

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Start the school year strong by weaving reading into your family's daily life

Establishing a consistent daily reading time at the beginning of the school year is a powerful way to support your child's reading development. Make it a routine now, and it will effortlessly become a part of your family's day! Then, look for even more ways to weave reading into your child's everyday life:

- **Bring books anywhere** your child may need some entertainment (in the car, on the bus, in line at the post office, etc.).
- **Read favorite books** together at the breakfast table before school.
- **Check out new books** from the library regularly. Keep them in a special place.
- **Celebrate what you read.** Have themed book dinners. Hang a paper "reading tree" on the wall and add a leaf for each book your child reads. Or, create a paper chain—each link represents a finished book.



A personal dictionary boosts vocabulary

Elementary schoolers see and hear new words every day. How can they remember them all? One way is to create a personal dictionary. Your child can:

1. **Designate a special section** of a binder or a small notebook to use as a personal dictionary.
2. **Write down new words** throughout the day. They can be words from reading materials, conversations or even TV.
3. **Use a print or online dictionary** to look up word meanings and write them down. Suggest your child note the part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, etc.) and even include a simple sentence using the new word. This process not only builds vocabulary but also fosters confidence and essential research skills.

Preview school books with your child

Reading to learn is an essential part of student life. When your child receives a new school book, in print or online, preview it together:

- **Find the author's name** and the date of publication.
- **Read over** the table of contents.
- **See what chapters** look interesting.
- **Look at pictures**, graphs, maps and other illustrations.



Make reading more appealing

Maintaining your child's enthusiasm for reading is crucial for academic success and lifelong learning. However, as children grow older, some find reading less attractive. To make reading irresistible:

- **Create a comfortable** reading spot.
- **Host a book swap** with friends.
- **Let your child stay up** later on weekends to read.



Set limits on passive screen time

Too much recreational screen time is linked to problems with sleep, learning and socializing. So, if you relaxed your screen-time rules over the summer, it's time to get back on track:

- **Establish screen-free times**, such as during meals and family time.
- **Set a technology curfew.** Make sure your child turns off screens at least one hour before bedtime.
- **Offer fun alternatives.** Suggest your child read, play outside or do a craft.



Teach your child ‘active’ reading strategies

When elementary schoolers are given a reading assignment, they often look over the material and then read it straight through. Instead, encourage your child to read actively—by engaging in activities *during* the reading process.

Active reading improves comprehension, retention and thinking skills. When reading, remind your child to:

- **Stop and think.** *What are the main points? What am I learning? How does the material relate to other things that I have learned?*
- **Restate what the passage says.** When students put information in their own words, it’s easier for them to remember and recall.
- **Make a list of confusing points.** Your child can use the list as a guide to ask the teacher for clarification.



Read-aloud time is special family time

Reading aloud as a family can strengthen your child’s vocabulary, improve reading scores—and allow you all to enjoy books and quality time together. For a successful read-aloud:

- **Pick a time** when your child is likely to be receptive and stick to it. Some families read in the morning rather than at night.
- **Read the book** before you read it aloud. You’ll be more comfortable reading it aloud if you’re familiar with the text.
- **Read books everyone enjoys.** It will show on your face and in your voice if you like the book.
- **Build anticipation.** Stop reading when the story becomes exciting and your child can’t wait to hear what will happen next.



Q: School just started, and I’m already worried about my child’s reading skills. Is it too soon to contact the teacher?

A: No! The sooner reading struggles are identified, the better. The teacher is still getting to know your child, so your perspective provides helpful insight. Working together gives your child the best chance for success.

Let the teacher know about your concerns and be sure to ask what you can do to support your child at home.

Retell fairy tales in new ways

Read a favorite fairy tale together. Then, ask your child to change the characters and details to create a new version of the story.

For example, how would *The Three Little Pigs* differ if the author were to tell it from the wolf’s perspective?



For lower elementary readers:

- ***A Walk in Paris*** by Salvatore Rubbino. Join a girl and her grandpa on a walk through Paris. Along the way, learn interesting facts and vocabulary words.
- ***Max’s Words*** by Kate Banks. Max watches his brothers collect stamps and coins, but they won’t share. So Max finds something of his own to collect.



For upper elementary readers:

- ***Bugs: A Stunning Pop-Up Look at Insects, Spiders and Other Creepy-Crawlies*** by George McGavin. Your child will learn about bugs’ growth cycles and more in this scientific pop-up book.
- ***The Mummy’s Mother*** by Tony Johnston. When a mummy family’s tomb is disturbed, a boy mummy takes action to find his stolen mother.

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