

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Harvard Elementary School

Play the Alphabet Words game with your child to review phonics and spelling

Alphabet Words is a fun game that helps kids practice their letters, spelling and word sounds.

To play:

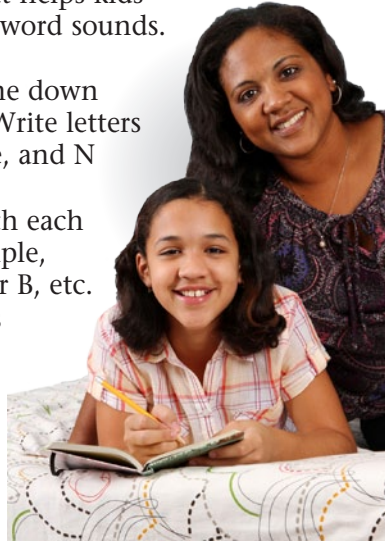
- 1. Create a playing board.** Draw a line down the center of a sheet of paper. Write letters A through M down the left side, and N through Z down the right.
- 2. Write down a word** that starts with each letter of the alphabet. For example, *announcement* for A, *beautiful* for B, etc.
- 3. Encourage your child to think** of as many words as she can. Give hints if she needs them.
- 4. Write the words** next to each of the letters.

For an extra challenge, make all the words of a game match a theme—such as animals or foods.

Source: P. Kaye, *Games for Reading*, Pantheon Books.

“Reading is a basic tool in the living of a good life.”

—Mortimer Adler



Familiarize your child with analogies

Students have to read analogy problems on some standardized tests. The problems often follow a formula: “A is to B as C is to D.” For example, “*Sock* is to *foot* as *glove* is to *hand*.” (The relationship between A and B is similar to the relationship between C and D.)

See if your child can solve problems like these:

- **Hot is to cold** as *top* is to _____. (*Bottom*—because the words are opposites.)
- **Sun is to yellow** as *grass* is to _____. (*Green*—because the words are descriptive.)
- **Grape is to fruit** as *carrot* is to _____. (*Vegetable*—because the words are in categories.)

Source: A. Reckner, “What’s an analogy?” Fact Monster, www.factmonster.com/spot/analogy.html.

Research supports reading with family

Research shows that children who read at home with parents do better in school.

It helps when you:

- **Keep** reading materials handy, such as magazines, books and newspapers.
- **Talk** about books.
- **Tell** pretend and real-life stories.
- **Point out** words everywhere you go.
- **Set** a good example by reading daily.

Source: “Steps You Can Take to Improve Your Children’s Education,” Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, U.S. Department of Education, www.ed.gov/pubs/PFIE/families.html.



Make reading a special activity

Reading at home should be special and personal for your child. Help her establish a cozy and comfortable spot to read. And encourage her to read whatever she likes!



Concentration can help your child remember important sight words

Review *sight words* by playing



Concentration. These are words that your child should know just by quickly glancing at them. Ask your child’s teacher for a list of sight words. Then:

- 1. Have your child write** each word on two index cards.
- 2. Lay out the cards** face-down.
- 3. Take turns flipping over** two cards at a time. If the cards are the same, remove that pair. If they are different, flip the cards back over.

Source: N. Stern, “Elementary Sight Word Activities,” eHow, www.ehow.com/list_6150194_elementary-sight-word-activities.html.

Interesting discussions build comprehension

To help your child get the most out of books, talk about them before, during and after she reads. Discuss a book's:

- **Title and the summary on the back cover.** What can your child tell just from looking at the cover? What does your child think will happen? Why? Where does the story take place? Is there a conflict in it?
- **Characters and plot.** What are the main characters like? Does your child agree with their decisions? What might happen next?
- **Conclusion.** Did the story end the way your child expected? What other endings can she imagine? What did she get out of the story?



Source: "Appropriate Reading Discussions for Children," Math and Reading Help, http://math-and-reading-help-for-kids.org/articles/Appropriate_reading_discussions_for_children.html.

Venn diagrams help with organizing

Venn diagrams are a kind of *graphic organizer*, a visual tool that helps students organize and structure their thoughts.

If your child is comparing and contrasting, try using a Venn diagram. Have him:

1. **Draw two overlapping circles.**
2. **List similarities** where the circles overlap.
3. **List differences** on the far right and left of each circle.



For lower elementary readers:

- ***Bear Has a Story to Tell*** by Philip C. Stead (Roaring Brook). Bear looks for his friends to tell them a great story, but they're all preparing for winter. Maybe he'll be able to tell his story in the spring.



- ***Dinosaurs!*** by Gail Gibbons (Holiday House). In this colorful, informative book, young paleontologists will learn about different kinds of dinosaurs, from what they ate to how they looked.

For upper elementary readers:

- ***Heroes and She-ros: Poems of Amazing and Everyday Heroes*** by J. Patrick Lewis (Dial). From Helen Keller to Roberto Clemente, this book of poetry describes how numerous people have made the world a better place.
- ***Racing the Moon*** by Alan Armstrong (Random House). Alexis is building a rocket to go into space. Then she meets Captain Ebbs, a space travel expert, and the space pioneers set out on adventures.

Encourage your child to start a book club

If your child likes to tell you all about the books he's reading in school, encourage him to start a book club with his friends. Book clubs are a great opportunity for children to read for pleasure and discuss what they're reading.

When they form a book club, your child and his friends will be able to:

- **Choose books** that interest them.
- **Meet with other kids** who want to read.
- **Gather regularly** to discuss reading.
- **Have relaxed conversations** about the material.
- **Lead the discussion** by themselves, without an adult's help.
- **Be independent** by developing discussion questions on their own.
- **Choose new books** to discuss.



Source: "What are literature circles?" LiteratureCircles.com, www.literaturecircles.com/article1.htm.



Q: My child procrastinates about doing homework, and I think it's because reading intimidates her. Could this be the case?

A: If reading is hard for your child, homework probably is, too. But don't let her avoid it. Expect her to stick to a study time—such as every day before dinner. Always provide supervision and support. Ask her teacher about how to build her reading skills.

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

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