

# BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

St. Louis County Schools

## Make sure reading routines are part of your child's back-to-school success plan!

The beginning of a new school year is a time to gather supplies and get organized. It's also a time to establish routines that help students do their best—especially when it comes to reading.

To help your child develop strong reading habits:

- **Set aside time for daily reading.** Kids who read at least 20 minutes a day (in addition to their regular homework reading) are more successful in school and develop larger vocabularies.
- **Make your routine special.** Read favorite books at the breakfast table. Visit the library every week and fill a special bag with new books to read. Do whatever it takes to keep your child excited about reading!
- **Stick to a regular bedtime reading routine.** Allow time for getting ready for bed, reading a bedtime story and saying good night.



## Have some fun with prefixes and suffixes

Learning about prefixes and suffixes can help children comprehend new words in almost every subject. Remind your child that:

- **Prefixes appear at the beginning of words.** For example, the prefix *pre-* means “before.”
- **Suffixes are found at the end of words.** Words that end in *-able*, for instance, relate to “being able.”
- **Prefixes and suffixes are clues.** They can help students figure out the meaning of new words. For example, the word *predetermine* means “to determine before.” *Measurable* means “able to be measured.”

Together, have some fun with prefixes and suffixes. Can your child guess the meaning of *predate* or *excusable*? Then, let your child name words with prefixes and suffixes for you to define.

## Encourage a broad range of reading

Not only do good readers read often, they also read many different kinds of things. Encourage your child to read a variety of types of writing, including:



- **Nonfiction texts** on subjects of interest.
- **Instructions**, how-to guides and recipes.
- **Magazines** and newspapers.
- **Poetry** collections.
- **Biographies** about influential people.
- **Comics** and graphic novels.

## Use wordless picture books for writing inspiration

Find a picture book with few or no words, such as *Journey* by Aaron Becker or *Shine* by Dagny Griffin.

Then, challenge your child to write some text to go with the illustrations.

Once finished, read the adventure together!



## Set limits on screen time

Too much recreational screen time reduces the time your child can spend on more productive things—like reading. So, if you relaxed screen-time rules over the summer, it's time to get back on track:

- **Establish screen-free times**, such as during family meals.
- **Set a technology curfew.** Turn off screens at least one hour before bedtime to allow time for reading.
- **Offer fun alternatives.** Suggest that your child read, play outside or do a craft.



## Try these four activities to make reading fun and bring books to life

To illustrate just how much fun reading can be, suggest that your child enter the world in which a book takes place. Here's how:

- 1. Get into character.** Have your child read some exciting passages from the book out loud. Remind your student to read with enthusiasm and to be dramatic.
- 2. Make a map.** Your child can draw the area where the story takes place. This is great for adventure stories.
- 3. Design costumes.** Your child can sketch pictures of the type of clothing each character might wear.
- 4. Invite a character to dinner.** Together, plan a menu the character would like based on what your child knows from the book.



## Make reading aloud a special family time

Reading aloud as a family can strengthen children's vocabulary, improve reading scores—and allow everyone to enjoy books and special time together.

For successful read-alouds:

- **Read the book** yourself before you read it aloud. You'll be more comfortable reading it aloud if you're familiar with the text.
- **Read books everyone enjoys.** Your enthusiasm will show on your face and in your voice if you like the book.
- **Leave them wanting more.** Stop reading when the story becomes exciting and your children can't wait to hear what will happen next.



**Q:** My child's teacher wants students to "think critically" about what they read at home. How can I help?

**A:** All elementary students—even kindergartners—can practice critical thinking. After your child reads something, ask questions that help your child analyze the material. For example, "What happened in the story?" "Why did it have a happy ending?" "Does the book remind you of anything in real life?" "What did you learn from reading it?"

## Ask questions to select books

When your child is trying to decide which books to check out from the library, ask these questions:

- **Does the title** sound interesting?
- **Is the text** easy to read?
- **How do you feel** about the pictures?
- **Do you want to read more** after reading the first few lines?



## For lower elementary readers:

- *Peeny Butter Fudge* by Toni Morrison and Slade Morrison. A day with Nana includes lots of special things—including making a tasty treat, peeny butter fudge!
- *My Kite Is Stuck! And Other Stories* by Salina Yoon. The vibrant illustrations and repetition make reading these silly stories about three friends a fun experience for early readers.



## For upper elementary readers:

- *Odd Duck* by Cecil Castellucci. Theodora is a normal duck who lives a very simple life—until a new, odd duck moves in next door.
- *Bugs: A Stunning Pop-Up Look at Insects, Spiders and Other Creepy-Crawlies* by George McGavin. Learn about bugs' growth cycles and more in this fact-filled book.

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