

BUILDING READERS

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Pollard School Reading Room
Ms. Tozier and Mrs. Rockwell

Flowers can help your family explore genres

Spring is here! Flowers are in bloom all around—in gardens, in planters and even in books. If your child loves looking at flowers, take this opportunity to learn more about flowers *and* about the different genres of literature.

All literature is divided into three main **genres**, or categories: *fiction*, *nonfiction* and *poetry*. Fiction is any story that is made up. It may include fantasy elements (like talking animals) or unlikely events (like a child sailing around the world alone). Nonfiction books are filled with factual information. Poetry is writing that has a certain rhythm and often rhymes.

To show your child the differences between these genres, together:

- **Read a *fiction* book about a flower.** Talk about how you knew it was fiction. Did the flowers speak?
- **Read a *nonfiction* book about a flower.** Discuss what makes this book nonfiction. Were there photographs or very realistic illustrations? Did you learn facts?
- **Read a *poem* about a flower.** How did you know that this was a poem? Did the words follow a pattern of rhyming?



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Focus, timing improve textbook studying

Textbooks contain a lot of information that kids need to read and remember for tests. Here's how to help your child get the most out of reading textbooks:

- **Focus on a small section.** Encourage your child to start with a single paragraph. After reading it, have him write down a one-sentence summary of what was included.
- **Set a timer** for every five or 10 minutes. At the end of that time, have your child summarize out loud what he read. The timer will help him concentrate and remember.

When it is time for a test, make up a question for each summary sentence. These should be the same types of questions that the teacher uses. If it will be a true-false test, make up true-false questions. This process will help your child understand and remember information from any textbook.

Source: Sylvia Rimm, *Parenting for Today: How to Parent So Children Will Learn*, ISBN: 0-609-80121-X, Three Rivers Press.

Choose appealing read-aloud books

When you visit the library, be sure to look for books you can read with your child. As your child develops his reading skills, simple books may not be about his interests—while interesting books may be too difficult for him to read on his own. Remember, when reading aloud to your child, you can pick books slightly above his reading level. You can help him understand them—and keep him engaged in reading.



Source: R. Needlman, M.D., "Reading Aloud with School-Age Children," www.drspock.com/article/0,1510,5140,00.html.

Launch your family toward reading

Have a question about how to help your child with reading? Visit Reading Rockets online, which is funded by the U.S.

Department of Education.

The site aims to "launch young readers," and it motivates parents, too! Find it at www.readingrockets.org.



Make reading a late-night treat

It's a great idea for your child to read every day at home. But some children resist this activity—especially at homework time. Try letting your child stay up at least 10 minutes later to read. Make this treat even more exciting by reading together or using a flashlight. You may be surprised to hear, "Please, Mom! Just five more minutes!"



Good oral reports require good reading

When children prepare their first oral report, they usually start with reading. To make your child's project a success:

- **Help your child pick a topic.** If she's asked to report on a current event, for example, you might guide her to a few simple, fun articles from which to choose.
- **Read the material together.** Check your child's understanding by talking and asking questions that help her summarize what she read in her own words.
- **Talk about what your child should include in the report.** Teachers often want students to describe the basics (such as *who, what, when, where, why and how*) in a paragraph.
- **Be an attentive audience.** Your child should practice presenting her report clearly, loudly and with confidence—without reading straight from the paper too much. Your compliments and support will make a big difference!



Enjoy ranking top book titles

Next time you're at a bookstore or library, suggest that your child take a closer look at book titles. Which five or 10 titles does he like best? Why? What's his top pick? Suggest that he try the book and see if it lives up to its name!



Source: P. Scales, "Winning Back Your Reluctant Readers," Random House, www.randomhouse.com/highschool/RHI_magazine/reluctant_readers/scales.html.

For lower elementary readers:

- ***Wilky, the White House Cockroach*** by Howie Schneider (The Penguin Group). Wilky craves adventure. That's what he gets when he stows away in a pizza box—and arrives at the White House!
- ***A House for Hermit Crab*** by Eric Carle (Aladdin). Hermit Crab outgrows his shell and finds a new home. Kids will relate to the discomfort and value of change.



For upper elementary readers:

- ***Bread and Roses, Too*** by Katherine Paterson (Clarion). During a mill-worker strike in 1912, a young girl must live with another family.
- ***How Basketball Works*** by Keltie Thomas (Maple Tree Press). From rookies to old pros, almost everyone can learn from this unique, exciting look at basketball.

Stand up to the 'fourth-grade slump'

Research shows that interest in reading often drops as students move from elementary school to later grades. Some experts say fourth grade tends to be when this starts, especially for boys. To help your child through this time, keep reading frequent and fun. Keep irresistible materials around the house, such as:

- **Novels** related to your child's interests.
- **Kid-friendly newspaper articles** and comics.
- **Biographies** of role models.
- **Magazines** about your child's favorite topics.
- **High-quality graphic** (comic) novels.
- **Cookbooks** and other how-to books.
- **Books** and articles *you'll* enjoy—so you can set a good example.



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Q: My child is supposed to play reading games at home to boost her skills. But she says playing with me is "boring." What should I do?

A: Perhaps there's someone else who would enjoy pitching in sometimes. Many kids happily do learning activities with siblings, grandparents and other caregivers because it adds novelty. Another option is to add computers to the mix. Visit the library and ask about its computer games. Find one that matches your child's age and skills. If she continues to resist, talk with her teacher.

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

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