

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

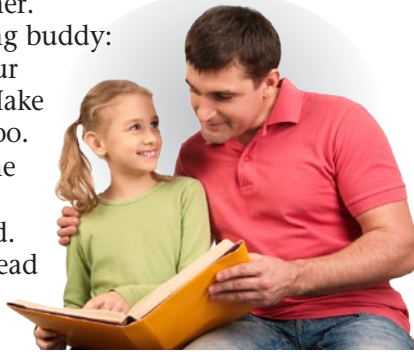
Harvard Elementary School

Be your child's reading buddy to boost fluency and comprehension

Some children struggle to sound out every word as they read, which can make it hard to understand what they are reading. Helping your child read more accurately and fluently can make reading easier and more fun for her.

To become your child's reading buddy:

- 1. Look for a short passage** that your child would find interesting. Make sure it is at her reading level, too.
- 2. Read the passage aloud** while she listens and follows along.
- 3. Have her read** the passage aloud. If she has trouble reading it, read it to her again. Then have your child read it after you.
- 4. Ask each other questions** about what you read. What was the biggest problem in the passage? Discuss your favorite characters or the most entertaining part. This will help build your child's comprehension skills.



Source: D. Haager and others, *Interventions for Reading Success*, Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

"I was born with a reading list I will never finish."

—Maud Casey

Pumpkins can inspire reading, word play

Now that it's October, pumpkins are everywhere! Make a pumpkin the center of your family reading with books like *The Biggest Pumpkin Ever* by Steven Kroll or *It's Pumpkin Time* by Zoe Hall.

Then, play some pumpkin-related word games! Have fun as a family while you build language skills. Here's how:

- **Look at a pumpkin.** Who can make the longest list of words or phrases that describe it? (*round, lumpy, orange, future pie*, etc.)
- **Write the word *pumpkin*** on a large sheet of paper. How many smaller words can each person make from the letters in it? (*pump, pin, pink*, etc.)

Whoever has the most words in either activity wins!

Source: "Pump Up the Curriculum with Pumpkins," Education World, nswc.com/pumpkin.

Decoding strategies help your child figure out words

Students are expected to develop decoding skills in order to figure out tricky words. These skills include sounding out words. Have your child try these strategies:



- **Say parts of a word** slowly and then blend them together.
- **Try different sounds** for the same letters.
- **Notice familiar beginnings** and endings.
- **Look for smaller, familiar words** within the difficult word.

Source: K. Tankersley, *Threads of Reading*, ASCD.

Encourage your child to choose reading material

Don't force your child to read something just because you think it's a good book. Instead, let him decide what to read.

When your child thinks that reading is fun, he will want to do it more!



Ask reading-focused questions at your parent-teacher conference

When you meet with your child's teacher for parent-teacher conferences this fall, be sure to ask about your child's reading progress. Some good questions are:

- **What is my child's** reading level? What progress have you seen?
- **How would you describe** my child's reading?
- **My child likes reading** _____. Do you have suggestions for other books she'll like?



Source: "The Parent-Teacher Conference," Reading Rockets, nswc.com/readingconference.

Give your child tools to assist with reading for a research project

When children are assigned research projects, they have to do lots of reading. To make this type of reading productive:

- **Look at the research together.** Visit the library to find books about your child's topic. Practice using the table of contents, section headings and index.
- **Supervise online research** and review how to use sources. For instance, it's not okay to "cut and paste" words into a project. Your child must quote directly or put things in his own words and list his sources.
- **Provide supplies** such as sticky notes or bookmarks to save pages. Your child can use index cards for jotting down key information.



Source: L.K. Rath, Ed.D. and L. Kennedy, *The Between the Lions Book for Parents*, HarperCollins.

Read alouds should be consistent and fun

Reading aloud is a great way to expose your child to the joys of reading. Read-aloud time allows children to enjoy books that might be too challenging to read on their own.

For successful read alouds:

- **Do it every day.** When you read aloud daily, you show that reading time is too important to miss.
- **Pick a regular time.** Making reading part of your routine makes it easier to fit it into a hectic day.
- **Read the book before** you read it aloud. Previewing a book may keep you from getting bogged down in a book that neither you nor your kids enjoy.
- **Read a variety of books** that you and your kids find fun.



- **Leave them wanting more.** Stop your day's reading at a point where your kids are eager to hear what happens next.

Source: R. Freedman and S. Frost, "Making the Most of Read Alouds," Illinois Reading Council Journal.



Q: My elementary schooler says she doesn't like to read. What can I do?

A: In the early grades, children are still learning how to read. This is harder for some children than others, and they can become frustrated. Rather than pushing your child to practice reading, show her that reading can be fun. Provide books and magazines about your child's interests. And set an example by reading yourself!

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

Find various materials to read

Reading doesn't only take place in books. Show your child that there are many different things to read—all of which are enjoyable! Encourage your child to:

- **Read newspapers** and magazines.
- **Do crossword puzzles.**
- **Read maps and atlases.**



For lower elementary readers:

- ***The Promise*** by Nicola Davies (Candlewick). A young girl makes a promise to an old woman to plant a sack of acorns—and as she plants them around the city, the girl's entire world changes.



- ***Rubia and the Three Osos*** by Susan Middleton Elya (Hyperion). This take on *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* includes Spanish vocabulary—and a surprising twist at the end!

For upper elementary readers:

- ***Grandma Chickenlegs*** by Geraldine McCaughrean (Carolrhoda). When Tatia's stepmother sends her to get a needle from Grandma Chickenlegs, the evil woman traps the girl in her cottage. This traditional folktale is accompanied with beautiful illustrations.
- ***The Big Bad Wolf Goes on Vacation*** by Delphine Perret (Sterling). Louis is best friends with the Big Bad Wolf, who has never been to the beach before. When Louis' grandpa comes to take him to the beach, the big Bad Wolf comes along.

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