

Building



Readers[®]

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Eisenhower Elementary
Norman, Oklahoma

Get creative with writing ideas

You'd like your child to write more, but she doesn't want to keep a journal. Remember that there are many alternatives. For example, she can write a:

- **News article.** Start a family newsletter and let her report on topics. She could also write a real letter to the editor.
- **Magazine article.** Have your child imagine that she writes for her favorite magazine. What would she cover? Include photos (or drawings) with captions.
- **Script.** Help your child write a short play. Ask family members to act in different roles. Compliment her creativity!

Source: Nate Cole, "A new way to teach writing in Belding," June 7, 2005, *The Daily News* (Stafford Communications Group, 1-800-968-9301, www.thedailynews.cc/).



Tip

To practice reading, you don't have to announce, "It's reading time!" You can also fit it in naturally. For example, "What's the next step in the cookie recipe?" "Let's read the directions for building this toy." "Mark lives on Pine Street. Can you help me look for it?"

Source: "Tips for Reading to and with Children in Kindergarten Through Grade 3," National Education Association, www.nea.org/parents/readingk3.html.



Q: My child mentioned using a reading log at school. What is that?



A: Reading logs can be as simple as a list of books your child has read—or as detailed as a personal reading journal. Reading logs help children think about what they read. Meanwhile, they also help teachers monitor students' progress.

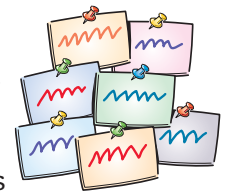
Source: "Reading Logs: What are reading Logs?" Bayview Education Centre, www.bayvieweduc.ednet.ns.ca/Smoran/Reader'sworkshop/reading_logs.htm.

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

Using resources

Have you ever wondered about a certain author? Where does he get his ideas? When did he start writing? The answers may be at www.kidsreads.com. Click on "authors" to see an alphabetical list. Help your child find details about his favorite writers—and interviews, too.

Make a 'word wall' at home



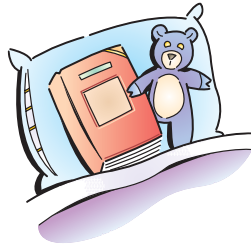
Schools use many techniques to build vocabulary, including "word walls," which familiarize kids with words all day long. They're easy to make. Simply attach words to a bulletin board, poster board or wall. You can organize them (such as by first letter, meaning, etc.). Let your child add words as she learns them. Make sure to hang the "wall" in a noticeable spot!

Source: Sylvan Learning Center, "Vocabulary Building: Teach New Words at Home," MSN Encarta, <http://encarta.msn.com/encnet/departments/elementary/default.aspx?article=vocabbuild>.

? What's a synonym for antonym?

A "synonym" is a word with the same meaning as another word. An "antonym" is a word with the opposite meaning. So a synonym for *antonym* might be *opposite*! If your child understands that, she knows these two words!

Include reading in bedtime routines



If bedtime is hectic at your home, you're not alone. Parents want kids to sleep, but kids want to do everything else. Experts say evening routines can help—especially those that include reading. Why? Because reading:

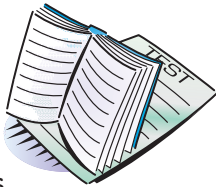
- **Improves literacy.** It can boost school success. After all, almost every class requires reading.
- **Is better than watching TV** and playing computer games late in the day. These activities may affect sleep.
- **Helps parents build relationships.** Reading with your child shows that she is a priority—and so is relaxing at night.

Source: Rebecca Adams, "Bedtime rituals can help get kids tucked in," *USA TODAY*, April 25, 2006 (Gannett Co. Inc., 1-800-872-0001, www.usatoday.com).

Help your child practice reading before tests

To succeed on tests, children must read well and comprehend what they read. A child who struggles through instructions is at a disadvantage. Even math tests often include sentences that must be understood.

To help your child prepare for tests:



- **Boost reading skills** every chance you get. For example, read together daily. Introduce your child to new words. Ask the school for a reading list.
- **Read homework carefully.** What words are used often? Practice any that give your child trouble. In math, key words might include *measure*, *divide* and *pattern*.

Source: "Help Your Child Improve in Test-Taking," U.S. Department of Education, www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/TestTaking/index.html.

For Lower Elementary readers:



Mrs. Brice's Mice, by Syd Hoff (Harper Trophy). Twenty-five mice follow Mrs. Brice's lead. But one mouse has different ideas. Readers see how independence can pay off.

Patch, by Kristen Earhart (Scholastic). Horse riding is too competitive for one girl, while another rides with quiet confidence. Still, a friendship is possible.

For Upper Elementary readers:

Socks, by Beverly Cleary (Harper Trophy). This popular author looks at life from a cat's-eye view. Life is different (and amusing) when a baby joins the family.

Just Juice, by Karen Hesse (Scholastic). Does your child have trouble with reading? So does the main character in this book. It's written by an award-winning writer and recommended by experts.

Reading term of the month

Decode

When students **decode** words, they figure out how to say them.



"What one reads becomes part of what one sees and feels."

—Ralph Ellison

Be choosy about your words

Here are two ways to help your child learn new words, just by making small changes in what you say:

- 1. When you describe** something, use specific words. For example, "Did you see that weightlifter's gargantuan dumbbell?" That's better than, "Wow! He has a big weight."
- 2. When you respond** to your child, rephrase what he says. If he says, "Look at that lion family," you might reply, "That's a mother lion—a *lioness*—and her cubs."



Choose words that say exactly what you mean. They'll improve your child's vocabulary—often without needing to be explained or defined.

Source: The editors of *Parents Magazine* with Marge Kennedy, *The Parents Book of Lists: From Birth to Age Three*, ISBN: 0-312263-73-2, (Roundtable Press and G+J USA Publishing, 1-800-777-0222, www.parents.com).

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