

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Pollard School Reading Room
Ms. Tozier

Resolve to stick to good reading habits

January is the perfect time to assess your child's reading habits and progress. It may be time to increase the level or variety of her reading materials. To help your child restructure her reading habits:

- **Schedule regular reading time.** Try to be realistic about how often and for how long you can set aside time. Three evenings a week for 10 to 15 minutes would be a great start!
- **Introduce advanced materials slowly.** Read them together so you can help when your child might have difficulty or questions.
- **Encourage and reward more reading.** Set new goals and help your child reach them.
- **Lead by example.** Show your child how much you enjoy your reading time and she'll look forward to it as much as you do.



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“Resolve to edge in a little reading every day, if it is but a single sentence. If you gain fifteen minutes a day, it will make itself felt at the end of the year.”

—Horace Mann

Reading games can grow with your child

No matter what grade your child is in, he can still enjoy reading activities. Each of the following games is based on research about learning to read. Your child can:

- **“Say it fast” in kindergarten.** Start by saying a word slowly to your child, emphasizing each part. “S—uh—n.” Then have him say it fast. “Sun!”
- **“Say it slowly” in first grade.** Now say a word quickly. “Stall!” Can your child say it slowly? “S—t—ah—ll.”
- **“Speed read” in second grade.** Have your child read for one minute and mark his spot. Then he can attempt to increase his speed in subsequent readings.
- **Read to others in fourth grade and beyond.** Suggest that your child read to parents and siblings. Encourage him to ask them questions about the book.

Source: “For Parents,” Florida Center for Reading Research, www.fcrr.org/Curriculum/curriculumForParents.shtm.

Start at the library to promote your child’s responsibility this year

Regular library visits are opportunities to encourage reading and responsibility. If your child is ready, allow him to get a library card and check out materials. Help him note due dates and return items on time. At home, take good care of library books, CDs and other items. When your child returns them on time, he can check out new ones. If he’s late, discuss the consequences, which may include fines.



International Reading Association lets kids, experts recommend books

Having trouble finding a good book for your child? The International Reading Association can help. Visit www.reading.org/Resources/Booklists.aspx. There you’ll find “Choices” book lists. They include ideas from educators and children!



Consider the characters’ feelings

Reading a book isn’t necessarily the same as *understanding* a book. To help your child understand



main characters, suggest that she make a “mood chart.” Have her write down two details from each chapter: 1) The main character’s mood and 2) Why the main

character felt that way. Notice how the character’s mood changes throughout the book.

Source: J. Fowler and S. Newlon, *Quick & Creative Reading Response Activities*, Scholastic.

Nonfiction reading prepares your child for textbook success

When reading with your child, do you tend to pick fiction books? Many parents do. But reading nonfiction is important, too. Studies show that familiarity with nonfiction books:



- **Builds** skills needed to read textbooks.
- **Prepares** kids to use reading skills in real-life situations.
- **Shows** that reading nonfiction can be pleasant.
- **Boosts** knowledge about the world, which helps with future learning.
- **Motivates** kids to read, since their interests and questions are being addressed.
- **Improves** vocabulary in ways that reading fiction may not, especially when parents or teachers read aloud.

Source: "6 Reasons to Use Informational Text in Primary Grades," Scholastic Inc., www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/6-reasons-use-informational-text-primary-grades.

Keep track of reading hours

How much does your child read? Both of you might be surprised by the answer!

1. **Use** a journal to keep track of her reading activities.
2. **Note** what your child reads—books, articles, recipes, etc. Write down the date, the title of what she read, and how much time she spent reading.
3. **Tally** the hours at regular intervals (such as daily, weekly and monthly). In December, add up how much she read in 2012. You're sure to be impressed!



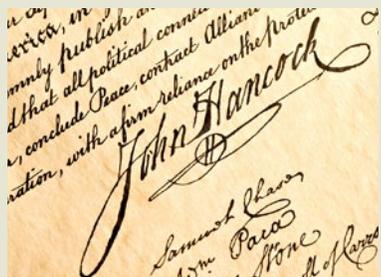
Handwriting Day celebrates the 'write' stuff

January 23 is National Handwriting Day. That's because on January 23, 1737, John Hancock was born.

According to the legend, Hancock had problems with writing as a youth. The ink from his quill pen was always dripping and creating a mess. After many years of practice, he became more proficient—as seen in his signature on the Declaration of Independence.

To help your child celebrate his own penmanship, have him:

- **Practice his signature.** See if he can add flourishes to his letters, like John Hancock did.
- **Choose a favorite saying** from Ben Franklin or another famous person to write in his best handwriting. Encourage him to use script. Post the saying in your home.
- **Read a book** written in "handwriting" like Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*—or ask your librarian for other suggestions.



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For lower elementary readers:

- **Knuffle Bunny Free: An Unexpected Diversion** by Mo Willems (Balzer + Bray). Favorite stuffed animal Knuffle Bunny is accidentally on a plane to China! How brave can his owner Trixie be?



- **Bear's Loose Tooth** by Karma Wilson (McElderry). See what happens when Bear loses his first tooth.

For upper elementary readers:

- **Eight Keys** by Suzanne LaFleur (Wendy Lamb Books). When they start middle school, two kids had no idea how their lives would change.
- **Hothead** by Cal Ripken, Jr. and Kevin Cowherd (Hyperion). Connor loves baseball, but his temper puts his hobby at risk. In order to win, he must overcome his anger.



Q: My child's teacher says we should work on "sight words" at home. What does this mean?

A: Sight words are written words that readers see often, such as *I, me, dog, open* and *school*. Becoming familiar with them is important because it makes reading much easier. Ask your child's teacher for a list of sight words. Then use homemade flash cards (with simple pictures at first, if you wish) to practice reading them.

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

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