

# BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Harvard Elementary School

## Suggest that your child start a summer book club

Keep your child reading all summer by helping her start a book club. Not only will it encourage your child and her friends to explore new books, they'll engage in thoughtful conversations—and it will also be a social activity!



To help guide good discussions:

- **Encourage book club members** to pick dynamic books that will challenge them and spark interesting discussions.
- **Have your child and her friends** set ground rules, such as “Everybody gets to talk” and “No put-downs.”
- **Help book club members think** of open-ended questions that invite a lot of discussion. Asking questions like, “Why do you think the character acted this way?” will promote more interesting conversation than “Did you like this book?”

**Source:** “Having Great Discussions at Kids’ Book Clubs,” PBS Parents, <http://tinyurl.com/m4r79ye>.

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

—Joseph Addison

## Work with your child to build fluency

Fluency is the ability to read smoothly. To help your child improve his fluency, spend time:

- **Reading together.** Try reading aloud at the same time. Run your finger along words as you read them, and invite your child to join you.
- **Listening to your child practice reading.** The more your child reads and enjoys it, the better. He can also read text silently while you read it aloud. Reading and rereading favorite books that your child is already familiar with will help him develop fluency.
- **Setting a good example.** When you read, be clear and expressive. Hearing your fluency will be a learning experience for your child. Try listening to audio books, too.

**Source:** “Promising Practices—Fluency: Helping Your Child Read and Understand,” Action Alliance, [www.pacer.org/publications/pdfs/all47.pdf](http://www.pacer.org/publications/pdfs/all47.pdf).

## Use the five W’s to ask questions

When you discuss a story with your child, remember the “Five W’s”: Who? What? When? Where? Why?



These simple questions help readers focus when they read and retell a story. They also help children think critically about what is going on in the story. A few examples are, “Who is the story about?” “When does it take place?” “Where does it happen?” “Why do the characters act the way they do?”

## Conversations lead to a stronger vocabulary

Talk with your child as you do your daily activities together. Ask questions. It’s one of the most important ways to help your child build a strong vocabulary. And that’s part of building a strong reader!



## Use analogies to build vocabulary

Expand your child’s vocabulary by practicing *analogies*, comparisons

between words that have a relationship with each other—like *dog* is to *fur* as *bird* is to *feather*.

Have your child fill in the missing word in the following analogies:

- *Sand* is to *beach* as \_\_\_\_\_ is to the *North Pole*. (*snow*)
- *Fly* is to *airplane* as \_\_\_\_\_ is to *car*. (*drive*)
- *Good* is to *wonderful* as \_\_\_\_\_ is to *terrible*. (*bad*)

**Source:** “Analogies,” Learning Games for Kids, <http://tinyurl.com/k3hcewz>.

## A storytelling game develops imagination and language skills

When kids tell stories, they practice using their imaginations. They learn to play with words and structure their thoughts.

Try this storytelling game when traveling, during dinner or even during a special storytelling party:



1. **Select at least five words** that have no connection to each other, such as *dragon, song, tree, happy* and *forgetful*. The older your kids, the more words you can choose.
2. **Write the words down** and post them for all to see.
3. **Have each player create and tell a story** that includes all the selected words.
4. **Ask each player to include** a title and conclusion. The story must make sense. But it can take any form—suspense, fairytale, comedy or drama.

Your family could also write the stories down in a notebook. Have fun illustrating them. Then come up with a title for your collection!

## Exciting beginnings can hook readers

Encourage your child to read—and keep reading—by choosing a book with a quick, thrilling beginning. To get your reader excited about a book:

- **Find the right book.** Ask your librarian for books that get off to a fast start. Mysteries and adventure books often grab a child's attention from the first page.
- **Read the beginning aloud.** If your child is hooked, give him the book and let him read the rest for himself. If he's bored, don't force him to keep reading that book.
- **Ask your child to tell you** about what is happening in the



plot and with the characters. Active readers who think about the story as they go are more likely to be good readers.



**Q:** My child gets frustrated when she can't read unfamiliar words. What can I do?

**A:** Help her read the word slowly to identify the sounds of the word. Then ask, "What word would make sense in the story?" A guess based on context may be correct. Be available for your child when she needs help. This lets her feel more in control of her reading process.

Do you have a question about reading? Email [readingadvisor@parent-institute.com](mailto:readingadvisor@parent-institute.com).

## Help your child learn to read for different subjects

Reading for math, science and social studies is different than reading fiction.



Here are things your child can do to keep up with her subject-area reading:

- **Identify** what she already knows.
- **Use** mental pictures to "see" what she's reading.
- **Summarize** what she's read.

## For lower elementary readers:

- ***Ike's Incredible Ink*** by Brianne Farley (Candlewick). Ike sits down to write a story and decides to make his own ink. Join him on his journey to gather the materials for just the right ink.
- ***A House for Hermit Crab*** by Eric Carl (Little Simon). See what happens when Hermit Crab outgrows his shell and must find a new home on the ocean floor.



## For upper elementary readers:

- ***Running Shoes*** by Frederick Lipp (Charlesbridge). Sophy receives the most wonderful gift—a pair of running shoes—and is inspired to do great things.
- ***I Even Funnier: A Middle School Story*** by James Patterson and Chris Grabenstein (Little, Brown). Jamie Grimm is determined to become the best stand-up comic ever—but things may not go according to Jamie's plan.

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