

# BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Danville Elementary School

## Start the school year excited about reading

What does it really mean when a child “can’t stand” reading? Often it means he hasn’t found the right reading materials yet. Try these ideas to turn your reader from reluctant to ravenous early in the school year:

- **Offer a variety of materials.** Frequent visits to the library help.
- **Be open-minded.** If your child likes short, simple stories, that’s okay!
- **Consider your child’s interests.** Look for materials on topics he loves.
- **Move on.** If your child is bored by the second chapter of a book, let him pick a new one.
- **Read aloud sometimes.** Get your child hooked on a book by reading the first chapter to him.
- **Show interest.** Read a book with your child so you can discuss all the details.



**Source:** “RHI: Reaching Reluctant Readers,” Random House, Inc., [www.randomhouse.com/highschool/RHI\\_magazine/pdf/RHI06.pdf](http://www.randomhouse.com/highschool/RHI_magazine/pdf/RHI06.pdf).

*“There are many little ways to enlarge your child’s world.  
Love of books is the best of all.”*  
—Jacqueline Kennedy

## Learn essential library research skills together

Your child has been assigned her first report of the year, and she’s expected to use books as sources. How should she start her research? Go to the library together and:

- **Be enthusiastic.** “I can’t wait to learn about the moon with you. This is going to be cool!”
- **Use the online catalog.** Which books look best? Where are they located?
- **Review how to use** a book’s table of contents and index.
- **Ask the librarian** about other resources if needed, such as reference books, databases and news articles.

**Source:** “Four Steps to a Successful Research Project,” Toronto Public Library KidsSpace, <http://kidsspace.torontopubliclibrary.ca/research.html>.

## Writing letters can improve reading

Letters from family members have many benefits. Families grow closer, and children are motivated to improve their reading and writing skills.

Ask family and friends to write letters to your child. Have them ask for a return letter. Help your child write back. Keep a dictionary on hand in case your child needs to look up a word.

**Source:** “Family Words Matter,” [www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content3/Read\\_Write\\_Now/young.html](http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content3/Read_Write_Now/young.html).



## Check out library services for kids

When you meet your child’s teacher this year, don’t be afraid to ask important questions. Many reading terms are new to parents. If the teacher says your child is a “fluent reader,” for example, that’s a compliment! It means he reads accurately and smoothly.



## Make vocabulary words into food for thought in your kitchen



Is your refrigerator plastered with photos, art and more? As the school year begins, make room for new vocabulary words, too! Add:

- **Some magnets** that will allow your child to combine letters and words.
- **A calendar** that helps your child recognize days of the week.
- **Lists** of all kinds, such as shopping lists, to-do lists and weekly menus.
- **A “word of the day”** for you and your child to use and discuss.

**Source:** J. Castrejón, “7 ways to use your refrigerator door to build vocabulary,” Children Learning Languages, <http://bit.ly/I1g62l>.

## Make comprehension a key reading goal

Fall is the perfect time to put reading skills to work for your child. At school and at home, she'll read for pleasure and learning. And no matter what she reads—from a comic book to a textbook—you can boost her comprehension with simple steps. Research shows it's critical to emphasize:



- **Decoding.** Have your child sound out tough words. Review common words so she recognizes them instantly.
- **Vocabulary.** Introduce new words through experiences, instruction and reading itself.
- **Knowledge.** Ask questions that remind your child of related information she already knows.
- **Active reading.** Encourage your child to think about what she reads. Predict what will happen next or summarize a section.
- **Self-help.** Explain that when your child thinks, "Wait. I didn't get that," it's a good idea to reread the text.

**Source:** M. Pressley, "Comprehension Instruction: What Works," Reading Rockets, [www.readingrockets.org/article/68/](http://www.readingrockets.org/article/68/).

## Decode unfamiliar words like a detective

Your child is stuck on a word and asks for help. "What does it say?" she asks. Now's the time to encourage her—and have a little fun! Suggest that she investigate and:

- **Sound it out.** How do the letters come together to make sounds? Be patient and encouraging as your child tries.
- **Reread the sentence or paragraph.** What comes before and after the "missing word"? What word or words would make sense in that place?
- **Look for clues.** Are there hints in nearby illustrations or photos? Is the word—or any part of the word—similar to one that your child already knows?



**Q:** School just started, and I'm already worried about my child's reading skills. Is it too soon to contact his teacher?

**A:** No! The sooner that reading struggles are identified, the better. The teacher is still getting to know your child, so your perspective is especially important. Working together gives your child his best chance for success. Be sure to ask what you can do to help at home.

Do you have a question about reading? Email [readingadvisor@parent-institute.com](mailto:readingadvisor@parent-institute.com).

## Ask about reading instruction

You're eager to help your child. But what if you're both confused by his homework? Use your local library! Many libraries have special services that kids can use for homework help. Bonus: Your child's appreciation for the library will grow!



**Source:** "Library Services," U.S. Department of Education, [www2.ed.gov/pubs/parents/Library/Services.html](http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/parents/Library/Services.html).

## For lower elementary readers:

- ***Penny and Her Song*** by Kevin Henkes (Greenwillow Books). Children identify with Penny, a cute mouse with a song to share. What is it like when your family isn't ready to listen?
- ***Pete the Cat: Rocking in my School Shoes*** by Eric Litwin (HarperCollins). Pete the Cat—a popular character with kids—returns in cool, red shoes that are perfect for enjoying school.



## For upper elementary readers:

- ***Calli Be Gold*** by Michele Weber Hurwitz (Yearling). How can Calli stand out in a family of stars? Help comes from someone unexpected: a second grader named Noah.
- ***Dancing Home*** by Alma Flor Ada and Gabriel M. Zubizarreta (Atheneum Books for Young Readers). Margie's classmates finally believe she's American. When her cousin arrives from Mexico, she worries the teasing will start again.

### Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Stacey Marin.

Writer: Susan O'Brien.

Copyright © 2012, The Parent Institute® (a division of NIS, Inc.)

P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525, ISSN: 1533-3302

[www.parent-institute.com](http://www.parent-institute.com)