Elementary School • April 2016

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Pollard School Reading Room
Ms. Tozier

Reading is critical for success on tests

The chances are good that your child will take a number of tests this spring, from end-of-unit exams to standardized tests. To succeed, he'll have to be able to read and understand the test directions and questions. As you help your child prepare, remind him to:

- **Read and reread the directions** carefully. He should also listen to the teacher's instructions. Encourage your child to ask if anything is unclear.
- **Look through the entire test** before beginning. Not only will this give your child an idea of what he will be doing on the exam, it will also help him plan his time appropriately.
- **Review the test** when he's done. Encourage your child to use any extra time to review his work. He should reread the test questions and his answers to make sure he answered everything to the best of his abilities.

Source: C. Cortellessa, M.Ed., "Test-Taking Tips," TeensHealth, niswc.com/reading_tests.

"In a good book the best is between the lines."
—Swedish Proverb

Differentiate between types of nouns

Nouns are an essential part of the grammar of a sentence. They are words that name people, places, things or ideas. Remind your child that *common nouns* name them in general (such as *boy*), and *proper nouns* give them specific names and are capitalized (such as *Patrick*). To practice:

- **List several nouns** and have your child say whether they're common or proper nouns. For example, you might name *dog* (common), *hat* (common), *Mississippi* (proper), *plant* (common) and *Dr. Seuss* (proper).
- **Look at a magazine** with your child. Challenge her to find several examples of common nouns and proper nouns.
- **Read a story aloud** and have your child listen for nouns. She can raise her hand when she hears a common noun, and stand when she hears a proper noun.

Source: L. Sunley, "Fun With Grammar: 75 Quick Activities & Games That Help Kids Learn About Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives, Adverbs & More," Scholastic, niswc.com/grammar_nouns.

Performances enliven poetry

April is National Poetry Month! So it's the perfect opportunity to add poetry to your child's life. Visit the library with your child and check out several books of poetry—both silly and serious. Then challenge everyone in your family to memorize and recite a poem. With your child, plan a special performance, and be as creative as you'd like. You might set a poem to music, act it out or say it quickly. No matter how you perform, the key is to enjoy yourselves!

Source: K. Nesbitt, "How to Host an Open Mic Poetry Party for Kids," Poetry4Kids.com, niswc.com/poetryperformances.

Feed—and read about—the birds!

A fun spring activity is to set up a simple bird feeder with your child. As you observe the birds that come, read about them in a guidebook. Help your child learn to identify the different birds and where they come from.

Provide opportunities for your child to write

Reading and writing go hand-in-hand, so look for ways to encourage your child to write. To provide chances for your child to practice writing:

- **Leave notes** for each other.
- **Give your child** a calendar on which to record special events and activities.
- **Spend time together writing** in journals.
- **Encourage your child** to write letters and cards to friends and relatives.

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Context clues can help your child understand new vocabulary while reading

If your child comes across an unfamiliar word while reading, help her use context clues to figure its meaning. *Context clues* help a reader infer the meaning of a word from the other information given in a sentence.

For example, in the sentence, "Jonathan wanted to buy a new pair of shoes, but the price deterred him," your child can figure out that the shoes were too expensive. Context clues within the sentence (the qualifier *but* and the word *price*) indicate that the sentence is about the cost of the shoes, which will help your child figure out that *deterred* means "caused him to decide" not to get the shoes.

Source: "Context Clues," Power Up What Works, niswc.com/contextclues.

New experiences are inspiration for reading

When you expose your child to a wide range of new experiences and ideas, you help your child build her vocabulary and develop new interests. These new interests can inspire your child to learn and read more. To expand your child's interests:

- **Take your child to intriguing places,** such as museums or parks. Have thought-provoking discussions with her about the things that you see.
- **Read books and magazines** together on topics you encounter during your experiences. Include fiction and nonfiction texts.
- **Encourage your child to use the Internet** and library to research topics she enjoys.

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 *and*, *me*, *why* and *because*. Becoming familiar with them is important because it makes reading much easier. Ask your child's teacher for a list of sight words. Then help your child make flash cards to practice reading them.

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

Using examples strengthens your child's book reports

Your child has a lot to say when he's writing a book report! As he's writing, make sure he supports his opinions with examples. "My favorite character was the main character, Leo. He is kind and does nice things for others. He makes sandwiches for homeless people and walks dogs at the animal shelter."

For lower elementary readers:

- ***A Mango in the Hand: A Story Told through Proverbs*** by Antonio Sacre (Abrams Books for Young Readers). As Francisco prepares for a special feast, his family members teach him useful lessons through traditional proverbs.
- ***I (Don't) Like Snakes*** by Nicola Davies (Candlewick Press). A little girl hates her family's pet snakes. That is, until she learns some cool facts about the slithery creatures.

For upper elementary readers:

- ***The Unforgettable Season: The Story of Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams and the Record-Setting Summer of '41*** by Phil Bildner (G.P. Putnam's Sons). In 1941, two baseball players achieved amazing feats that no player has matched since.
- ***Other Goose: Re-Nurseried!! and Re-Rhymed!! Children's Classics*** by J. Otto Seibold (Chronicle Books). This silly book takes on nursery rhymes like "Mary Had a Little Band."

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