

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Harvard Elementary School

Encourage your child to engage in independent reading

Research shows that independent reading has a positive effect on school success: The more your child reads for pleasure, the more she will enjoy—and benefit from—reading in school.

Independent reading means your child selects material to read just for her enjoyment. She does not have to answer comprehension questions or check in with a teacher. To encourage independent reading at home:

- **Set a good example.** When your child sees you reading, she may want to join you.
- **Have a special family reading time.** Carve out some time each week when family members gather together to read.
- **Ask for your child's opinions about what she is reading.** Show her that you're interested in learning more about the books she likes.

Source: B.E. Cullinan, "Independent Reading and School Achievement," School Library Media Research, niswc.com/independentreading.



"A book is like a garden, carried in the pocket."

—Chinese Proverb

Review capital letter usage with your child

Your child has learned about capital letters in his language arts class. Beyond using them to begin sentences, remind him to use them when writing:

- **The pronoun "I."**
- **Important words in titles** (*The Mouse and the Motorcycle*).
- **Names of people, organizations and specific places** (Bryan, Brown Elementary School, Spain).
- **Days of the week, months and holidays** (Monday, April, Earth Day).
- **Titles that are associated with names** (Aunt Rosie, Grandpa).

Encourage your child to look in the books he's reading to find other times that capital letters are used. Talk about why we capitalize when we write. What if we only used lowercase letters? What if we only wrote in capitals?

Source: "Capitalization," Capital Community College Foundation, niswc.com/capitalletters.

Make sure reading is part of your family's everyday life

When reading is a part of your family routine, your child will learn to look forward to and love reading time. You can:

- **Create reading rituals,** such as read-alouds at bedtime or weekly trips to the library.
- **Take books with you** on errands.
- **Take time to listen** as your child reads aloud.



Break up compound words

Isolating parts of words helps your child develop her awareness and knowledge of language. Make a list of *compound words* (words that have two parts) like *sunshine*, *moonbeam* or *baseball*. Pick a word, then ask your child "The big word is *baseball*. If I say *base*, what is missing?"

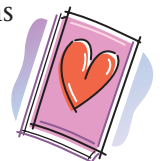


Source: "Beginning to Read: Now You Hear It, Now You Don't," KidSource OnLine, niswc.com/compoundwords.

Have fun with poetry this month

April is National Poetry Month, so look for collections of funny poetry to read with your child. Try Shel Silverstein's *Where the Sidewalk Ends* or Bruce Lansky's *A Bad Case of the Giggles*.

Don't just read the poems together—act them out! Use a booming voice, a whisper or a squeaky voice—whatever you think is appropriate. Or change the words and see who can make the silliest new poem.



Source: K. Nesbitt, "Enjoying Poems," Education World, niswc.com/funpoetry.

Writing and reading are connected

Your child is advancing through school, which means she uses writing more often to illustrate her understanding of reading. For example, she might have to write a report after reading a book. As your child's reading and writing mature, she will be expected to:

- **Write about reading assignments** in order to think more deeply about them.
- **Focus on forming ideas** rather than simply forming letters.
- **Revise and edit work** so it makes sense and includes descriptive words.
- **Continue improving** spelling and grammar.

Your child always benefits from your support. Remember to give compliments and display her work proudly!

Source: "Education: Second and Third Graders Writing Milestones," PBS Parents, nswc.com/readingtowriting.



Build vocabulary with puzzles

To help your child develop his vocabulary, an important part of reading, introduce him to crossword puzzles. Look online to find age-appropriate puzzles. Solve the first few together until your child gets the hang of it. If he becomes frustrated, take a break. Remember: Word games should be fun, not work.



For lower elementary readers:

- **My Monster Mayhem** by Anita Pouroulis (DigitalLeaf). There's a reason that one little girl splashes during her bath and slams her door—to fend off all the monsters in her home!



- **The Day the Crayons Quit** by Drew Daywalt (Philomel). When Duncan opens his crayon box, he finds a note from each of his crayons. Every crayon is upset about something, and they've all gone on strike!

For upper elementary readers:

- **The Magical Ms. Plum** by Bonny Becker (Alfred A. Knopf). Ms. Plum's third grade class is the most exciting room at Springtime Elementary School. And Ms. Plum is sure this will be the best year yet.
- **Nouns and Verbs Have a Field Day** by Robin Pulver (Holiday House). It's Field Day in Mr. Wright's class—and the nouns and verbs that the students have been studying join in!

Boost comprehension by focusing on key areas

It's important for your child to read, and it's even more important for him to understand what he reads. If your child comprehends well, he should be able to summarize his readings in detail. To boost comprehension, discuss:

- **Parts.** Instead of focusing on the whole book, talk after each chapter or section.
- **Content.** Ask your child what happened in the book. Why? How did the characters feel?
- **Connections.** Can your child relate the material to other things he's read or experienced?
- **Vocabulary.** Help your child check the definitions of new or difficult words.



Source: "Comprehension," Reading Rockets, nswc.com/comprehensiontips.



Q: I want my child to do well in reading. How can I set high expectations without nagging?

A: It's important to keep a positive attitude about reading. You want to encourage it without making it seem like a chore. Replace any negative words ("You *have to* read well or you'll *fail*.") with positive talk and daily activities ("Reading can help us learn about almost anything! Let's think of something really cool to read about this week.")

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

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