

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Harvard Elementary School

Get into a family reading routine at the beginning of the school year

Reading with your child every day is one of the best ways to improve her reading skills. Even if you already read together every night at bedtime, there are more ways to develop special reading routines as a family.

To make reading an even bigger part of your daily schedule:

- **Bring books anywhere** your child may need entertainment (in the car, on the bus, in line at the grocery store, etc.).
- **Read favorite books** before school at the breakfast table.
- **Visit the library every week** and fill a special bag with new books to read.
- **Celebrate what you read.** Have themed book dinners as a family. Hang a paper “reading tree” on the wall and add a leaf for each book your family reads.



Source: “Family Reading Traditions,” Family Reading Partnership, www.familyreading.org/i-traditions.htm.

“In the case of good books, the point is not to see how many you can get through, but rather how many can get through to you.”

—Mortimer J. Adler

Encourage your child to be a book critic

After your child finishes a new book, encourage him to keep thinking about it by writing a short review. What did he like about it? What does he wish were different? Would he recommend that one of his friends read this book? Why or why not?

Ask your child to write a paragraph about what he thought about the book. Help him keep a “book review” notebook. Make sure he includes the name of each book and author (this will come in handy if he needs inspiration for a book report!).

Keeping track of completed books will give your child a sense of accomplishment. It may also motivate him to read more, think about what he’s reading and develop important critical thinking skills.

Search for letters and words on magazine pages

Grab an old magazine and try this activity with your child:



1. **Write a few letters** of the alphabet at the top of some magazine pages.
2. **Ask your child** to circle the words that begin with the letters you wrote.
3. **Count to see which letter** started the most words. Read the circled words together and discuss their meanings.
4. **Have your child create** sentences with some of the words. Ask her to read the words back to you and review their meanings.

In-depth information about your child’s favorites is available online!

Check out www.KidsReads.com with your child to find out about her favorite books and authors. You will find book reviews, interviews and lots of other special features, too.



Talking with your child builds reading and language skills

Talking with your child provides countless benefits. When he is talking with you, your child builds vocabulary and conversation skills. He’s developing thought patterns and making connections that will boost language and reading skills, too.

Talk with your child often. Ask about what he’s learning in school. Discuss his hobbies and interests. And of course, talk about what you’re reading together!

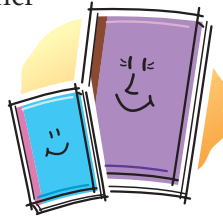


Overcome reading challenges with perseverance and a positive outlook

Reading is part of many home and school activities, so if your child struggles with it, it can feel as if it affects every part of his life. To make matters worse, you may worry about whether reading difficulties hurt your child's self-esteem.

To help your child:

- **Consult experts, including your child's teacher.** Ask about realistic expectations. Is your child reading at grade level? If not, what help is available?
- **Use reading materials at home** that minimize frustration. For example, choose books that are easy to read and understand. They should have very few difficult words.
- **Stay positive about your child's learning.** Focus on how his strengths can help him. Praise your child often for his hard work.



Source: C.B. Smith and R. Sensenbaugh, "Helping Children Overcome Reading Difficulties," KidSource OnLine, www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content2/help/overcome.html.

A personal dictionary can increase vocabulary

Your child is constantly seeing and hearing new words every day. How will he ever be able to remember them all? Help him make his own special dictionary for all the new words he learns.

Encourage your child to write new words or words he's not sure about in a small notebook (he can make his own by stapling several pieces of paper together).

Writing just the word is okay. Later, your child can look up the new word and add the definition. He can also draw pictures to illustrate the definition. Make sure your



child reviews his dictionary regularly—and his vocabulary is sure to grow!



Q: No matter how much I try, my elementary schooler just doesn't like to read. What can I do?

A: When children are still learning to read during the early grades, they can become frustrated. Rather than pushing your child to continually practice reading, focus on making reading fun!

Keep interesting reading material on hand. Don't use reading as a punishment. Let your child see you with a book. Soon enough, she may just be interested in picking up a book on her own.

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

Use textbook reading time wisely

If your child has just started using a textbook at school, review these study tips together:



- **Rewrite headings into questions.** Answering those questions is a great way to review.
- **Note words in bold type.** This indicates that they're important.
- **Look at information in other forms,** such as graphs and pictures.

For lower elementary readers:

- ***Open Very Carefully: A Book with Bite*** by Nick Bromley (Nosy Crow). See what happens when story time is interrupted by a crocodile who is stuck in the pages of the book!
- ***Fireflies at Midnight*** by Marilyn Singer (Atheneum). Spend a summer day in nature with poems describing a huge range of animals, from a robin at dawn to a firefly at midnight.



For upper elementary readers:

- ***Icefall*** by Matthew J. Kirby (Scholastic). Solveig and her siblings are sent to an isolated fortress, waiting for word of the king's victory ... when mysterious things start happening.
- ***Head to Toe Science*** by Jim Wiese (John Wiley & Sons). Pique your child's interest in science by conducting over 40 science experiments about the human body.

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