

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Harvard Elementary School

Build your child's reading confidence at home

Does your child read too quickly? Guess at words? Avoid sounding them out? If so, she may have reading anxiety. This makes school subjects and tests more difficult. To reduce stress over reading:

- **Read to your child every day.** It helps develop her love of reading.
- **Don't force your child** to read to you. If she wants to, great! If not, don't make her.
- **Let your child stay up** an extra half-hour on weekends to read for fun.
- **Make audio recordings** of materials your child finds especially challenging so she can read along.
- **Act out plays to build confidence** with words.
- **Be patient and encouraging.** Talk privately with her teacher and ask about ways you can help.



Source: S. Rimm, *How to Parent So Children Will Learn*, Great Potential Press.

"Fill your house with stacks of books, in all the crannies and all the nooks."

—Dr. Seuss

Mnemonic devices help with memorization

A mnemonic device (pronounced *ne-MON-ic*) is a trick that can help your child remember specific information. Some types of mnemonic devices include:

- **A word or words made up of the first letter** of each item in a series of information, such as *ROY G. BIV*, which represents the colors of the rainbow in order (Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet).
- **Rhymes and sayings**, such as, "In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue" or "30 days hath September, April, June, and November."
- **A sentence to remember words or items** in a specific order. For example, *Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally* (PEMDAS), to remember the order of operations in math.

Source: K. Hayden, "How Can I Remember? Use Helpful Mnemonic Devices," Bright Hub Education, nswc.com/mnemonics.

Analogies help your child develop important skills for school

Analogies are phrases that compare words or concepts, such as, "The heart is like a pump." As your child becomes familiar with analogies, he improves his abilities related to:

- **Comprehension.**
- **Reasoning.**
- **Vocabulary.**
- **Problem-solving and decision-making.**



Source: "Learning Analogies," Vocabulary.Co.II, nswc.com/analogyskills.

Explore a variety of reading materials with your child

Encourage your child to look at books about different people and different things. He doesn't have to finish a book if he doesn't like it, but reading a broad range of books will help him discover new things and new interests.



Make your home reader-friendly

Nurture your child's love of reading by creating an encouraging environment at home. To do this:

- **Keep books and other reading materials** around your home.
- **Check out new reading material** from the library regularly.
- **Let your child pick** his own books.
- **Give your child plenty of time** to read with you and on his own.



Combine reading and math for double the learning

Fiction and nonfiction books that feature math help kids who love math enjoy reading—and kids who love reading enjoy math! Help your child:



- **Choose books about math.** Stories like *Ten Little Rabbits* by Virginia Grossman teach while entertaining, too.
- **Find books with patterns.** Many books, such as the classic *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do you see?* follow a pattern—just as numbers do.
- **Notice references to math.** Look for shapes, measurements, numbers and more in books. In addition to fiction, have your child read cookbooks and how-to books.
- **Count your books.** If your child has a book collection, see how big it is. Together, try counting by twos, fives or tens.

Source: K. Manuel and C. Roper, “Help your child succeed in math,” Peel District School Board, niswc.com/mathandliterature.

Help your child develop critical thinking skills

Analyzing information means examining and evaluating it instead of just accepting it. This is an important critical thinking skill, especially when reading.

Look for everyday ways to help your child learn this thinking skill. You can:

- **Look at a newspaper headline** together, then read the story. Did the headline do a good job of telling the reader what the story was about?
- **Talk about fact** (established truth) and *opinion* (a person’s beliefs). Ask your child to tell you whether a statement is fact or opinion, and why.
- **Ask your child** “What do you think?” at least once a day.



Encourage him to share his thinking and explain why he thinks as he does.

Source: V. Perrone, *101 Educational Conversations With Your 6th Grader*, Chelsea House Publishers.



Q: I want my child to enjoy reading, but she seems to prefer watching TV and playing video games. What can I do?

A: It can be difficult to motivate some kids to read—especially when there are so many entertainment options available. Try to limit screen time to 10 hours a week or less. Keep irresistible reading materials around the house. Many young readers love magazines and graphic novels. Look for materials based on your child’s favorite shows or games.

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

Let social media inspire book reviews

Have your child take book summaries to a new level by having her “tweet” a quick review of what she just read. Challenge her to write a short summary of a book’s plot and themes—as well as whether or not she would recommend the book to a friend. Remember, tweets are just 140 characters!



Source: B. Levin, “Social Media Book Review,” education.com, niswc.com/tweetreview.

For lower elementary readers:

- *Pinkalicious* by Victoria Kann and Elizabeth Kann (HarperCollins). When a little girl sneaks one too many pink cupcakes, her whole body turns pink!
- *In the Trees, Honey Bees!* by Lori Mortensen (Dawn Publications). Learn some interesting facts about the daily life of a honey bee in this beautifully illustrated, informative book.



For upper elementary readers:

- *Tales for Very Picky Eaters* by Josh Schneider (Clarion). Is your child a picky eater? Then he’ll love this collection of stories with titles such as “The Tale of the Slimy Eggs”!
- *Joe and Sparky Go to School* by Jamie Michalak (Candlewick). When a yellow school bus arrives at the zoo, Joe Giraffe and Sparky Turtle hop on—and their adventure-filled field trip to school begins!

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