

*25 Ways Parents Can ...*

# **Read With Children**



**...and Help Them Do Better in School**



# Reading: A Foundation for Success

**R**eading is the foundation for success in school—and in life. Strong reading and writing skills are necessary to master *every* school subject and to communicate effectively. Even more importantly, children who enjoy reading will continue to learn throughout their lives. Reading is one of the most inexpensive and readily available forms of education and entertainment.

You have an important role to play in helping your child become a successful reader and develop a love of reading. You know your child better than anyone else does, so you can offer support and encouragement and help choose books that will interest your child.

That's where this publication comes in. It shares 25 family-tested ideas you can use to reinforce your child's reading skills and motivation at home.



**1** Encourage your child to spend time reading every day. Reading is a skill and it gets better with practice. Research shows that kids who spend at least 30 minutes a day reading books, magazines and news articles are more likely to become strong readers.

**2** Help your child get into the library habit. Set aside some time every week for a family trip to the local library. While you're there, check out a book yourself. You'll be setting a powerful example of the importance of reading for your child.

**3** Make reading easy. If TVs and digital devices are within easy reach, but books are stored on a high shelf, you can probably guess how your child will spend free time. But if you have a bookshelf filled with interesting books, and screen time must be scheduled in advance, your child will probably pick up a book.



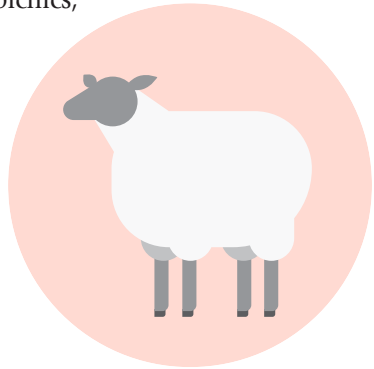
**4** **Read aloud to your child.** Research shows that this is probably the most important thing you can do to encourage your child's reading success. Here are some tips from Jim Trelease's *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, an excellent book to read before you start:

- **Begin reading** to your child as soon as possible—no matter how young.
- **Set aside time** every day for reading aloud. Start with just 10 minutes a day.
- **Read stories** that you also enjoy. You and your child might take turns deciding what to read. Don't be surprised if your child tends to choose the same books over and over. Familiar books are comforting to children, and repeated readings increase word recognition, vocabulary and comprehension.
- **Vary the subject matter, genre and length** of your reading. Choose storybooks, science fiction, historical fiction, biographies, poetry, graphic novels and even joke books.
- **Focus on quality over quantity.** Your child will remember 10 minutes of reading together far longer than two hours of staring at a screen.
- **Don't compete** with digital media. If you ask whether your child would prefer a story or screen time, your child will most likely choose the screen. But remember: You're the adult. Announce that digital devices will be turned off at 7:30. If your child wants a story, fine. If not, that's OK, too. But don't give your child the idea that books are the reason behind screen-time limits.

**5** Use tried-and-true teacher tips to help your child become a better reader. During your read-aloud times at home:

- **Stop before the end** of the story. Ask your child to predict what may happen next.
- **Encourage your child** to predict what the next rhyming word may be if you're reading a rhyming story or poem.
- **Have your child** relate the story to a personal experience or to another book.
- **Ask how your child** might have changed the story. Would your child prefer a different ending? Would the story be more interesting if it was set in a different place or time period?

**6** Give your child a wide range of experiences, which are the foundation for understanding reading material. Take your child on picnics, visits to the zoo or trips to a nearby park. A child who has seen and touched a sheep, for example, will learn the words *sheep*, *wool* and, of course, *baa*.



**7** **Make reading part of your family's nighttime routine.** Read bedtime stories to your child. If you're reading a chapter book, leave the book on your child's nightstand as you say goodnight. Your child may be tempted to read the next chapter before lights out!

Choose a weekend night to hold a family "read-in." Gather in the living room, turn out the lights and read by flashlight or candlelight. You might even want to plan a special snack.

**8** **Look for unusual places** for your daily reading time with your child. Here are some suggestions:

- **Read outside under a shady tree**, in a sandbox, in a hammock or at a nearby park.
- **Toss a sheet over a clothesline** or table to create a reading hideaway.
- **Keep a book in a tote bag or your glove compartment** for long trips, traffic delays or those times when you get stuck in a line.
- **Spread a blanket on the floor.** Have an indoor reading picnic.

**9** Have a family contest to determine “The Most Unusual Place I Ever Read.” Take pictures of family members in their favorite reading hideaways. (These would make great holiday greeting cards.)

**10** Schedule time to read aloud. In some families, when everyone says, “Oh, DEAR,” that doesn’t mean something’s gone wrong. Instead, they’ve agreed to Drop Everything And Read.

During DEAR Time, digital devices are turned off. And everyone sits down for some uninterrupted reading time. Here are some suggestions for making DEAR Time a success at your house:

- **Schedule DEAR in advance.** If you have a family calendar, write “DEAR Time” on it. This lets your child see that reading time is just as important as basketball practice.
- **Make sure everyone has something to read.** You might want to plan a trip to the library before DEAR day.
- **Start small.** Some families schedule a half-hour of DEAR time once a week. When everyone has the reading habit, DEAR time is more frequent.
- **Join in.** DEAR time can be a success only if everyone takes part. So pop a big bowl of popcorn, grab that bestseller you’ve been dying to read and settle down for quiet reading yourself.

**11** Squeeze reading into a busy day. You can include reading during:

- **Breakfast.** One parent makes sure the kids get a “breakfast of champions” by reading aloud while they eat. Best of all, the kids become so engrossed with the story they stop arguing with each other!
- **Cooking time.** Ask your child to read aloud while you cook. Possibilities include a book your child is reading for school, a story your child wrote in class or even the school lunch menu.
- **Wait time.** Read books, magazines or news articles while you wait for the doctor or dentist.
- **Bathtub time.** On hectic days, one family schedules read-aloud time during baths for good, clean fun.
- **Travel time.** Today’s families seem to spend a lot of time on the road. Try recording a favorite book while you read aloud to your child. Then play it as you drive so your child can read along while listening. Keep a small stack of books and magazines handy so your child can read during the afternoons spent traveling back and forth to activities.



**12** Start a family library so your child can enjoy favorite books again and again. Of course, few families can afford to buy every book their children like. But with a little planning, you can have a library that will spark your child's interest in reading. Here's how:

- **Choose paperback books.** To make them last, cover them with clear contact paper.
- **Encourage your child to swap books with friends.** Host a "read-in" in your neighborhood. Have each child bring a favorite book. Afterward, they can exchange or borrow books.
- **Buy used books.** You can often find gently used books at a very reasonable price. Visit used book shops and websites that sell secondhand books. Look for yard sales and garage sales.
- **Give books for gifts.** Establish a family tradition of giving books for holidays and birthdays. If you're not sure which book to choose, give a gift certificate to a bookstore.



**13** Invite a “guest reader” to read to your child. You don’t have to be the only one to read to and with your child. Encourage siblings to read to each other. Ask friends and neighbors, or other relatives, to share a story with your child. Older kids will love showing off their reading skills to a younger child. And so will your child. Encourage your child to read to a younger relative, a neighbor or even a pet or a stuffed animal.



**14** Make sure a book is on your child’s reading level. Some educators suggest using the following “rule of thumb”:

Have your child read a page of the book aloud and then hold up one finger for each unknown word. If your child holds up four fingers and a thumb before the end of the page, the book is probably too hard to read alone. But it might be a great book for you to read aloud.

**15** Turn your whole house into a reading lesson for your very early reader. Make labels for everything your child sees or uses: *door, wall, sofa, bed, lamp*. (Hint: Use masking tape that won't hurt walls or furniture.) Hang up a family message board where you and your child can leave notes for each other. Put magnetic letters on the refrigerator and spell familiar words for your child to read.

**16** Limit your child's recreational screen time. Doctors recommend that families limit screen time to allow children plenty of time for reading and other productive screen-free activities. Some families give their children "tickets," each good for 30 minutes of screen time. When the tickets are gone, the screens are turned off for the week, unless they are needed for schoolwork.

**17** Give your child practice reading directions by following a recipe or doing a craft project together. Choose a simple recipe or project your child will have fun making. Ask your child to read the directions out loud to you. Work together, step-by-step. Then enjoy!

**18** Make your child a reading detective. Hide a small toy or treat. Write clues that send your child from one part of the house to another to find the hidden item. (In nice weather, hide some clues outside, as well.) Your child will have fun—and get some valuable practice in reading.

**19** Try a news scavenger hunt. Get a newspaper, or go online together, and give your child a list of things to find, such as:

- The name of a famous athlete.
- Today's weather forecast.
- A favorite comic strip.
- The name of a local restaurant.
- The title of a program at your public library.
- The movie schedule for your local theater.

After finding each item, your child can cut or print it out. Can your child locate everything on the list?



**20** Play **Alphabet Concentration** with a child who's just learning to recognize letters. On one set of index cards, print the alphabet in capital letters. On another set, print the alphabet in lowercase letters. Then shuffle the cards, turn them over and lay them all out. Players can make a pair by matching the capital letter with its lowercase partner. For very young children, start with a few pairs, gradually working up to the entire deck.

With older kids, try playing **Synonym Concentration**, using words on cards, instead—for example: *happy* and *jolly*, *tiny* and *little*, *cold* and *frigid*.

**21** Schedule a “**reading dinner**.” It’s a great way to provide special reading time for your family. Announce the meal beforehand. That night, have everyone come to the table with something to read. And don’t forget to turn off digital devices.

Make it the one time when reading at the table is allowed. You may want to read something aloud for everyone to share. And be sure to talk about what each family member is reading.

An occasional reading dinner works because it’s special. It also gives kids a chance to see that reading is important for the whole family.

**22** **Teach your child to find information.** When your child asks a question and you don't know the answer, find it together. A trip to your local library or an online search will help your child discover the answer to the question—and learn how to find answers to many questions in the future.

**23** **Promote reading** even if you're not a strong reader yourself. Listen to audiobooks with your child and follow along in the printed book. When your child begins reading independently, set aside some time to have your child read to you—while you cook, for example. Plan regular library visits to refresh your child's supply of reading materials and keep reading interesting.

**24** **Encourage your child to write a letter to a favorite author.** You can find the publisher's address inside the front of the book or online. Publishers are usually glad to forward letters to authors. This may lead to a continuing interest in the life and works of this author—and others.

**25** **Make a special effort to find reading materials** on subjects that interest your child—especially if your child seems to be losing interest in reading. Leave them around the house in easy reach. You might subscribe to a magazine for children. Odds are, your child will be reading again in no time.

**Encouraging a love of reading is one of the most important things you can do to put your child on the road to school success.**



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