

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Harvard Elementary School

Reading aloud builds your child's comprehension skills and vocabulary

Even though your child is beginning to read on his own, continue reading aloud to him. Reading aloud not only gives you important quality time with your child, it exposes him to new ideas, concepts and vocabulary.

Each time you read aloud together, you have the opportunity to build your child's:

- **Reading comprehension skills.** Talk about what you read. Ask your child to summarize the passage.
- **Vocabulary.** Define words your child doesn't know.
- **Listening and speaking skills.** After reading a passage, have your child tell you what he heard. Ask questions.
- **Analytic skills.** Have your child explain why events happened in the story, who his favorite character was or why he believes the author made specific choices.



Source: M. Popkin, B. Youngs and J. Healy, *Helping Your Child Succeed in School*, Active Parenting Publishers.

"Books are a uniquely portable magic."

—Stephen King

Use science texts to review nonfiction features

Reading about science is a great way for your child to learn new information while also improving her nonfiction reading skills. As she reads her science textbook, a news article about a science topic or any other science-focused material, encourage your child to look for:

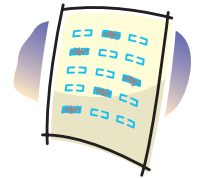
- **Titles and headings.** These will help her understand the main ideas.
- **The table of contents and index.** They will help her find the information she is looking for.
- **Graphs and diagrams.** These will help your child visualize information about the topic.
- **Words in bold and italics.** They are often key words your child should know.

Source: E. Manning, "Using Science Texts to Teach the Organizational Features of Nonfiction," ReadWriteThink, nswc.com/nonfictionfeatures.

To prepare your child for tests, encourage thinking

Standardized tests involve more than just filling out bubbles. To help your child prepare for Language Arts tests:

- **Ask questions** about the reading that require your child to think. How does this material relate to his life?
- **Brainstorm possible answers** to questions. Help your child see that his first idea might not be the only correct response.



Exposure to correct grammar will improve your child's language

Learning grammar rules can be tough—but reading makes it easier! When your child reads well-written text, she sees how language should be used. When she's used to that, mistakes in other materials will stand out.



Source: D. and C. Johnson, *Homework Heroes, Grades 3-5*, Simon & Schuster.

Three ways to encourage your reader

The more exciting reading is, the more your child may be encouraged to keep reading! To motivate your child to read:

1. **Play board games** that involve reading.
2. **Build activities** around what your child is reading. Act out the story or do crafts that relate to it, for example.
3. **Keep a reading calendar.** Mark the days that he starts and finishes a book.



Source: J. Snyder, "Tips for Encouraging Kids to Read," Reading Rockets, nswc.com/otherwaysencourage.

Cure boredom with reading and writing fun

There are plenty of reading and writing activities your child can do when he claims he's bored. Suggest that your child:

- **Look up events that happened** on the day he was born. Your child can write about them in a booklet or use the headlines to make a poster.
- **Invent a new board game.** Have your child design the board and write the rules.
- **Conduct a nature study.** How many animals, birds and insects can your child find in your backyard or a local park? Have him make a list and then go to the library or on the Internet. Together, research the critters on his list.
- **Look at a map and pick a town.** Have your child find out everything he can about that town.



Source: "Summertime Fun Activities," KidSource, niswc.com/readingwritingactivities.

Help your child evaluate information online

When your child is doing a research project, help her find reputable and reliable information on the Internet.

To evaluate the information she finds online, your child should ask herself three questions:

1. **Is the source reputable?** Be sure your child checks to see where the information is coming from.
2. **Is the source biased?** Information that comes from a company might be designed to sell their product. Information from an organization might reflect a political agenda. Your child needs to take these biases into account.
3. **Is the information up-to-date?** Science studies, for example, may become outdated when newer research is completed.



Source: E. Marshall, *A Student's Guide to the Internet*, The Millbrook Press.



Q: How can I help my child remember the difference between *synonyms* and *antonyms*?

A: Remind her that *synonyms* have the same, or similar, meanings (such as *happy* and *cheerful*). Point out that *synonym*, *same* and *similar* all start with *s*. *Antonyms* are words with opposite meanings (*fast* and *slow*).

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

Show reading's positive influence

Take a picture of your child reading her favorite book. Positive images of reading will remind your child of how important and exciting reading is.

Place the picture where she'll see it regularly. Post it on the refrigerator. Tape it to the mirror. Send a copy to a relative to show how proud you are of your child.



Source: "Positive Images of Reading," Reading Today, International Reading Association.

For lower elementary readers:

- ***Hiromi's Hands*** by Lynne Barasch (Lee & Low). This biography tells about chef Akira Suzuki and his daughter Hiromi, as they each discover a passion for making sushi.
- ***Mine-o-saur*** by Sudipta Bardhan-Quallen (Scholastic). The Mine-o-saur refuses to share his toys and his snacks—and soon he realizes he has no friends to play with! How can the Mine-o-saur solve this problem?



For upper elementary readers:

- ***Poem Runs: Baseball Poems and Paintings*** by Douglas Florian (HMH Books for Young Readers). Get ready for baseball season with this collection of poems about various positions and pieces of equipment.
- ***Bronte's Book Club*** by Kristiana Gregory (Holiday House). When Bronte Bella moves to a new town, she worries about making friends. A book club helps her find things in common with girls in the new place.

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