

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Danville Elementary School

Use textbooks to educate and entertain

Does your child think textbooks are boring? Do you? A fun activity might change your opinion. Ask your child to name her favorite subject. Then get out one of the books she uses in her class. Next:

- **Flip through the book** and stop somewhere interesting. Or open to a random page and see what you find. Look at pictures and headings. What do they make you and your child wonder?
- **Read with your child** to satisfy her curiosity. She can read aloud or you can take turns reading. If she gets bored, switch to a more interesting topic.
- **Ask each other questions** about what you've read. Show enthusiasm about learning. This will help your child grasp concepts and want to learn more.



Ask questions to spark reading

Looking for an easy way to build your child's reading skills? Ask open-ended questions about things that interest him. Encourage detailed answers so your child isn't answering with just *yes* or *no*. For example, "What was the most interesting thing you learned in science today?" Listen carefully to your child's answers, then look for books or magazines at home or at the library that will tell you both more about the topic.



Inspect illustrations and graphics to enhance reading comprehension

To help your child understand what she reads, take breaks to talk about what contributes to the information in the text. Notice how pictures affect what she reads. For example, ask, "Why do you think that girl looks sad?" "Why did the author include this chart?"



Opportunities for leisure reading can be found in everyday activities

It's a Saturday afternoon, and you wish your child were reading. Instead of talking him into it, incorporate reading into some of your child's other favorite weekend activities. For example:

- **Read a book** about local history. Explore the sites you read about. What additional information can your child learn about your town?
- **Talk about foods** you love. What would be fun to whip up? Pick a recipe from a cookbook to follow.
- **Watch or play sports** together. Visit the library to find books about famous athletes, statistics and playing tips.
- **Bring a nature guide** on a walk. How many flowers, animals, bugs or trees can you identify?
- **Start a craft project** that requires following instructions. Let your child read the directions and take charge of the craft.

Creating analogies is helpful and fun

Children often see analogies on standardized tests. For example, "*finger* is to *hand* as *toe* is to _____" (*foot*). Analogies are great for building reading, thinking and vocabulary skills, too. Try naming a word with your child (such as *big*), and then create an analogy to go with it. "*Big* is to *small* as *cold* is to _____" (*hot*)."



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

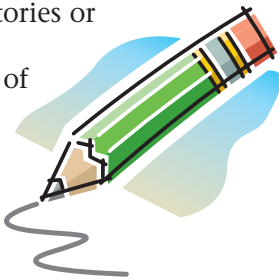
"It is not true we have only one life to live; if we can read, we can live as many more lives and as many kinds of lives as we wish."

—S.I. Hayakawa

Be creative when suggesting journaling

Keeping a journal is a great way to build reading and writing skills. If your child wrinkles her nose at this idea, hand over a notebook and suggest that she use it for something else, such as:

- **Drawing.** Many kids enjoy sketching things they see or imagine. Suggest that your child add stories or simple captions.
- **Reviewing.** What does your child think of books that she reads? What would she recommend to others? Why?
- **Recording.** Your child might keep track of the weather, books she reads or facts she collects. Show enthusiasm about what she writes.
- **Scrapbooking.** Let your child glue favorite pictures and mementos into the notebook—complete with her notes about them. This will be fun to read and remember in the future!



Build your child's excitement about reading

Research shows that when children are more motivated to read, they are more successful readers. To motivate your child to read, take simple steps, such as:

- **Displaying books** in new ways, such as propped up on a table. This new display will be sure to catch your child's attention.
- **Reading a variety** of materials aloud. Try poetry, news articles or biographies.
- **Using reading-related rewards**, such as extra reading time and time to talk about books.
- **Helping your child "publish"** his own writing. He can



George Doyle

write a story and illustrate it or write a family newsletter.

Source: L. Gambrell and B. Marinak, "Simple Practices to Nurture the Motivation to Read," Reading Rockets, www.readingrockets.org/article/29625/.



Q: My child likes to read comics and world-record books. Do these really count? Will they build his reading skills?

A: Every bit of age-appropriate reading "counts"—and helps. Continue to support his interests. Meanwhile, keep other materials around the house, such as novels and biographies. With so many options, he may not be able to resist trying something new!

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

Cook up reading and math success

What simple activity involves math and reading? Cooking! To make the most of it:

- **Take turns reading** a recipe. Ask your child to read the ingredients aloud, for example, while you collect them.
- **Make more—or less.** Take an uncomplicated recipe and double—or halve—it. Do the math together.



For lower elementary readers:

- **The Boss Baby** by Marla Frazee (Beach Lane). When a baby arrives, who's the family boss? This story has kids and parents laughing about the answer!
- **Grandpa Green** by Lane Smith (Roaring Brook). What was life like for Grandpa Green? A young boy explores his great grandfather's decorative garden to find out.



For upper elementary readers:

- **The Strange Case of Origami Yoda** by Tom Angleberger (Abrams). A child's Star-Wars-inspired puppet says amazing things. How is this possible? And should anyone listen?
- **Junkyard Wonders** by Patricia Polacco (Philomel). Tricia doesn't want to be in a "special" class. But in this inspiring story (based on the author's experiences), her teacher finds ways to make it wonderful.

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