

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Danville Elementary School

Put some extra thought into reading time

During your family's reading time each day, it's important to have "thinking time," too. This builds your child's comprehension. For example:

- **Before reading a book,** talk about it. Why does it look interesting? What is it about? What hints does the cover provide? Encourage your child to ask questions and make comments while you read.
- **Think aloud while reading.** You and your child might wonder, "Why did that happen?" "Does the story make sense?" "What could happen next?" "Do you agree with that character's decision?"
- **After reading a book,** talk about it again. Did you like it? Why or why not? Do you relate to the characters' experiences or feelings? Discuss it again days later, when your child has had more time to think about the story.



Source: "Helping your child learn to read: A Parent's Guide," Ontario Ministry of Education, www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/brochure/earlyreading/index.html.

*"It is well to read everything of something,
and something of everything."*

—Lord Henry P. Brougham

'Journaling' is an exciting writing project

Keeping a journal is a great way to build reading and writing skills. But kids aren't always enthusiastic about "journaling." Try giving your child a notebook, a pen and irresistible ideas, such as:

- **Rewriting a favorite story.** Encourage your child to write something new about a character he loves.
- **Writing a silly poem.** Don't follow the "rules." Instead, craft a poem that uses fun combinations of words!
- **Trading messages.** Pass notes with your child. Write a fun question in his notebook for him to answer. Then he can write back and ask you something.
- **Writing for TV.** Suggest that your child imagine a new episode of a TV show he loves. Read—and compliment—the story he writes!

Source: K.J. Gough, "Summer Journaling with Kids," Metro Parent, www.metroparent.com/Metro-Parent/June-2012/Summer-Journaling-with-Kids/.

Let reading inspire family activities

Your child has to read a biography for school, and he's not excited about it. How can you help him persevere? Plan fun activities related to the book. If he reads about Benjamin Franklin, for instance, he might learn that Franklin supported fire departments. As a family, you could visit a fire department in honor of Franklin's work.



Source: "Summer Reading Activity Center," All Star Activities, www.allstaractivities.com/reading/Reading-summer-calendar.htm.

Soar With Reading supports family learning online

Looking for reading tips, book ideas and online activities? Visit Soar With Reading at www.soarwithreading.com. Click on "Let's Read" for parent tips. Or try "Activities" for kid-friendly fun.



Add sight words to your child's regular learning routine

Children are often told to "sound out" words. But that's especially difficult with some words. Introduce



your child to *sight words*—words she needs to recognize quickly. Ask her teacher for a list. Then make flash cards that use words and pictures. (The

number "twelve" might have a "12" next to it, for example.) Use the cards to review often.

Teach your child to tackle tough words

Sometimes words are hard to figure out, and that's why schools teach "word attack" skills. When your child approaches a challenging word, she can:

- **Sound out the word**, making and blending letter sounds. Which sounds make the most sense?
- **Think of similar words**. What words look like the mystery word? For example, *freight* looks and sounds like *eight*.
- **Look carefully at pictures**. What people, things and actions are shown? Do they provide any clues?
- **Read more**. Reread the sentence—and the ones before and after it. Think about what words might fit. Give them a try!



Source: "Reading and Word-Attack Strategies," Reading A-Z, www.readinga-z.com/more/reading_strat.html.

Suggest comic books for reluctant readers

Does your reader hesitate to pick up traditional chapter books but will read comic books? That's okay!

Experts say that comic books are just another type of book. They provide the same benefits and reading skills. In fact, picture books have adopted elements of comics, including motion lines and speech bubbles.

By reading comic books that you approve of, your child will understand how words and pictures come together to tell a story. He will also see the progression of a story from beginning to middle to end.



Digital Vision

So when your child says that he just doesn't want to read, suggest a comic book featuring some of his favorite characters—he may just change his mind about reading!

Source: P. Ciciora, "For improving early literacy, reading comics is no child's play," University of Illinois, <http://news.illinois.edu/news/09/1105comics.html>.



Q: Is it normal for children to reverse letters? I'm worried that my son has dyslexia.

A: It's common for early readers to confuse similar-looking letters, such as *b* and *d*. As reading skills improve, however, this shouldn't happen often.

It's wonderful that you pay attention to your child's skills! But if you are worried about his reading, be sure to discuss your concerns with his teacher.

Do you have a question about reading? Email readingadvisor@parent-institute.com.

Famous actors read to children online



Need a break from doing dramatic read-alouds for your child? Visit Storyline Online! Here, find recordings of popular stories done by members of the Screen Actors Guild. Check it out at www.storylineonline.net. The site provides free reading activities, too!

For lower elementary readers:

- ***Minette's Feast*** by Susanna Reich (Abrams). What would chef Julia Child serve her pet? Readers find out in this tale about Child's real-life cat Minette.



- ***Because Amelia Smiled*** by David Ezra Stein (Candlewick). Because she saw Amelia smile, Mrs. Higgins smiled and baked some cookies. See what happens next in this chain of events started by a simple smile.

For upper elementary readers:

- ***Our White House: Looking in, Looking Out*** by N.C.B.L.A. (Candlewick). More than 100 authors and illustrators contribute to this updated edition. It's especially good for advanced readers and read-aloud story times.
- ***Bananas in my Ears*** by Michael Rosen (Candlewick). This silly collection of quirky poems and stories takes readers to the seaside to meet some Smelly Jelly Smelly Fish, but be careful not to get Spollyollydiddlytiddlyitis, or you'll have to go to the doctor!

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Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

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Writer: Susan O'Brien.

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