

Building Readers[®]



How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Pollard School Reading Room
Ms. Tozier and Mrs. Rockwell

Choose books that brighten lives

Anita Silvey, an expert on books, says talking about favorite childhood books often makes people's eyes light up. To make kids' eyes light up, Silvey suggests considering:

- **Art.** Good pictures are just as important as good stories. Look for both!
- **Characters.** Strong, interesting characters keep kids reading.
- **Variety.** Enjoy all kinds of materials, from poetry to mysteries.
- **Interests.** What appeals to your child? Let her enthusiasm be your guide.
- **Classics.** Try books that made a difference to you and others.
- **Fun.** Focus on books your child likes. Don't worry too much about reading levels.

Source: Anita Silvey, "How to choose books that will spark your child's interest in reading for life," *Scholastic Parent & Child*, September 2006 (Scholastic Inc., 1-800-724-6527, www.scholastic.com/parentandchild).



Tip

There is so much bad news about the Internet that it can seem like the enemy. But reading with your child online can be productive and fun. Try looking for simple things together, such as reviews of items your child wants to buy.

Patience pays off in textbook reading

Some kids rush through reading assignments just to be finished. But they miss out on learning. When reading a textbook, your child should:



- **Skim the text**, noticing main ideas.
- **Turn headings** into questions. Answer them by reading.
- **Restate ideas** after each section.
- **Review** what he learned.

Source: "Textbook Reading Systems," Center for Learning & Teaching, Cornell University, www.clt.cornell.edu/campus/learn/LSC%20Resources/readingsystem.pdf.

Using resources

You know where your local library is. But do you know its web address? Many libraries let users look up and reserve books online. You may also have access to special research databases. These can save your child time when writing school reports!

Brush up on vowel sounds



Kids' phonics homework can be confusing for parents. What does a long "a" sound like? How about a short "e"? Here's a website that can help: www.tampareads.com/realaudio/vowelsnds/voweltest.htm. It plays vowel sounds and explains them to adults.



Q: Is it important for families to read together?

A: Yes. If one parent always reads with your child, add some variety. Research suggests that including fathers, for example, boosts kids' success. So include everyone. Family DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) times can help. Say, "It's DEAR time!" Let everyone pick a book—and maybe a reading partner, too.

Source: "Why dads should be involved," National Literacy Trust, www.literacytrust.org.uk/familyreading/parents/dads.html.



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

Familiarize your child with analogy problems

Students have to read analogy problems on some standardized tests. The problems often follow a formula: "A is to B as C is to D." For example, "Sock is to foot as glove is to hand." (The relationship between A and B is similar to the relationship between C and D.)



See if your child can solve problems like these:

- **Hot is to cold** as top is to _____.
(Bottom—because the words are opposites.)
- **Sun is to yellow** as grass is to _____.
(Green—because the words are descriptive.)
- **Grape is to fruit** as carrot is to _____.
(Vegetable—because the words are in categories.)

Source: Ann Reckner, "What's an analogy?" Fact Monster, www.factmonster.com/spot/analogy.html.

Practice spelling, letter sounds with your child

Recognizing letters is an important part of reading. Learning letter sounds will help improve your child's spelling and reading abilities.

Try these activities together:

- **Have your child** write down letters that match letter sounds as you say them aloud.
- **Play "I Spy."** Can your child find an object that begins with a "ddd" sound? Then ask her to name the letter or write it on paper.

- **Write letters on flashcards.** Hold up one card at a time. Have your child say the name of the letter and the sound that it makes. Then encourage her to spell a word that begins with that letter.



Source: "Letters and Sounds: Practical Ideas for Parents," Reading Rockets, www.readingrockets.com/article/160.

For lower elementary readers:

Horrible Harry Goes to Sea, by Suzy Kline (Puffin). Harry's class takes a field trip to learn about ships.

Fans of the series should expect the usual fun, and new readers will be glad they're aboard.

Henry and Mudge and the Big Sleepover, by Cynthia Rylant (Simon & Schuster). Beginning readers can enjoy this story about boys, dogs and a sleepover. It's a perfect introduction to the Henry and Mudge series.

For upper elementary readers:

Fairy Dust and the Quest for the Egg, by Gail Carson Levine (Disney Enterprises, Inc.). Each fairy in Never Land, including Tinker Bell, has a special talent. But one fairy is still searching for hers. Detailed illustrations add to the story's appeal.

Because of Winn-Dixie, by Kate DiCamillo (Candlewick Press). A stray dog changes the life of a new girl in town. This award-winning book reveals the power of friendship.

Reading term of the month

Noun

A **noun** is a word that represents a person, place or thing.

Mysteries can make writing exciting

If your child likes reading mysteries, suggest that he try writing one himself. Getting started can be the toughest part.

Have him begin with ideas such as:

- **A character** always keeps his keys in the same spot. But one day they're missing. What could have happened to them?
- **Strange noises** come from a wrapped gift at a birthday party. Who brought the present? What could be inside?
- **Hikers find a map** buried on a mountain. Why was it left there? Where does it lead? To a treasure? To trouble? To exciting adventures?



Source: "7 Mystery Writing Projects for Kids," Associated Content, www.associatedcontent.com/article/19703/7_mystery_writing_projects_for_kids.html.

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"A book is like a garden carried in the pocket."

—Chinese Proverb



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