

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

West Chester Area School District

Take advantage of opportunities to read with your child during family activities

It's a Saturday afternoon, and you wish your child were reading. Instead of asking your child to pick up a book, incorporate reading into some of your family's weekend activities. You could:

- **Explore local history.** Ask your child to go online and research a historical site in your area. Visit it together and ask what your child learned about it.
- **Cook together.** Talk about foods you love. What would be fun to whip up? Let your child pick a recipe from a cookbook to read and follow.
- **Watch or play sports** together. Then, visit the library to find books about famous athletes, statistics and playing tips.
- **Bring a nature guide** on a walk. How many flowers, animals, bugs or trees can you and your child identify?
- **Start a craft project** that requires following instructions. Let your child read the directions and take charge of the craft.



Three strategies can strengthen your early reader's confidence

When young children learn how to read, they are often excited and ask family members to listen to them. To support your child's progress and reading confidence, follow these three guidelines:

1. **Get the right books** for your early reader—books with a few sentences on each page, repetitive words/phrases and predictable stories.
2. **Be a good listener.** Don't interrupt your child with corrections, or turn it into a reading "lesson." For now, the key is to have fun, laugh and enjoy the story.
3. **Offer lots of praise** and encouragement. Say, "Wow! Listen to you read."

Ask questions to find reading topics

Looking for an easy way to strengthen your child's reading skills? Ask open-ended questions about things that interest your elementary schooler. Encourage your child to give details and not just answer with one word.



For example, ask, "What was the most interesting thing you learned in science today?" Listen to the answer, then share books, news articles or websites that can help your child learn more about the topic.

Graphics boost comprehension

To help your child understand reading assignments, take breaks to talk about what complements the information in the text. Notice how the visuals reinforce the meaning. For example, ask, "Why do you think that character looks sad?" "Why did the author include this chart?"



Practice using directional words

With your child, draw a simple map of your neighborhood or community. Include places important to your elementary schooler, such as the library, stores, the school and friends' homes.

Next, give your child written directions to one of those places on the map. Use directional words, such as *left*, *right*, *first*, *second*, *east*, *west*. Then, have your child give you directions.



Talk about different types of nouns

Nouns are an essential part of the grammar of a sentence. They are words that name people, places, things or ideas. Remind your child that *common nouns* name them in general (such as *boy*, *cat*), and *proper nouns* give them specific names and are capitalized (such as *Patrick*, *Virginia*).

To help your elementary schooler practice:

- **List several nouns** and have your child say whether they're common or proper nouns. For example, you might name *dog* (common), *hat* (common), *Mississippi* (proper), *plant* (common) and *Roald Dahl* (proper).
- **Look at a magazine** together. Challenge your child to find several examples of common nouns and proper nouns.
- **Read a story aloud** and have your child raise a hand when you say a common noun, and stand when you say a proper noun.



Older kids provide reading motivation

Studies show that kids who see an older sibling reading for pleasure are more likely to seek out books themselves.

Book-loving older kids model good reading habits and are great resources for sharing books and suggesting new stories to explore.

To reap the benefits:

- **Include older siblings** or cousins in your weekly family reading time.
- **Ask your babysitter** to bring along a favorite book to read. Seeing how important reading is to an older kid, may inspire your child become interested in it, too!



Source: M. Knoester and M. Plikuhn, "Influence of siblings on out-of-school reading practices," *Journal of Research in Reading*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.



Q: My child has to take notes from a book for a research project. How can I help with this?

A: Discuss how the book is organized. Your child's notes should be organized in a similar way. To demonstrate how this works, look at a chapter or section together. What is the main idea? Have your child write it down. Then, notice the supporting details that follow. Your child should write a brief summary for each detail.

Performances enliven poetry

April is National Poetry Month! So it's the perfect opportunity to celebrate poetry.

Visit the library with your child and check out several books of poetry—some silly and some serious. Then, challenge each family member to memorize and recite a poem. Encourage them to be creative. They could set a poem to music, act it out or recite it with emotion.

For lower elementary readers:

- *A Mango in the Hand: A Story Told through Proverbs* by Antonio Sacre. As Francisco prepares for a special feast, his family members teach him lessons through traditional proverbs.
- *I (Don't) Like Snakes* by Nicola Davies. A little girl dislikes her family's pet snakes—until she learns some cool facts about the slithery creatures.



For upper elementary readers:

- *The Junkyard Wonders* by Patricia Polacco. Trisha doesn't want to be in a "special" class. But her teacher finds ways to make it wonderful.
- *The Unforgettable Season: The Story of Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams and the Record-Setting Summer of '41* by Phil Bildner. In 1941, two baseball players achieved amazing feats that no player has matched since.

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