

BUILDING READERS®

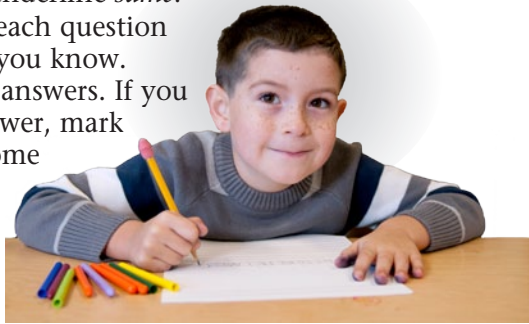
How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Danville Elementary School

Reading is critical to success on tests

No matter what tests your child takes at school, reading skills will help him do well. Experts recommend using certain techniques to succeed. Tell your child that it helps to:

- **Review the instructions carefully.** Underline key words. If the directions say, “Circle words with the same meaning,” your child should underline *same*.
- **Move forward.** Read each question and consider what you know. Cross out incorrect answers. If you don’t know the answer, mark the problem and come back to it later.
- **Go back.** Return to unanswered questions. Keep in mind that the first answer you choose is most likely to be the right one.



Source: “The Test-Taking Strategy,” Virginia Council for Learning Disabilities, www.vclcd.org/pages/newsletters/01_02_fall/testtaking.htm.

“Reading without reflecting is like eating without digesting.”

—Edmund Burke

Help your child through reading challenges

Statistics show that almost one-third of fourth graders read below the basic level needed in school. This is especially troublesome because, when kids can’t read well, all learning suffers. There are simple signs that may indicate a child is struggling with reading. The sooner these red flags are noticed, the better. Talk with your child’s teacher if:

- **Your kindergartner or first grader** has difficulty rhyming or recognizing sounds that begin words, end words and make up short words. It’s also important for your child to know that print represents words—and that we read from left to right.
- **Your second or third grader** (or higher) has trouble figuring out words. When your child reads a book on her grade level, her reading should be fairly smooth and easy. She should also be able to understand what she reads.

Source: “Top Ten Things You Should Know About Reading,” Reading Rockets, www.readingrockets.org/teaching/about_reading/; “Reading Risk Indicators by Grade Level,” Reading Rockets, www.readingrockets.org/article/3498/.

Teach your child to use and enjoy the library

“Where do elephants live?” your child asks. Instead of answering, suggest a trip to the library. Look up elephants in the library catalog. Talk with the librarian. Find books together. You might even take notes on what you learn. “Let’s write down some information about elephants. Then we’ll tell Grandma all about it when we get home!”



Graphic organizers help when reading

Students are often expected to summarize what they read. The teacher may ask about characters, setting, plot and more. To help your child keep track of details, use a graphic organizer. For example, draw a sun by making a circle with rays. Each ray should lead to another planet. On the sun, your child should write the book’s title. On each planet, he should add a detail, such as “author” and “main character.” When he’s done reading, all of his thoughts will be organized!



Look for reading help online

Does anyone in your family need a little extra help with reading?

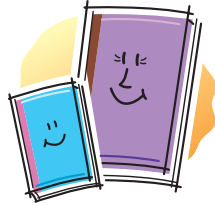


Literacydirectory.com can help you find it! Enter your zip code to see nearby reading programs. You can search for help with math and homework, too.

Teamwork aids reading teachers and students

The National Institutes of Health says it's important to catch reading problems early, and parent involvement helps with this. When problems are identified quickly, it's easier for kids to catch up. Start by keeping in touch with the teacher. Discuss:

- **Expectations.** What skills are most important for your child to develop? What's normal for kids his age?
- **Progress.** How has your child's reading been evaluated? How did he score? What do the results mean?
- **Books.** What books does the teacher recommend? Is there a certain reading "level" that's best for your child right now?
- **Activities.** What common words should your child study? How long should he read each day? What games will build critical reading skills?
- **Perspectives.** Are you satisfied with your child's reading accomplishments? How does the teacher feel? What steps should you take next?



Source: "Partner With Your Child's Grade K-2 Teacher," Parents, www.scholastic.com/resources/article/partner-with-your-childs-grade-k2-teacher.

Play games to build your child's vocabulary

Good readers have good vocabularies. Try one of the following word games to boost your child's vocabulary—and reading skills:

- **Word war.** See who can learn the most new words in a week. Post a chart on the refrigerator where you can each write your new words.
- **Guess the definition.** Open the dictionary and pick a word you're sure your child knows. Read the definition and see if she can guess the word.
- **Memory.** Choose five to 10 words from her reading. Print each on two 3" x 5" index cards. Shuffle the



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cards and lay them face down. Each player takes turns turning over two cards at a time until all pairs are matched.



Q: My child's teacher says she needs to become more "fluent" in reading. What does this mean? How can I help my child with this?

A: A "fluent" reader progresses through material with confidence and feeling. With more fluency, it is easier for your child to read and understand material. Ask the teacher for ideas, and make sure your child reads often (even if it's the same material repeatedly). Read aloud to her sometimes, too. When you read to her, model fluency by reading with clarity and expression.

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

Math and reading have similarities

Math and reading may not seem alike, but they have plenty in common.

Explain to your child that math and reading use languages. To focus on both at once, read books about math! For example, read *The Greedy Triangle* by Marilyn Burns. Then, discuss geometric shapes with your child. Connect what you read to real life.



Source: A.K. Balas, "The Mathematics and Reading Connection," ericdigests.org, www.ericdigests.org/2000-1/math.html.

For lower elementary readers:

- **Blue Chicken** by Deborah Freedman (Viking Juvenile). Uh oh! Chicken spilled blue paint on an unfinished drawing! Sometimes trying to help complicates things.
- **Too Noisy!** by Malachy Doyle (Candlewick). The Bungle family is always *so noisy!* How will Sam ever find peace and quiet to think and dream?



For upper elementary readers:

- **The Unforgotten Coat** by Frank Cottrell Boyce (Candlewick). Julie feels ready to leave elementary school. But then something wonderful happens. She gets to know—and help—two Mongolian brothers.
- **Wild Wings** by Gill Lewis (Atheneum). An 11-year-old boy works hard to protect an osprey. What will happen when the bird migrates from Scotland to Africa?

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