Elementary School • March 2024

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Windom Elementary School

Strengthen your child's thinking skills by reading news articles together

When children read, they benefit from thinking deeply and analytically about the material. To help your elementary schooler strengthen thinking abilities, get a newspaper or head to a news website. Then:

- **Choose** an age-appropriate article to read and discuss with your child. Does your child find your choice interesting? Why or why not?
- **Scan** the paper or website together. See what topics appeal to your child and look for articles on those topics. Talk about what your child decides to read. Ask, "How does this topic relate to your life or things you know?'
- **Collect clippings.** Perhaps you both laughed at a story or debated an author's viewpoint. Make a weekly habit of rereading favorites and adding clips to your collection.



Learning about authors can boost your child's interest in reading

When your child reads a book, ask who wrote it and what information the book provides about the author. Learning more about the author can increase your child's interest in the book. Help your elementary schooler:

- **Research the author.** Have your child learn about the writer's life. How does it relate to the book, if at all?
- **Write to the author.** Your child can write a letter in care of the publisher or send an email. Keep in mind that not all authors will respond.
- **Imitate the author's style.** Challenge your child to write a story in the author's style—using humor, short sentences or a certain point of view, for example.

Use license plates to inspire fun letter-based games!



License plates provide an endless source of material for letter-based games. To play one, have your child call out the letters on a license plate. Then, take turns thinking of silly phrases that use words beginning with those letters.

For example, if the letters on the plate are YPZ, you might say, "young painted zebras" or "yellow potted zinnias." The person who thinks up the wackiest phrase wins!

Encourage your child to exchange book suggestions

As children get older, classmates become great sources of reading recommendations. Your child can ask friends, "What's your favorite book?" or "Have you read any cool books lately?"

Your child can also recommend books to others. When kids read the same books, they can discuss them, which strengthens reading comprehension skills.

Turn shopping into a reading experience with coupons

If you use coupons when you shop, let your child help you—and work on reading skills. Before going to the store, ask your child to write a shopping list based on the coupons you plan to use. At the store, have your child read the list aloud to you, find the coupons you need and match them to the correct products.



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Challenge your child to correct grammar and punctuation mistakes

Everyone makes mistakes, and it can be fun for your child to see *you* make mistakes—especially if your child can correct them! Challenge your child to edit your work. Here's how:

1. **Write down several sentences** that contain errors. For example, use lowercase letters when you should capitalize. Use incorrect punctuation marks, such as a period instead of a question mark. Use the incorrect tense of a few verbs.
2. **Have your child review your work** and correct the grammar mistakes on your paper.
3. **Look over the edits** and admire your child's writing skills.



To simplify the task, make the same mistakes in every sentence. Say, "All of these sentences need to start with a capital letter and end with a period. Can you fix them?"

Graphic organizers boost comprehension

Graphic organizers are tools students can use to visualize and keep track of what they have read. Explain how the following organizers work:

- **Venn diagrams** use overlapping circles to compare and contrast. Similarities between objects go in the overlapping sections and differences go in the separate circle areas.
- **KWL charts** show what students **K**now, **W**ant to Know, and have **L**earned. Have your child make three columns, and fill out the K and W columns before reading and the L column after reading.
- **Time lines** keep track of the order in which events occur. This helps your child remember their sequence.





Q: The teacher says my child needs to become more "fluent" in reading. What does this mean?

A: A "fluent" reader progresses through material confidently and without stumbling over words. With more fluency, it is easier for your child to understand material. Reading often, and reading the same material repeatedly, can help. Model fluency by reading aloud to your child with clarity and expression. Ask the teacher for more ideas.

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:

- ***Whale Trails: Before and Now*** by Lesa Cline-Ransome. Hop aboard the *Cuffee* and go whale watching with a child and her father. Along the way, learn about how whaling expeditions have changed over time.
- ***My Teacher is a Monster (No, I Am Not)*** by Peter Brown. Bobby thinks that his teacher, Mrs. Kirby, is a monster! But when he sees her in the park, his views begin to change.



For upper elementary readers:

- ***Wild Wings*** by Gill Lewis. A young boy works hard to protect an osprey. But what will happen when the bird migrates from Scotland to Africa?
- ***Starring Jules (as Herself)*** by Beth Ain. Jules has a lot of pizzazz and a lot to accomplish—from writing jingles to starring in TV commercials!

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How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers
Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.
Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.
Editor: Rebecca Hasty Miyares.

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(a division of PaperClip Media, Inc.)
P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474
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