

Building Readers[®]



Eisenhower Elementary
Norman, Oklahoma

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Find ways to use new words

Sometimes parents avoid using new words around children. They think kids won't understand what's being said. With your child:

- **Talk about new words.** These might be words you hear, say or see. Explain what they mean.
- **Look for new words.** Open the dictionary and find an unfamiliar word. Define it and use it all day.
- **Play with new words.** Introduce a word. Then give three possible meanings. Let your child guess which one is right.
- **Use new words.** Try out the new words in sentences full of familiar words. This makes them easier to understand.



Source: "Teach your kids new words," PBS Kids: Between the Lions, <http://pbskids.org/lions/parentsteachers/resources/tips/teach-words.html>.

Tip

Is time with your child often spent in silence? Maybe he's watching TV. Or maybe you're busy with chores. Keep in mind that time together is an opportunity to talk. It's good for your relationship—and your child's vocabulary.



Source: Meline M. Kevorkian, "Communicating with Children: You Make the Difference," BlueSuitMom, www.bluesuitmom.com/family/parenting/communicating.html.



Q: How can I help my busy child make time for reading?

A: Start with materials she'll like and then use them to develop new habits. Let her read in bed, for example. Or visit a special reading spot on the weekends, such as a park. If reading is part of an enjoyable routine, your child may appreciate it more. Plus, studies show that when kids like to read, they often do better in school.

Source: "Make reading a habit at home," Scholastic, www.scholastic.co.uk/bookfairs/parents/great-ways.htm.

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



Make reading appealing

Research suggests that as kids grow older, reading may become less attractive to them.



To prevent this problem:

- **Let your child** read age-appropriate materials he likes.
- **Ask the librarian** to recommend a series of books.
- **Create** a cool reading spot.
- **Make exceptions** for reading, such as staying up a little later.
- **Suggest** that your child trade books with friends.

Source: Stacy DeBroff, "How to Encourage Your Struggling Reader," Canadian Parents.com, www.canadianparents.com/CPO/Toddlers/Preschoolers/2006/05/30/1606137.html.

Poetry makes rhyming fun

Children love knowing what comes next when they read. Through repetition and rhyme, poetry does just that! Here are some fun ideas to try out when reading poetry with your child:

- **Pick a story** that uses repeated phrases, or a poem that your child enjoys. Read it aloud once to your child. Read it again, pausing at the sections that repeat or rhyme, to see if your child can fill in the blanks.
- **Have your child act out** a poem. Read the poem aloud with feeling to your child. Have her make a face that reflects how the character in the poem feels. Encourage her to perform it for other family members.

Source: Bernice Cullinan and Brod Bagert, "Family Reading Activities," Reading Rockets, www.readingrockets.org/article/385.

Improve fluency with simple activities

Children read more quickly (and with more understanding) when they recognize many words. This is called “fluent” reading. To develop this skill:

- **Review common words with your child**, such as *yellow, two, and, but, said, etc.*
- **Read aloud** so your child hears examples of smooth, expressive reading.
- **Suggest that your child reread** so he gets used to material.
- **Read slowly sometimes**, with your finger under words, to familiarize your child with the material.
- **Have him make** the beginning sound of a word and move on if he has trouble. Hearing the rest of the sentence may help him guess the word.



Source: “Helping The School-Age Child Become a Better Reader,” Children’s Literacy Publications, www.makereadingfirst.com/struggle.html.

Banish writer’s block with ‘story starters’

Many children enjoy writing stories, but sometimes it’s tough to get started. “Story starters” solve this problem. You provide the first sentence of the tale, and your child writes the rest. For example:

- “Two elephants got loose at the zoo, so they”
- “A woman was gardening when a boy walked by and said”



- “The first thing Rex the dog saw when he woke up was”
- “Missy decided that if she could go anywhere in the world, she’d visit”
- “Brian had always wanted to be an astronaut, so he...”
- “It was the first day of school, and all the kids”

Source: “Help your children create stories,” Chateau Meddybemps, www.meddybemps.com/9.700.html.

For Lower Elementary readers:



Caps for Sale, by Esphyr Slobodkina (HarperTrophy). The story of a peddler, his hats and a group of monkeys has been in print since 1940, but kids still love it today.

The Lorax, by Dr. Seuss (Random House). Kids with a soft spot for the environment will like this earth-friendly, quirky tale. Written decades ago, its theme is still relevant.

For Upper Elementary readers:

Stuart Little, by E.B. White (HarperTrophy). Stuart is a tiny mouse in a world full of big adventures. Kids and parents will enjoy reading about them together. It’s fun to imagine “What if a mouse joined our family?”

Bridge to Terabithia, by Katherine Paterson (HarperTrophy). In an emotional but beautifully written book, the themes of friendship, loss and more are explored. Follow it with a meaningful talk.

Reading term of the month

Sight word

A **sight word** is a common word kids recognize immediately while reading.

Show how exciting reading can be

Sometimes kids want to read challenging books, but they need reading breaks. Offer to take turns reading. Use an enthusiastic voice—and maybe even several voices for characters. This sets a great example for your child.

Source: Jim Cornish, “Reading With Your Children,” The Centre for Distance Learning & Innovation, www.cdli.ca/CITE/summer_reading_7.htm.

“

“A house without books is like a room without windows.”

—Horace Mann

Using resources



If you haven’t visited Reading Rockets, it’s worth a try. The website is dedicated to helping young readers (and their parents). You’ll find details on all kinds of reading topics. You can even sign up for daily emails about top reading news. Check it out at www.readingrockets.com.

Building Readers®
 How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers
 Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.
 Managing Editor: Pat Hodgdon.
 Editor: Amanda Blyth. Writer: Susan O’Brien.
 Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.
 Copyright © 2006, The Parent Institute® (a division of NIS, Inc.)
 P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474
 1-800-756-5525, ISSN: 1533-3302
www.parent-institute.com