

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Harvard Elementary School

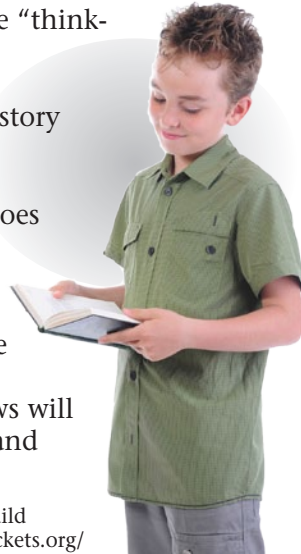
Read and think aloud with your child to build important comprehension skills

Fluent readers think about what they are reading by making connections to the story. Help your child become a more knowledgeable reader with these “think-aloud” strategies:

- **Discuss the book.** Connect it to an experience in your child’s life. “This story reminds me of the time when”
- **Talk about books with similar settings, characters or themes.** “What books does this story remind you of?”
- **Help your child see** the connection between the story and something similar that may be happening in the real world.

Relating books to what he already knows will help your child remember and understand what he reads.

Source: J. Gold and A. Gibson, “Reading Aloud to Build Comprehension,” Reading Rockets, www.readingrockets.org/article/343/.



“The books that help you most are those which make you think the most.”

—Pablo Neruda

Four steps to motivate reluctant readers

Does your child make excuses not to read? Here are some steps you can take to encourage her:

1. **Find reading materials** relevant to your child’s interests.
2. **Look for DVDs or online videos related to the subject** she’s reading about. But don’t let these take the place of books!
3. **Let her talk it out.** Ask your child to explain what she knows. When you help her express her thoughts, her confidence will grow. With more confidence, she will be motivated to read more.
4. **Show your child that reading is useful.** Using a catalog that comes in the mail and a recipe to make a meal shows your child practical, everyday uses for reading.

Source: N.D. Collins, “Motivating Low Performing Adolescent Readers,” ERIC Digests, www.ericdigests.org/1997-1/low.html.

Use word attack skills to uncover new words

Word attack, or decoding, skills help your child figure out a difficult word while reading. When your child is stuck on a word, help him figure it out by using:

- **Context clues.** What do the other words around the word say?
- **Phonemic awareness.** What sounds do the letters make?
- **Pictures.** What clues do they offer?

Source: A. Morin, “What are Word Attack Skills?” About.com, <http://childparenting.about.com/od/schoollearning/a/word-attack-skills-def.htm>.



Websites help parents review books

Do you ever feel overwhelmed by the number of books available for your child? Or want to know more about a book before you take it home? Carol Hurst’s Children’s Literature Site (www.carolhurst.com) reviews books by grade level, so you can find titles just right for your child.



Ask ‘what if?’ questions to spark creative writing

Reading and writing go hand in hand. The more your child writes, the better his vocabulary and reading skills will be.

Ask “what if?” questions to spark his creative imagination. Have him write stories explaining his answers. To start, ask questions like:

- **What if oranges** were purple?
- **What if dogs** could talk?
- **What if everyone** had the same name?



Develop research skills for now and the future

Does your child need to research something for a school assignment? Share these tips with him to simplify the process:

- **Define the task.** Help your child figure out exactly what he needs to research. By narrowing in on key words to search for, your child's research will be more focused.
- **Use reliable sources.** Together, determine if a source is appropriate and factual. Recently published encyclopedias and other reference books, as well as websites that end in *.gov* or *.edu*, are generally reliable sources.
- **Take notes.** Whether your child writes key facts on index cards or on a piece of paper, keeping track of information—and the source he got it from—will help him stay organized.



A good understanding of how to conduct research will come in handy for the rest of your child's academic career.

Source: "Five Ways to Teach Research Skills to Elementary School Students," Concordia University Online, <http://tinyurl.com/kwgtbox>.

Journals can improve reading comprehension

Encourage your child to take notes in a journal as she reads. When she writes down characters' names, places, situations and problems, she'll be able to remember important details and follow the complicated material better.

After reading through the material once, have your child go back through and mark confusing or important passages. Then, encourage her to take notes about her observations.

The following questions are a good starting point:

- **What did you think** of what you read?
- **What details are important?** Why do you think so?
- **Can you make** connections to things you already know?
- **How can you relate** to the reading?
- **What questions** do you have?



Source: "What Is a Reading Journal?" University of South Florida, <http://chuma.cas.usf.edu/~pinsky/journaling.htm>.



Q: My child is not very sure of herself when she reads aloud. What can I do to help build her confidence?

A: Get your child practicing! Read to and with your child every day to help her with any difficulties. Help her understand what she reads by encouraging her to ask plenty of questions. Talking with your child every day is also a great way to build her language and vocabulary skills.

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

Stay in touch with your child's teacher

It's important to stay up to date on what's happening with your child's reading progress. Ask questions about his success in reading, such as:



- **Is my child** progressing well?
- **What are my child's** biggest strengths and challenges with reading?
- **How can I help** my child at home?

For lower elementary readers:

• ***Stealing Home: Jackie Robinson: Against the Odds*** by Robert Burleigh (Paula Wiseman). Burleigh uses poetry and narratives to tell the story of Jackie Robinson, the first African American to play major league baseball.

• ***Cousin Irv from Mars*** by Bruce Eric Kaplan (Simon & Schuster).

Teddy's cousin Irv is visiting from Mars, and Teddy isn't happy about it. Irv is loud and he borrows things without asking!



For upper elementary readers:

• ***The Have a Good Day Cafe*** by Frances Park and Ginger Park (Lee & Low). Every day, Mike's family sells food from their food cart. But when business starts to slow, Mike and his grandma come up with a plan.

• ***Doo-Wop Pop*** by Roni Schotter (Amistad). Elijah Earl keeps to himself—until the school janitor, Doo-Wop Pop, helps him and a few other shy students form their own musical group!

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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