

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

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Strengthen your child's critical thinking skills with these three activities

Analyzing information means examining and evaluating it instead of just accepting it. This is an important critical thinking skill for students—especially when reading to learn.

To help your child practice thinking critically:

- 1. Look at a news headline** together, then read the article. Ask your child if the headline did an effective job of telling the reader what the story was about. If not, ask how your child would rewrite it.
- 2. Talk about *fact*** (established truth) and *opinion* (a person's beliefs). Ask your child to tell you whether a statement is fact or opinion, and why.
- 3. Ask, "What do you think?"** at least once a day. Encourage your child to give reasons for opinions by asking, "What makes you think that?"



Write a special Valentine poem together

Throughout history, people have written poems to show their love. With your child, try writing a *cinquain*—a classic style of poem that has five non-rhyming lines. Here's how:

- 1. For the first line**, write a noun that describes the poem's topic. Make the topic something your child loves.
- 2. For the second line**, write two adjectives that describe the topic.
- 3. For the third line**, write three action verbs ending in "-ing" that relate to the topic.
- 4. For the fourth line**, write a short phrase that describes the topic.
- 5. For the final line**, write a noun that is a synonym or description of the topic of your poem.

To read sample cinquain poems, visit www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson43/RWT016-1.PDF.

Fiction makes history come alive

Build your child's interest in social studies by introducing historical fiction. Ask your child's teacher or your local librarian to suggest historical fiction books that:

- **Present** time periods accurately.
- **Are set** in real places.
- **Teach** the facts.
- **Include** helpful pictures.
- **Avoid** misconceptions about the past.



Graphic organizers offer clarity

Drawing a picture of a tree can help students organize their thoughts about what they read.

Each large tree branch can represent a part of the story (such as the main character, plot or setting). Smaller branches—which grow from the big branches—can include details.



Patience with school reading assignments pays off

Some students rush through reading assignments because they want to finish quickly. But when they do that, they miss out on learning. When reading something for school, students should:

- **Skim the text**, noticing main ideas.
- **Turn headings into questions**, and then read the text to find the answers.
- **Restate main ideas** after each section.
- **Pause and review** what they learned.



Three factors boost motivation to read

When elementary school students read often outside of school, they become better readers and score higher on achievement tests in all subject areas. To motivate independent reading, experts recommend that families focus on three factors:

- 1. Confidence.** It's important for children to feel good about their reading experiences. Talk about your child's reading successes and offer opportunities to practice reading aloud.
- 2. Choice.** Children are more motivated when they get to pick what they read. Make regular trips to the library with your child. Visit several sections (such as fiction, nonfiction and hobbies) and let your child choose what to check out.
- 3. Interaction.** Model strong reading skills by reading aloud to your child on a regular basis. Have family discussions about books and articles you read.



Build your child's reading confidence

Does your child read too quickly? Guess at words? Avoid sounding them out? If so, your child may have reading anxiety—which can ultimately lead to challenges in school.

To reduce your child's stress about reading:

- **Make it fun.** For example, plan a treasure hunt. Your child must read clues to find the treasure.
- **Don't force your child** to read aloud to you.
- **Extend bedtime** by 30 minutes on weekends so your child can read in bed.
- **Make audio recordings** of challenging materials so your child can listen and read along.
- **Be patient and encouraging.** Talk privately with the teacher and ask about ways you can help.



Q: Playing video games is my child's favorite activity. How can I get my child to spend more time reading instead?

A: It can be difficult to motivate some kids to read—especially when there are so many entertainment options available. Place limits on recreational screen time. Keep irresistible reading materials around the

house. Many young readers love magazines and graphic novels. Look for materials based on your child's favorite shows or games.

Writing improves reading!

Reading and writing go hand in hand. To build writing skills, suggest your child:

- **Keep a journal** to record thoughts.
- **Write notes** to friends and family.
- **Create text** to go along with wordless picture books.
- **Continue a favorite story** by writing a sequel.



For lower elementary readers:

- *In the Trees, Honey Bees!* by Lori Mortensen. Learn some interesting facts about the daily life of a honey bee in this beautifully illustrated, informative book.
- *A Second is a Hiccup: A Child's Book of Time* by Hazel Hutchins. How long is a second, a day or a week? This book explores all a child can do within certain lengths of time.



For upper elementary readers:

- *Every Day on Earth* by Steve Murrie and Matthew Murrie. What amazing things happen on Earth every day? This book provides fascinating details, such as how much air a person inhales in a day.
- *Nuts* by Kacy Cook. When Nell and her brothers find two baby squirrels in their yard, the children's lives change. Together, they figure out a way to take care of the animals.

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