

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Boost your child's reading comprehension with these five tips

The older your child gets, the more complex her school reading will become. She'll need strong reading comprehension skills to do her best in school. To help your child understand what she reads, encourage her to:

- 1. Read aloud.** This slows down reading and helps your child "process" words.
- 2. Read to relax.** Encourage your child to read enjoyable books for fun.
- 3. Reread.** Reading things more than once familiarizes your child with new concepts and vocabulary.
- 4. Supplement reading.** Look for interesting, non-intimidating materials related to what your child is learning in school.
- 5. Discuss reading.** Ask questions that encourage thinking, such as, "Would you recommend this book to a friend? Why or why not?"



Source: "Improve Reading Comprehension," Scholastic.

*"There are many little ways to enlarge your child's world.
Love of books is the best of all."
—Jacqueline Kennedy*

Find out about reading programs now

It's a new school year and a new chance for reading success! Whether your child excels or struggles in language arts, learn about the school's reading program and what to expect this year. Talk with the teacher about:

- **Reading levels.** How are reading skills assessed at school? What do levels mean? How can parents use them to help kids pick good books?
- **Progress.** How often is reading evaluated at school? When and how do parents receive results? How can you help your child make the most progress?

Communicate with your child's teacher now to set the stage for the entire year. Introduce yourself and show your enthusiasm about working together. Ask about the best ways to help your child with reading at home. The teacher—and your child—will see how important reading is to your family.

Make sure reading is part of your family's everyday life

When reading is a part of your family routine, your child will learn to look forward to and love reading time. You can:



- **Create reading rituals,** such as read-alouds at bedtime or weekly trips to the library.
- **Take books with you** on errands.
- **Take time to listen** as your child reads aloud.

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!



Encourage your child's fluency

He can sound out *c-a-t*. But when it's time for him to read a story, he slows down. Teachers would say your child's reading lacks *fluency*.

So what's a parent to do? Here are some tips:

- **Try repetition.** If your child loves a book or poem, have him read it again. (And again.) Repeated readings help children gain fluency.
- **Take turns.** You read one sentence. Have your child read the next.

Source: "Tips for Parents of First Graders," PBS.

Writing and reading are connected

Your child is advancing through school, which means she uses writing more often to illustrate her understanding of reading. For example, she might have to write a report after reading a book. As your child's reading and writing mature, she will be expected to:



- **Write about reading assignments** in order to think more deeply about them.
 - **Focus on forming ideas** rather than simply forming letters.
 - **Revise and edit work** so it makes sense and includes descriptive words.
 - **Continue improving** spelling and grammar.
- Your child always benefits from your support. Remember to give compliments and display her work proudly!

Source: "Education: Second and Third Graders Writing Milestones," PBS Parents.

Help your child develop critical thinking skills

Analyzing information means examining and evaluating it instead of just accepting it. This is an important critical thinking skill, especially when reading.

Look for everyday ways to help your child learn this thinking skill. You can:

- **Look at a newspaper headline** together, then read the story. Did the headline do a good job of telling the reader what the story was about?
- **Talk about *fact*** (established truth) and *opinion* (a person's beliefs). Ask your child to tell you whether a statement is fact or opinion, and why.
- **Ask your child** "What do you think?" at least once a day.



Encourage him to share his thinking and explain why he thinks as he does.

Source: V. Perrone, *101 Educational Conversations With Your 6th Grader*.



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.

To improve reading, encourage writing



Reading and writing go hand in hand. When your child writes regularly, he'll be building his reading skills, too. To help him develop the writing habit:

- **Encourage him to keep a journal.**
- **Display what he writes.** Put it on the refrigerator.
- **Give him a box** of special writing supplies in his favorite colors.

For lower elementary readers:

- ***President Taft is Stuck in the Bath*** by Mac Barnett. Legend has it that the 27th president, William Howard Taft, was once stuck in a White House bathtub! Did that actually happen?



- ***Henry's Heart*** by Charise Mericle Harper. Learn how a heart works, including its important role as a muscle and what makes it beat extra quickly.

For upper elementary readers:

- ***Confetti Girl*** by Diana López. Join Lina as she goes through her school year—playing volleyball with her best friend, running a booth at the school carnival and adding to her collection of socks.
- ***Dear Mrs. LaRue: Letters from Obedience School*** by Mark Teague. When Mrs. LaRue sends her dog Ike to obedience school, he is not happy. He writes her letters to convince her to let him come home.

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