

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Harvard Elementary School

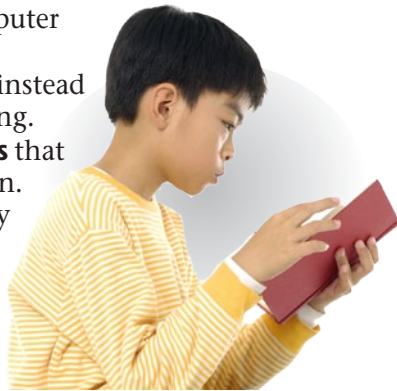
Reading benefits vary on screens and in print

While technology is an important part of education today, reading on a screen does not provide all of the same benefits as reading a book does. When children read text on an e-reader, tablet or computer screen, they tend to:

- **Skim the text** for specific details instead of reaching a deep understanding.
- **Abandon specific reading strategies** that improve reading comprehension.

But learning to read with technology is important to students' success. So, to help your child get the most benefits from digital reading:

- **Integrate print and technology.** Even if your child is reading on a screen, review print strategies and encourage him to use them often, like taking notes and highlighting important points.
- **Have him use technology to find answers** to questions or definitions of difficult words while reading.



Source: B. Herold, "Digital Reading Poses Learning Challenges for Students," Education Week, niswc.com/technologyreading.

"Reading takes us away from home, but more important, it finds homes for us everywhere."

—Hazel Rochman

Sight words are key for your reader

Sight words are high-frequency words that your child should be able to recognize at a glance without having to sound them out. Sight words are important for students of all ages, and they increase in difficulty as your student grows. So, the sight words a fifth grader should know includes those that a first grader has already memorized—and many more. For example, sight words for a:

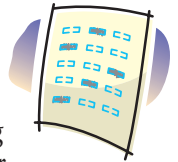
- **Kindergartner** might include: *like, am, does.*
- **Third grader** might include: *about, light, together.*
- **Fifth grader** might include: *finally, because, friend.*

Ask your child's teacher for more information on sight words your child should know.

Source: G.E. Tompkins, "100 High-Frequency Words for Older Students," Education.com, niswc.com/highfreqwords.

Practice reading directions for test success

To succeed on tests, your child must comprehend what she reads—including the directions. To help her practice for tests:



- **Play board games.** Have your child read the directions before you play.
- **Read homework carefully.** What words are used often? Practice any that give your child trouble. For example, math tests may often include words like *measure* or *amount*.

Source: "Help Your Child Improve in Test-Taking," U.S. Department of Education, niswc.com/testdirections.

Explore Starfall for reading activities

From games to online stories, Starfall (www.starfall.com) is a website with countless activities that your child will enjoy.

Starfall features activities for readers of all levels, from emerging readers to independent readers.



Read up on daily weather



Check out the weather page of your newspaper (or a weather website) for an activity that combines reading and science. Have your child start with today's weather. Is the prediction correct? What's the forecast for tomorrow and the rest of the week?

Focus at first on simple words, like *cloudy* and *rainy*. Then introduce and practice more challenging words, such as *report*, *forecast* and *predict*, or even *Celsius* and *Fahrenheit*.

Avoid discouraging your reader

It is important not to unknowingly discourage your child from reading, especially if she's reluctant to read. In order to motivate your child to read:

- **Don't nag.** Lecturing your child is unlikely to help.
- **Don't bribe.** It's good to reward effort, but your child shouldn't expect a prize every time she reads.
- **Don't judge how well** your child reads. Offer help when she needs it, but remember that reading should be fun.
- **Don't criticize your child's reading choices.** Reading just about anything is better than not reading at all.



Source: "Children Who Can Read, But Don't ...," Reading Is Fundamental, niswc.com/positivemotivation.

Blend sounds together to practice decoding

After learning the sounds that letters make, the next step in reading is *decoding*—figuring out written words. Readers decode a word by sounding out each of its letters and blending them together.

To help your child improve her decoding skills:

- **Play word games.** Write words on index cards. Take turns selecting a card and decoding the word. Make a sentence using the word.
- **Have a treasure hunt.** Hide words written on slips of paper throughout your home. Then have your child find the slips and decode the words.
- **Show your child a word.** Touch each letter from left to right, saying its sound. Then say all the sounds together to pronounce the word.



Source: "Practice: Practical Ideas for Parents," Reading Rockets, niswc.com/decodingskills.



Q: When I read with my child, she sometimes gets upset when she does not know a word. I try to help her sound it out, but that often makes things worse. What can I do?

A: You and your child should enjoy reading together. It shouldn't turn into work. If she stumbles over a word, tell her what it is and move on. Read the same story again the next day. You might be surprised how many of those new words she remembers!

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

Spin some word webs

Word webs are a good way to build language skills. Have your child pick a word (*veterinarian*, for example). Write the word on a piece of paper, and draw a circle around it. Then have your child write words that go with his word (*doctor* and *animal*, for example) on the paper and connect them to the main word.



Source: "Word Webs," READ*WRITE*NOW!, U.S. Department of Education, niswc.com/wordwebs.

For lower elementary readers:

- ***Lissy's Friends*** by Grace Lin (Viking). When Lissy is lonely at lunch, she makes a paper crane until she has a collection of origami friends.
- ***Biblioburro: A True Story from Colombia*** by Jeanette Winter (Beach Lane). Luis loves to read, so he comes up with a plan to use his two donkeys, Alfa and Beto, to share his love of books.



For upper elementary readers:

- ***The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate*** by Jacqueline Kelly (Square Fish). Growing up in Texas in 1900, Calpurnia Virginia Tate, better known as Callie Vee, would much rather learn about science than cooking and sewing.
- ***Wonder*** by R.J. Palacio (Knopf Books for Young Readers). Because he has severe facial abnormalities, August Pullman has never been to school—until he starts fifth grade.

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