

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Harvard Elementary School

Help your child build vocabulary while doing everyday errands together

Talk about what you see when you're out doing errands with your child. Ask her questions about what she sees. The more she talks about her surroundings, the more her vocabulary will grow!

When you're at a:

- **Train station or airport**, talk about luggage and transportation. What does your child think is the difference between a *pilot* and a *conductor*?
- **Bank**, talk about *safety deposit boxes* and *bank tellers*. What words does your child see on signs around the bank?
- **Grocery store**, look for unusual vegetables or fruit. Can your child spot some *broccoli* or a *pomegranate*? Later, look up where these foods are grown.



"A book is the most effective weapon against intolerance and ignorance."

—Lyndon Baines Johnson

Persevere through reading problems

It can be frustrating for both parents and children when a child struggles with reading or simply doesn't like to read. You may feel as if you've tried everything—reading aloud, offering different kinds of books, looking at magazines. But don't give up! It can help to:

- **Watch movie versions** of books to build enthusiasm.
- **Find books with large print** or exciting pictures.
- **Read whenever your child** suggests reading.
- **Explore various sections** of the newspaper, such as sports, arts and technology.
- **Play audiobooks** in the car and at bedtime.
- **Talk with your child's teacher.** She may have insight into your child's reading habits—and ways you can help.

Source: M. Sacks, "When You Love To Read ... But Your Child Doesn't," Great Schools, www.greatschools.org/students/homework-help/861-fostering-love-for-reading.gs.

Use magazines as a great way to encourage reading for pleasure

From sports to animals, there are magazines on all of your child's favorite topics. Use magazines to boost your child's love of reading.



Next time you're at the library, browse the magazine section with your child. Look for age-appropriate magazines, such as *Time for Kids*, *Highlights* or *National Geographic Kids*.

Your child will learn more about her interests—while building her reading skills at the same time.

Make daily reading your New Year's resolution

It's a new year and a great time to reevaluate your reading habits. If you and your child could be reading more, make a resolution to read for at least 15 minutes every day.



Learn to 'attack' words

When teachers talk about "word attack" or "decoding" skills, they are referring to your child's ability to figure out tricky



words. To help your child build these skills, cover a word's beginning or end. For example, even if your child knows the word *do*, he may be confused by *redo*. Have

him read just the familiar part of the word. Then try the entire word again.

Source: "Tips for Teaching: Word Recognition," reading-tutors.com, www.reading-tutors.com/tips/TH_Tips_WordRecog.pdf.

Four simple ways to help your child read more easily

Try the following ideas to increase your child's reading *fluency*, or the ease with which she reads:



1. **Encourage your child to reread** books out loud so words become more familiar.
2. **Read stories with rhyming words.** These show the connection between spelling and pronunciation.
3. **Don't correct incorrect words** immediately. Ask if the word made sense when she read it in the passage. Then look at it again together.
4. **Find books that are a little more advanced** and read them together. Just hearing more difficult vocabulary will help your child build fluency. You can also try listening to audiobooks together!

Writing skills can be developed day-by-day



Just as reading skills develop with practice, writing improves the more it's done. Help your child become a better writer by encouraging her to write every day. She can:

- **Keep a journal.**
- **Make lists.**
- **Write letters** to friends and relatives.

Source: S. Graham, "Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers," What Works Clearinghouse, <http://tinyurl.com/kktp3ep>.

For lower elementary readers:

- **The Obstinate Pen** by Frank W. Dormer (Henry Holt). Uncle Flood gets a new pen—that has a mind of its own! No matter what he writes, the pen writes something else.
- **Linus the Vegetarian T. Rex** by Robert Neubecker (Beach Lane). Ruth Ann thinks she knows everything there is to know about dinosaurs—until she meets Linus.



For upper elementary readers:

- **Worse Things Happen at Sea!** by Alan Snow (Atheneum). Step aboard the Nautical Laundry, a ship run by rats who embark on a silly adventure.
- **Daredevil: The Daring Life of Betty Skelton** by Meghan McCarthy (Paula Wiseman). Betty Skelton was one of the first women in aviation. Learn about her fascinating life, from the records she set to her time training with the NASA Mercury 7 team.

Make synonyms and antonyms fun with a game

As your child's vocabulary grows, he'll learn more about *synonyms* (words with the same meaning) and *antonyms* (words with opposite meanings). Challenge your child with this game that reviews synonyms and antonyms. All you need is one sheet of paper per player, some pencils and your brains!

1. **Together, pick a word** that you both know that has several synonyms and antonyms (such as *good*).
2. **Write down as many synonyms** for the word as you can think of in a minute (*great, wonderful, marvelous*).
3. **Flip your paper over.** Write as many antonyms as you can think of in a minute (*bad, terrible, horrible*).



4. **Whoever has the most words** written down picks the next word!



Q: My fourth grader says he hates reading. I bring home materials on the things he used to love reading about, but he says they're boring. What can I do?

A: As children get older, their interests change. Your son may have loved dinosaurs in second grade, but now he may see them as "little kid stuff." What does your son talk about now? Look for reading material on those topics. Share them with your son, but don't force them on him.

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

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Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.
Editor: Stacey Marin.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474
1-800-756-5525, ISSN: 1533-3302
www.parent-institute.com