

Find simple ways to make reading enjoyable



Support your child's growing reading skills by helping her see that reading isn't just useful—it's also fun! Reading is a lifelong skill and hobby for your child to enjoy.

To encourage her interest in reading:

- **Establish a routine.** For example, make the 30 minutes before bedtime reading time. Your child can read by herself or you can read together. Doing this daily will help your child develop a lifelong reading habit.
- **Provide exciting reading material.** Put interesting books, articles and poems where your child will see them. Find other things to read together, such as signs, recipes and instructions.
- **Read in unusual places.** Reading can take place anywhere! Your child can read outside, in



the kitchen, in the bathtub, or even in a blanket fort that she builds.

- **Research extracurricular activities.** Look for activities that involve reading or critical thinking, such as music or a book club.
- **Encourage your child to write often.** Reading and writing are closely connected. Give her a journal to write her thoughts in. Write your child little notes and ask her to write you back.

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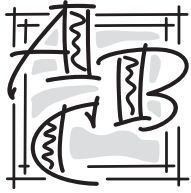
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Build vocabulary to boost reading skills



One of the best ways for your child to improve her reading and writing skills is to have a strong vocabulary. The more words she knows, the better her reading comprehension will be. Help your child learn new

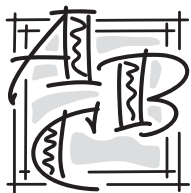
words and develop her vocabulary by having her:

- **Read, read, read!** This is the easiest way to build vocabulary. The more your child reads, the more new words she'll encounter.
- **Play word games.** Do crossword and other word puzzles.
- **Examine the context of new words.** See if she can figure out what a new word means by reading the text around it or looking at pictures.
- **Keep a list of new words** and their meanings in a special notebook. Have her look up definitions and review the list often.



- **Learn the roots of words.** See how many words she can think of that contain the same root—*predict*, *verdict*, *dictionary* and *dictate*, for example. What do these words have in common? What might the root *dict* indicate? (talk or speak)
- **Use a thesaurus.** She can look up *synonyms* (words with the same meaning) and *antonyms* (words with opposite meanings) for words she uses often.

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Brainstorming can inspire your child's writing



Writing and reading go hand in hand, and if your child enjoys writing, chances are he'll love reading, too! Help your child get excited about writing by thinking creatively.

If your child is having a hard time thinking about what to write, try brainstorming together to help him figure out a topic for a paper or think of ideas for a story.

Here are some thinking strategies your child can use to overcome writer's block:

- **Make lists.** Some examples are: Things I love. My favorite animals, places, toys or food. Things I know a lot about. Scary characters. Silly things adults say.
- **Be an observer.** Encourage your child to take notes on what he sees around him. He can keep track of his observations, what people are wearing or saying.



- **Become a critic.** Have your child write a few sentences about why he liked—or disliked—a book or a movie he recently read or saw.
- **Exaggerate.** Ask silly *What if?* questions to spark new ways to think about people, events and scenes. What if my dog could talk? What if people had four hands? What if I could breathe underwater?
- **Use visual images for inspiration.** Have him look at a picture and write down ideas it brings to mind.

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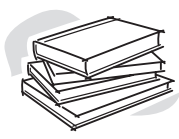
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Improve your child's reading comprehension



The older your child gets, the more he will need strong reading comprehension skills to do his best in school. Reading comprehension is more than just the ability to fully understand the material. It can also include more advanced skills, such as being able to draw conclusions based on evidence in the reading.

To help your child build reading comprehension:

- **Encourage him to form pictures** in his head of what he is reading. If he has trouble with this, have him actually draw the pictures at first.
- **Have him name at least one thing** in the material that reminds him of something he already knows.
- **Ask him to tell you** what he thinks are the most important parts of the story or text. What is the main idea? If he's reading a short story or a novel,



who are the main characters? What conflicts do the characters face?

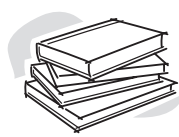
- **Practice critical thinking**, a key skill for older elementary school students. Ask your child to give you his thoughts about what he has read. Does it make sense? Should the author have presented it in a different way? Did characters in the novel make good choices? Why or why not?

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Reading aloud improves your child's skills



Reading aloud to children, even once they know how to read on their own, continues to strengthen family bonds. It's also a great way to continue building your child's reading skills.

When you read aloud with your child, choose books that are a bit harder than he can read on his own. Leave some time at the end for your child to read to you. As he progresses, gradually increase the amount of time he reads aloud.

When your child reads to you, follow these tips:

- **Let him choose the books** he wants to read. You'll both have more fun if you're reading something he likes.
- **Listen to see if he understands** what he's reading. Clues will come in the tone of his voice. For example, does it rise for a question?



- **Periodically ask questions.** These questions should help him think about what he's reading, and they don't have to have a right answer. Say, "Why do you think the main character did that?"
- **Don't jump in right away.** If he's having trouble with a word, have him read to the end of the sentence. Can he figure out the word then? If not, tell him the word and let him move on.

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Turn junk mail into an effective learning tool



Instead of throwing away the junk mail you receive, use it to help your child improve skills in geography, math, map reading and more.

Appoint your child the family mail detective. Ask her to examine each piece of mail to find where it came from. Help her search for a postmark, publisher or return address.

Once your child pinpoints the places of origin, help her:

- **Locate each place on a map.** Get or print out a large U.S. map and hang it up. Your child can use dots to mark where the mail came from. Have her keep track and see if more mail comes from certain areas.
- **Sort the mail using different criteria.** Sort by state or regions of the country, by climate or by which



ocean or mountain range the mailer's address is closest to.

- **Measure how far away** each place is from your hometown. Which mail pieces traveled the longest distance? The shortest?
- **Use a highway map to plan a pretend trip** between two cities where mail originated. Measure the mileage between them. Go online to research interesting places to see or things to do on your imaginary trip.

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