

# Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Red Mill Elementary School  
East Greenbush Central School District

## A reading game can teach your child to recall details

Keep reading aloud with your child—even when he can read for himself. It will expose him to vocabulary and concepts well beyond his own reading level.

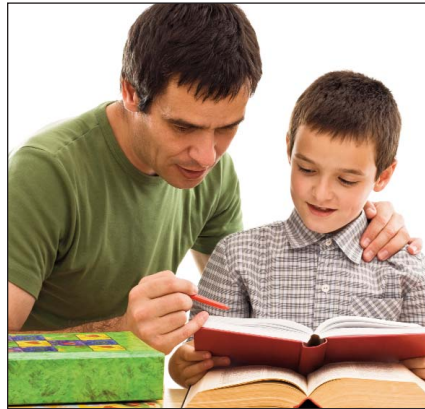
Here's a game for reading aloud. Try this with one of your child's textbooks. Have him read an assignment aloud to you and then take turns telling details from the text.

Give him time to think and restate the details. If needed, help him by asking the five W questions: *who*, *what*, *when*, *where* and *why*.

You each get a point for every detail recalled. For example, he gets a point for remembering that Polk was the eleventh president. The person with the most points wins.

**Source:** Cheryl Tuttle and Penny Paquette, *Thinking Games to Play with Your Child*, ISBN: 0-743-2258x (Lowell House, a division of McGraw-Hill Education).

***"A book that is shut is but a block."***  
—Thomas Fuller



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## Conversations give context to new vocabulary words



Talking is an important way to build children's reading skills. Not only does it expose them to new words, but it also gives the words meaning. For example, it's one thing to read "sweltering" in a story. It's another to discuss the *sweltering* day while feeling the heat. Make a point to use new words with your child—in ways that help her understand and enjoy them.

## Share constructive criticism



Your child brings home his spelling test, and he only made one mistake. Great! But if you need to discuss the error, use the "PNP" (positive-negative-positive) method. Surround gentle, constructive criticism with compliments. "Look how many words you spelled correctly. Wow! We can work on the one you got wrong. I'm impressed!"

**Source:** Thomas W. Phelan, Ph.D., *1-2-3 Magic*, ISBN: 1-889140-16-3 (ParentMagic, Inc., parentmagic.com).

## Tempting activities make kids want to write

You want your child to enjoy writing, but she resists using a journal. What else can you do? Try non-intimidating activities, such as:

- **Send holiday cards and letters.** Let your child include messages or drawings for loved ones.
- **Use a calendar to keep track** of your child's activities. Have her note special dates and events.
- **Ask for help with tasks** your child will enjoy, such as writing shopping or to-do lists.
- **Make a scrapbook during a vacation.** Your child can include photos, drawings and captions.

**Source:** Celia Webb, "Help Your Child Learn to Write," *Ezine@articles*, <http://ezinearticles.com/?Help-Your-Child-Learn-to-Write&id=1092780>.

## Parents affect reading skills



As a parent, you have a strong influence on your child's school success. To build his confidence and joy in reading:

- **Visit** the library often. Ask the librarian to recommend appealing materials.
- **Make** reading a treat. When given a bedtime choice of sleeping or reading, most kids pick reading!

## Teach grammar lessons with grammar mistakes

It's fun to see parents make mistakes, and it can be fun to correct them, too. To help your child practice basic grammar skills, challenge him to "edit" your work. Make a list of sentences that have errors. Leave out a period, for example, or use lowercase letters when you should capitalize. Also add incorrect punctuation marks, such as a period instead of a question mark. ("i went to the store on friday" or "did you see that dog today.") When he's done, review and admire his work.

Need to simplify the task? Make the same mistakes in every sentence. For example, "All of these sentences need to start with a capital letter and end with a period. Can you fix them?"

## Computer features can build word comprehension

Many computer word processing programs have a "thesaurus" feature that builds kids' vocabularies. Try using one at home or at the library. Choose a familiar word, such as *nice*. Talk about its meaning. Then click "thesaurus" and let your child type the word she chose. Notice:

- **How many synonyms** (words with similar meanings) are included.
- **Whether the thesaurus** lists antonyms (opposite words), such as *mean*.
- **Small differences** between words. Is *good* the same as



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*nice*? How are they alike or different?

- **What other synonyms** or antonyms you can name. Did the thesaurus leave some out?



**Q:** My child has to take notes from a book for a research project. How can I help with this?

**A:** Discuss how the book is organized. Your child's notes should be organized in a similar way. Show exactly how this works. Look at a chapter or section together. What is the main idea? Have your child write it down. Then notice the supporting details that follow. Your child can summarize them briefly in his own words.

**Source:** Linda K. Rath, Ed.D. and Louise Kennedy, *The Between the Lions Book for Parents*, ISBN: 0-06-051027-7 (HarperResource, harpercollins.com).

Do you have a question about reading? Email [readingadvisor@parent-institute.com](mailto:readingadvisor@parent-institute.com).



## For lower elementary readers:

**Diary of a Fly** by Doreen Cronin (HarperCollins). What's it like to be a young fly? This one has 327 siblings, attends fly school and wants to be a superhero!

**I'm a Big Brother/I'm a Big Sister** by Joanna Cole (HarperCollins). Preparing for a new baby? This book can help. It's available in two titles, one for big brothers and another for big sisters.

## For upper elementary readers:

**Jack Adrift: Fourth Grade Without a Clue** by Jack Gantos (Farrar, Straus and Giroux). Jack deals with tough issues in fourth grade, including being a new student and having a moody dad.

**Cracker: The Best Dog in Vietnam** by Cynthia Kadohata (Simon & Schuster). A dog and her handler sniff out danger during the Vietnam War. Their success depends on teamwork.

## Analogies promote thinking



Analogies describe what things have in common. They're often used in pairs. For example, a toe is part of a foot. Similarly, a finger is part of a hand. So, *toe* is to *foot* as *finger* is to *hand*. Can your child figure out other analogy pairs? *Goal* is to *soccer* as *touchdown* is to \_\_\_\_\_ . (Answer: *football*.)

*Swimming* is to *summer* as *skiing* is to \_\_\_\_\_ . (Answer: *winter*.)

**Source:** "Language Arts Lesson: Understanding Analogies," InstructorWeb, [www.instructorweb.com/lesson/analogy.asp#LESSON\\_PRINTABLES\\_](http://www.instructorweb.com/lesson/analogy.asp#LESSON_PRINTABLES_).

### Building Readers®

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