

BUILDING READERS

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Pollard School Reading Room
Ms. Tozier and Mrs. Rockwell

Creative games make reading irresistible

Reading with your child every day is a great routine—you're helping your child improve his fluency, learn new words and grow to love reading.

But even the best routines can feel a bit stale after a while! When that happens, it's time to get creative. For example:

- **Search for a treasure.** Few kids can resist a treasure hunt, so plan one that involves plenty of reading. Write clues that lead to the next one, with the final clue showing the way to a prize of a favorite snack or small toy—or even a new book. For example, “A toy in your room is red, white and blue. Look under it and see what to do!”
- **Put on a play.** Let your child choose a favorite book to act out. Then refer to it when needed. Ask questions and give hints to spur him on—“What did the dragon say to the princess?” Or, “Remind me what the pirate did next.” Add simple props, costumes and an audience for extra motivation. Don't forget to applaud!



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Source: “Reading Activities Make Reading Fun,” Reading-With-Kids.com, www.reading-with-kids.com/readingactivities.html.

Practice these important research skills

It may not have happened yet, but at some point, your child will be assigned a research paper. Will she know how to use the library catalog to find sources? To practice, go to the library and:

- **Search the catalog by topic.** Simply enter a subject—like “gerbils”—to see what you can find.
- **Narrow your search.** Your search results for “gerbils” will include every book the library has that mentions that topic—including storybooks or adult nonfiction. Try specifying “nonfiction books for children.”
- **Find books together.** Use the call numbers to figure out where books are on the shelves. Help your child several times, and then challenge her to take the lead. If you and your child are not sure how to use the library catalog or find a book, ask the librarian to help.

Urge brainstorming before writing

Sometimes the toughest part of writing happens *before* the pencil hits paper: deciding what to write. If your child has an open-ended assignment, such as “Write about your most memorable experience,” talk about it first. What are her ideas? If she's unsure, ask questions that help her think. For example, “What special places has our family visited?” “What do you remember about them?”



Summaries sizzle on book jackets

Children are often asked to summarize what they read. To help your child practice this skill at home, suggest that he make a “jacket” for a book he enjoyed. He can draw a cover and write a description of the book that would convince others to read it. Use other book jackets as examples to follow.



Get ready for read-aloud time!



Did you know that, even when your child can read on her own, listening to books being read aloud can improve her attention span and vocabulary? Reading aloud takes on a whole new energy when both the listener and the reader are excited about it. So next time you're at the library, find a book your child will love—and that *you* can't wait to read aloud.

Source: B. Rowley, “16 Fun Brain-Boosting Games,” Parenting, www.parenting.com/article/Child/Daycare--Education/16-Fun-Brain-Boosting-Games.

Attendance affects reading & math success

You may not think you're doing anything special when you help your child get off to school each morning. It's just part of the routine. But think again.

Experts say there's *nothing* more important to school success than regular attendance. Children who attend school regularly do better on reading and math tests than those who are frequently absent.

So, if your child's regular school attendance is routine for your family, congratulate yourself! You are fulfilling a critical responsibility. If not, try to:

- **Avoid scheduling medical appointments** or family vacations during school hours.
- **Make sure your child gets enough sleep** so he comes to school ready to learn.



Build your child's understanding of common test terms

Tests are intimidating, and they're even worse for students who struggle with reading. Look over your child's past tests. Which words are used often in directions? Could some of them confuse her? (For example, *multiply*, *divide*, *answer* or *choose*.) Review difficult test words to boost your child's confidence and help her succeed.



For lower elementary readers:

- **Wanted: The Perfect Pet** by Fiona Robertson (Penguin). A boy wants a dog—the “perfect pet.” But a duck has different ideas! What will the boy decide?
- **Shark vs. Train** by Chris Barton (Little, Brown Books). Watch from the sidelines as Shark and Train face off in a series of competitions. Who do you think will win?



For upper elementary readers:

- **Punctuation: The Write Stuff** by Simon Basher (Kingfisher). Punctuation marks are brought to life to teach children how to use them properly.
- **The Cowgirl Way: Hats Off to America's Women of the West** by Holly George-Warren (Houghton Mifflin). Saddle up to learn all about the brave women who shaped the American West.

Teach grammar by example

While your child is talking to you, she makes a grammatical error. Should you correct her? Experts say there's a better way to help: Be a grammar role model.

For example, if your child says, “The boys is going to the store,” Don't respond, “That's wrong! It's *are*.” Instead, you might casually say, “Oh, the boys *are* going to the store?” The more you talk with your child, the better. Conversations are opportunities to set a good example—and for your child to exercise skills she's learning—all while having fun.



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Source: “Simple Things Child Care Providers Can Do to Help All Children Read Well,” Reading Rockets, www.readingrockets.org/article/119.



Q: My child has been asked to read to younger students at school. But he's not such a great reader himself. Should I give my permission?

A: By all means! When older kids read to younger ones, *both* benefit. Younger kids learn how exciting reading can be. Older kids have to read over the stories first. That gives them extra reading practice. Those who aren't great readers can improve their confidence because the younger students look up to them. Reading to others can help your child become a better reader himself.

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

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