home or at the library. Show her how to choose "fonts" (different styles of type). She can be as creative as she likes. She might change fonts for *letters*, *words* and *sentences*—or even making things *small* or *BIG*. Have fun reading her writing together.

Consider volunteering in your child's school library



Parents often volunteer in children's classrooms. But how about in the school library? Many libraries depend on parents' help. It's a chance to encourage reading, see what's popular with kids and be a role model for your child.

Expand research options



When your child needs to do research, it's tempting to go online at home. But visit the library, too. Libraries have so much to offer. They have books, of course. They also provide help from research professionals—not to mention experience with alphabetization, numbering systems and more. Plus, browsing online doesn't compare to browsing in person. There's nothing like bringing home something special (and portable!) to read.

Source: "Enriching Lives, Inspiring Minds, Connecting People," @yourlibrary, www.atyourlibrary.org/Enrichment.

Make reading a fun, everyday family activity

Many kids today spend almost no time reading outside of school. But kids who read regularly do better in school than kids who don't. So motivate your child to read. You can:

- **Let him sleep on it.** Set bedtime a little earlier. But allow your child to keep the light on as long as he is reading. Odds are he'll go to sleep pretty quickly anyway.
- **Make reading a fun family affair.** On a Friday night, take the whole family to a bookstore to browse. Or visit the library on Saturday just before going out for ice cream.
- **Plan regular family reading times.** Kids are never too old for reading aloud. So turn off the TV and read a favorite book together. Serve a favorite snack and discuss what you've read.

Ask your child's teacher for help setting reading goals

When it comes to reading, it can be hard to set goals. You may not be sure what or how much your child should read. Consult the teacher about your child's:

- **Reading level.** Is she meeting expectations for her grade? What kinds of materials are best for her? How can you tell if a book (or magazine) is too hard, too easy or just right for your child? How can you help her improve?
- **Reading habits.** Many teachers expect students to



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read for a certain number of minutes each day. By working as a team (perhaps by keeping a reading calendar), you and the teacher can support habits that make a big difference.



Q: I want my child to enjoy reading. But she prefers TV and video games. What can I do?

A: It's difficult to motivate some kids to read—especially when there are so many entertainment options available. It helps to limit screen time to less than 10 hours a week. In addition, keep irresistible reading materials around the house. Read some of them aloud. Many reluctant readers find magazines and comic-type novels (known as “graphic novels”) appealing. Look for materials based on your child's favorite shows or games.

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



For lower elementary readers:

The Story of Ferdinand by Munro Leaf (Grosset & Dunlap). This engaging classic puts young readers at ease. It also promotes the wisdom of “being yourself.”

How Many Fish? by Caron Lee Cohen (HarperCollins). In simple language and colorful pictures, this tale looks at fish and feet on the ocean floor. It's just right for beginning readers.

For upper elementary readers:

Mickey & Me: A Baseball Card Adventure by Dan Gutman

(HarperCollins). A boy travels back in time to warn Mickey Mantle of impending trouble. Baseball fans may be unable to resist other books in this series.

The Mysterious Benedict Society by Trenton Lee Stewart (Little, Brown Young Readers). Children must work together to stop a villain from taking over the world. This popular read-aloud book appeals to parents, too.

Build reading confidence



Reading difficulties can be a blow to a child's self-esteem. But even kids who aren't top readers become “reading leaders” by tutoring younger children. This can boost self-confidence and reinforce skills. Don't know a child who needs a reading buddy? Ask about tutoring programs at your school or library.

Source: Judith Lee Ladd, “Helping a Reluctant Reader,” FamilyEducation, <http://school.familyeducation.com/learning-disabilities/reading/41941.html>.

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