

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Ask questions about books to strengthen your child's reading comprehension

To help your child get the most out of books, talk about them before, during and after reading them together. Discuss a book's:

- **Title and summary.** Before reading, have your child look at the summary on the back cover. What can your child tell about the story from them? What might happen? Where does the story take place?
- **Characters and plot.** What are the main characters like? Does your child agree with their decisions? What might happen next? Do the characters or plot remind your child of anything?
- **Conclusion.** Was the ending expected? Would your child have ended the book differently? What did your child get out of the story? Would your child recommend the book to a friend?



Get creative during reading time

Reading with your child every day is one of the most important things you can do to support learning. But you don't have to always do it the same way. To mix things up:

- **Find new reading spots.** You and your child could build a reading fort. Or, simply read on the stairs.
- **Read as a team.** Have your child follow words with a finger while you read aloud. Or, take turns reading paragraphs.
- **Plan a performance.** Choose a favorite story and help your child master reading it aloud for an audience.
- **Celebrate success.** When you reach a goal, such as 100 reading minutes in a week, do something special.

Search for letters and words in mail

Grab an old catalog or a piece of junk mail and try this activity with your child:

1. **Write a few letters** of the alphabet at the top of a page.
2. **Ask your child** to circle the words that begin with the letters you wrote.
3. **Count to see which letter** started the most words. Read the circled words together and discuss their meanings.
4. **Have your child create** sentences with some of the words and read them back to you.



Be a fluency role model

When you read aloud to your child smoothly and with emotion and enthusiasm, you demonstrate that fluent reading is similar to talking. It flows with ease. After modeling fluent reading, have your child practice by reading to you.



Monitor your child's reading skills

The older students get, the more they read to themselves—which can make assessing their reading skills tough. When monitoring reading progress, check that your child:

- **Reads books** that are a bit challenging.
- **Enjoys reading.**
- **Can understand** and analyze the information read.
- **Uses reading as a way** to learn new information.



Rereading and revising are essential steps in the writing process

Your child has written the last sentence of an essay and proclaims, “I’m finished!” Not so fast. Part of the writing process involves reading and editing. To help with these necessary steps:

- **Offer to read the report** or listen to your child read it. Compliment the things your child did well—and then offer constructive criticism, if necessary.
- **Encourage a new perspective.** Challenge your child to pretend to be the teacher and look at the paper. What might a teacher suggest be added, removed or changed? What should be left as it is?
- **Supervise revisions.** Encourage your child to improve the paper. Watch—and celebrate—as it goes from rough draft to final version!



Have fun with synonyms and antonyms

Here’s a way to work on *synonyms* (words with the same meaning) and *antonyms* (words with opposite meanings) with your child. You and your child should each divide a piece of paper into three columns. Then:

1. **In the first column**, describe yourselves in positive terms. For example, “I am ... *kind, generous.*”
2. **In the second column**, write a synonym for each word. “I am ... *nice, giving.*”
3. **In the third column**, write antonyms for each word in the first column. “I am not ... *mean, stingy.*”
4. **Exchange pages.** Read about each other. Then, play the game again and describe the other person.



Q: I want to encourage my child to read challenging material, but how can I tell if a book is too difficult?

A: In addition to asking the teacher for recommendations, you can also try the “five-finger rule” to assess a book’s difficulty. Have your child read one full page. Hold up one finger each time your child struggles with a word. If all five fingers are up by the end of the page, the book may be too challenging. Save that book for later.

It’s time for a weather forecast

Each evening, ask your child to read tomorrow’s weather forecast and tell the family how they should dress the next day.

Being in charge of the weather report will provide a bit of daily reading practice. Your elementary schooler will also see science in action while observing trends in the weather.



For lower elementary readers:

- ***Dinosaurs!*** by Gail Gibbons. In this colorful, informative book, young paleontologists will learn all about different kinds of dinosaurs.
- ***Finding Wild*** by Megan Wagner Lloyd. Wild can be found in all kinds of places, from deep in a forest to the side of a mountain.



For upper elementary readers:

- ***Heroes and She-roes: Poems of Amazing and Everyday Heroes*** by J. Patrick Lewis. The poems in this book describe how heroes from Helen Keller to Roberto Clemente have made the world a better place.
- ***Racing the Moon*** by Alan Armstrong. Alexis is building a rocket to go into space. Then, she meets Captain Ebbs, a space travel expert, and the space pioneers set out on adventures.

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