

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Danville Elementary School

Spice up your ordinary reading routines

Reading with your child every day is one of the most important things you can do to help his education. But there's no sense in always doing the same old thing. To build your child's excitement about reading:

- **Find new reading spots.** Pick fun, unusual places to read, such as a fort your child builds with pillows in the living room.
- **Read as a team.** Have your child follow words with his pointer finger while you read. Or let him "echo" sentences after you say them.
- **Plan a performance.** Choose a favorite passage from a book and help your child master it. Gather an audience to admire his skills!
- **Allow interruptions.** When taking turns reading aloud, encourage your child to take over reading anytime you reach the end of a sentence.
- **Celebrate reading success.** When you reach a goal (such as 100 reading minutes in a week), do something special!



Source: "Reading Resources for Parents," Columbus [Minnesota] Elementary, http://col.forestlake.k12.mn.us/parents/reading_resources_for_parents/.

"Books had instant replay long before televised sports."

—Bern Williams

Discover new titles with online book lists

With thousands of books to choose from, how can you and your child ever decide on what the best ones to read are? Many experts compile reading lists for families with suggestions based on age and more. Be sure to check out:

- **The Parents' Choice Awards** at parents-choice.org. This site divides books into groups (or *genres*), such as fiction, non-fiction and poetry. See an interesting book? Click on it for details and a review.
- **The Houston Area Independent Schools Library Network.** At haisln.org, librarians suggest books for kids of all ages. Simply click on your child's grade to see a list of recommended materials!

Source: J. Meier, "Summer reading lists," Reading Rockets, www.readingrockets.org/blog/51982/.

Challenge your child with analogies

Standardized tests often examine how well kids understand *analogies* (comparisons of different, yet related, things).



For example, *leg* is to *foot* as *arm* is to *hand*. Practicing this can be challenging and entertaining. You might say, "*House* is to *builder* as *pie* is to *what?*" (*Baker.*) Working on analogies builds important vocabulary and thinking skills!

Source: "Analogies," Spelling City, www.spellingcity.com/analogies.html.

Old favorites provide hints for new books

You're looking for a book your child will love. To start, think about her favorite things. *Favorite author?* Maybe he or she has written something new. *Favorite hobby?* Look for a how-to book. *Favorite food?* Read about how to prepare it. *Favorite topic?* Ask the librarian to suggest a popular title.



Source: "Spice up reading time with variety," National Education Association, www.nea.org/grants/13627.htm.

Children need fluency role models



Did you know that just by reading to your child, you are building her fluency?

When you set a good example by reading smoothly—with emotion and enthusiasm—you show that good reading is similar to talking. It flows with ease. If reading aloud is difficult for you, listen to audio books and attend library story times with your child. Afterwards, discuss the story with your child!

Everyday conversation can help boost your child's vocabulary

According to research, the conversations that children have with their parents have great influence on their vocabularies—and their reading skills. Your child probably hears many new words at home just in passing conversation. Once she practices using them, she might recognize them in books.

For example, find something new to mention at the grocery store. “These *mangos* are ripe.” Then provide more details. “Mangos are delicious. They’re green or red on the outside and orange or yellow on the inside. They’re sweet, juicy and even a little slimy. Where do you think they grow? Let’s try one at home.” See if your child can find *mango* on the receipt. Chances are the word will become unforgettable!



Source: “Conversation Can Build Vocabulary,” Better Children’s Books, www.betterchildrens-books.com/conversation.html.

Enjoy synonyms, antonyms and family time

Work on *synonyms* (words with the same meaning) and *antonyms* (words with opposite meanings) with your child while spending time together as a family. Divide two pieces of paper into three columns. Then:

1. **In the first column**, describe yourselves in positive terms. For example, “I am ... kind, generous.”
2. **In the second column**, write a synonym for each word. (“I am ... nice, giving.”)
3. **In the third column**, write antonyms for each word. (“I am not ... mean, stingy.”)
4. **Exchange pages.** Read about each other. Then play the game again—this time describing the other person. What similarities are there in the way you and your child describe each other? How does your child see herself?



Q: How can I tell if a book is too challenging for my child to read?

A: Stay in touch with the teacher about your child’s reading level. This will help when choosing books to read. Try the “five-finger rule” to assess a book’s difficulty. Have your child read a full page of a book. Hold up one finger each time he struggles with a word. If all five fingers are up by the end of the page, save that book for later.

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

Literature circles enhance reading

If your child participates in a literature circle at school, you may wonder what that is. Literature circles are like book clubs. They give kids the opportunity to participate in group discussions about books. To build literature-circle skills, read the same book as your child and ask him questions that promote conversation, such as, “What do you think of that character’s decision?”



For lower elementary readers:

- ***Luke on the Loose*** by Harry Bliss (Toon Books). What’s it like to be a pigeon in New York? Luke finds out when he chases a flock in this comic-book adventure.
- ***Good Dog, Aggie*** by Lori Ries (Charlesbridge). Aggie won’t listen to her owner Ben, and obedience school doesn’t solve the problem. How much patience will Ben have with her?



For upper elementary readers:

- ***Adventures in Cartooning*** by James Sturm, Andrew Arnold and Alexis-Frederick Frost (First Second). This humorous story is told in comic-book style—all while explaining how kids can create comics themselves.
- ***Tall Story*** by Candy Gourlay (Yearling). Andi would love to play basketball and live with her half-brother, Bernardo. One of her dreams comes true when eight-foot-tall Bernardo, who has a condition called Gigantism, arrives in London.

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