

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Turn your reluctant reader into an enthusiastic one with simple strategies

Do you have a child who knows how to read, but doesn't like to? If so, don't worry. Remember that interest in reading blossoms when adults are encouraging.

To foster a love of reading:

- **Offer reading choices.** It's great to suggest books that match your child's skills and interests. But let your child select what to read—even if you think it is too easy. And don't force your child to finish a book. If your student is bored after reading two chapters, suggest finding a new book to try.
- **Draw your child in.** Read the first chapter of a book aloud. It may motivate your child to keep reading it independently. You can also offer short, appealing reading on a related topic. "Here's an article about poodles, just like the dog in your book!"



Build your child's literacy skills in the kitchen

To help your child put reading and writing to practice use, try cooking together. Appoint your elementary schooler your kitchen helper and:

1. **Take turns reading** a recipe aloud.
2. **Have your child write** a grocery list that includes the ingredients you need to make it.
3. **Cook and enjoy** the meal together. Then, read a book related to the type or style of food you made.



Suggest reading graphic novels

Graphic novels offer more than just entertainment. Many address relevant and complex social issues. They also cover different kinds of literature, like mystery, fantasy and historical fiction.

Ask the teacher to suggest one your child might enjoy.



Make your child a 'reference librarian'

Give your child practice searching for and finding accurate information online. To make it fun, ask a series of questions and challenge your child to find the answers.

Get started with questions like these:

- **Who was the first astronaut** to walk on the moon? What else happened on that space mission?
- **What happens if people** don't get enough sleep?
- **What was the largest dinosaur** that ever lived? Where did it live?

Adjust your questions to match your child's interests and ability. When your child finds the information, say, "I'm impressed. Tell me where you found that information." Talk about ways to tell if a source is reliable.

Writing headlines strengthens your child's summarizing skills

Here's a fun way to help your child stay informed and practice the skill of summarizing:

Cut the headline off a news article before giving it to your child to read.

Ask your child to create a headline for the article after reading it. Is your child's headline similar to the actual one? Compare and find out!



Play word games to reinforce grammar rules

It's much easier to remember grammar rules if you use them often. Playing word games with you is a fun way for your child to do this. Here are some examples:

- **Take turns thinking of adjectives** that describe something, such as a rainy day. You might choose *wet*, *misty*, *damp* or *overcast*. How many can your child think of?
- **Use the pronouns** *I*, *me*, *we* and *us* in sentences. Have one person say a sentence, and the other guess if it's grammatically correct. For example, "My friends and *I* will go together" is correct. "My friends and *me* will go together" is not.
- **Define prefixes and suffixes** (the beginnings and ends of words). For example, the prefix *non* means "not," as in *nonstop*. The suffix *ful*, means "having," as in *healthful*.



A strong vocabulary helps in every subject

Studying vocabulary words can be a fun and engaging experience for your child that also boosts comprehension. Encourage your child to:

- **Make crossword puzzles** with the words to practice their spellings and definitions.
- **Make flash cards** and use them to take a self-quiz during the week.
- **Draw a sketch** connecting a vocabulary word to something meaningful.
- **Play word charades.** One player acts out the definition while others guess the word.
- **Use as many** vocabulary words as possible in conversations throughout the day.



Q: Is comprehension something that happens during or after reading a story?

A: Both. The more easily children can read, the better they can understand a story's content—not just its individual words—while they are reading it. So, help your child work on reading smoothly and quickly. Then, help your child think about the content after reading by asking questions such as: *Where did the story take place? Does it remind you of anything in your life?*

Track reading with a journal

Journaling can help your child track and enjoy reading accomplishments. In the journal, have your child:

- **List the title** and author of each book read.
- **Write** a brief summary of the book.
- **Rate the book** and share the reasons for liking it or not liking it.



For lower elementary readers:

- ***Pluto Visits Earth*** by Steve Metzger. When Pluto finds out that he has been named a dwarf planet, he gets upset and travels to Earth.
- ***Ollie the Purple Elephant*** by Jarrett J. Krosoczka. When Ollie the Purple Elephant comes home, everyone loves him—except for the cat.



For upper elementary readers:

- ***Mr. Ferris and His Wheel*** by Kathryn Gibbs Davis. See the inspiration that led George Ferris to create the Ferris wheel.
- ***Love, Amalia*** by Alma Flor Ada and Gabriel M. Zubizarreta. Amalia has a very special relationship with her Abuelita, who always knows the right thing to say and do.

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