

# BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

## Don't forget about reading when making family New Year's resolutions

A new calendar year offers an opportunity to think about the past and set goals for the future. This includes family reading goals.

With your child:

- **Talk about books or stories** you've enjoyed together in the past year. If the books are nearby, look through them. Have your child choose three favorites. Ask, "What was the best part of this story? Why?" Or, "What is your favorite picture in this book?"
- **Discuss future reading plans.** Are there ways you can refresh or improve reading habits? Could your family read more often? Could you read new things together, such as children's magazines? Could you listen to some audiobooks in the car? Could you start a family book club?



Build daily reading time into your family's schedule and make 2024 your family's best year ever for reading exciting materials!

### Challenge your child to be a book critic

After your elementary schooler finishes a book, ask for a written review. Your child should include the title of the book and its author, along with personal opinions about it. Offer sentence starters to help your child with reviews, such as:

- **I really liked this book** because ... .
- **My favorite part** of this story was ... .
- **I wish the author** would have ... .

Help your child compile the reviews into a Book Reviews notebook. The growing number of reviews will provide a sense of accomplishment, and your child will be able to remember which author wrote the funny book about the campout when looking for something new to read.

## Enjoy the benefits of the public library as a family

Libraries are wonderful places to explore with your child. To enjoy everything the library has to offer:

- **Help your child** get a library card.
- **Schedule regular visits.** Try to go at least once every two weeks.
- **Meet the librarian** and attend fun activities together.
- **Help your child** discover a new section of the library each time you visit.



### Cut out words to create poems

Collage poems are fun to make. To create one, have your child:

1. **Cut out a variety** of words from junk mail or magazines.

2. **Arrange the words** into a poem and glue them onto a piece of construction paper.

Remind your child

that poems don't need to rhyme.



## Read and write about science experiments

Hands-on learning is a fun way for your child to strengthen reading, writing and science skills.

1. **Look online** for simple science experiments you and your child can do at home.
2. **Read the directions**, gather materials, write predictions and conduct the experiment together.
3. **Have your child** take notes on the outcome.



## Thinking aloud improves comprehension

One factor in understanding reading material is *thinking* about it. Making connections between the reading and other things they know helps students retain the new material.

Help your elementary schooler strengthen comprehension skills by modeling these “think-aloud” strategies:

- **Discuss the book.** Connect it to an experience your child understands. “This story reminds me of the time when ... .” “Have you read any books that are similar?”
- **Talk about books** with similar settings, characters or themes. “What other books that we’ve read does this story remind you of?”
- **Help your child** make a connection between the story and something similar that may be happening in the real world.



Brainstorming together about a book helps your child learn to make these connections independently.

## Try this five-step writing process

When authors write a story, they rarely complete it in one sitting. Good writing involves a process. Help your child take time to:

1. **Brainstorm.** Encourage your child to list all ideas that come to mind.
2. **Draft.** Your child should start writing, without caring about mistakes.
3. **Revise.** Have your child read aloud and fix parts that are unclear.
4. **Edit.** Your child should check for grammatical and spelling errors.
5. **Read** the final product together and celebrate!



**Q:** My fifth grader enjoys listening to me read aloud. Isn't my child too old for this?

**A:** Definitely not! Children of all ages benefit when they are read to. You can select books and stories slightly above your child's reading level. As you read, your child will learn new concepts and words. Talk

about the story and explain anything confusing. Most importantly, enjoy the time together!

## Encourage your child to use the dictionary

When your elementary schooler isn't sure of what a word means or how to spell it, resist giving the definition or spelling. Instead, show your child how to look it up in a dictionary—online or in book form.

Demonstrate how the dictionary includes the word's definitions, its part of speech and other forms of the word.

## For lower elementary readers:

- **Stalling** by Alan Katz. Even though it's time for bed, Dan has plenty of things to do. He thinks up lots of ways to stall bedtime for just a few more minutes.
- **Stars** by Mary Lyn Ray. It's easy to forget the beauty of stars. But this book inspires readers to picture and appreciate them.



## For upper elementary readers:

- **Moon Runner** by Carolyn Marsden. Mina is nervous when she must start track at school, until she discovers that she loves it—and excels.
- **Stars in the Shadows** by Charles R. Smith, Jr. In 1934, the Negro League's All-Star East-West Game changed history. This book provides all the fascinating details.

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