

Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Pollard School Reading Room
Ms. Tozier and Mrs. Rockwell

Make your own maps

Understanding maps is an important reading skill for your child in school and in daily life. Schools test geographical knowledge at several stages in K–12 education. You can make maps at home with your child. Here's how:

1. **Use large paper** or tape two pieces of blank paper together. Help your child make a “map” of a room in your home.
2. **Draw the floor plan** of one room (approximate is fine). Have your child fill in what's there. Keep it simple.
3. **Label the objects** (TV, bookshelf, sofa, etc.) and have your child color them. It may help her to imagine she is above the objects looking down at them. You can also help her draw a map of the yard or area outside your home.
4. **Draw a map to show the way from your home** to your child's school. Discuss which streets you take to get there. Draw them together. Add a directional compass and a key. Use the map to see if it's correct!

You can find many resources online for maps. Try www.eduplace.com/ss/ssmaps/index.html or www.geographic.org to help your child explore.



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Let your child 'attack' words



Students are expected to develop “word attack skills”—also known as decoding skills. These skills involve sounding out words. For example, your child might:

- **Say parts of a word slowly** and then put them together.
- **Try different sounds** for the same letters.
- **Notice familiar beginnings** and endings.
- **Say one syllable** at a time.

Source: Richard L. Venezky, “The Read Write Now! Partners Tutoring Program,” U.S. Department of Education, www.ed.gov/inits/americanreads/Pubs/Tutorman.html.



Create comics on the Internet

Does your child like comics? He can create his own online. Visit the Comic Creator at www.readwritethink.org/materials/comic/index.html. He can choose all kinds of things, from drawings to words—and even word bubbles!

Grandparents are great reading partners

Parents and siblings aren't the only family members who can read with children. Reading with grandparents can be extra special—and educational, too. For example, your child can:

- **Read books on visits** with Grandma and Grandpa and spend time talking about the stories.
- **Ask grandparents about books.** What were their favorite children's books? Read them together.
- **Exchange letters or emails** with grandparents. Try sharing jokes, poems and riddles.
- **Look for reasons to send cards.** Maybe Grandma will send a birthday card, and then your child can write back.

Source: “Sharing Books with Your Grandchildren,” Family Reading Partnership, www.familyreading.org/i-grandparents.htm.

Teach your child to use a dictionary when reading



Your child is reading, and she comes across an unfamiliar word. “Mom, what does this mean?” she asks. Once in a while, have her practice using a kids' dictionary. If she has one at home, great! Use it to help your child find simple explanations and helpful pictures. If not, try online. Sites like WordCentral.com are fun and easy to use.

Work on comprehension while relaxing

If your child has trouble with reading comprehension, you can help her, even when she's not reading. For example, while watching her favorite show, ask about it. "Who is that?" "Why did he do that?" "Where are they now?" "How do you think this will end?"

The goal is to help your child consider things related to reading, such as characters, motivation and setting. Imagine that you don't know anything, and she has all the answers. She may enjoy being the expert!

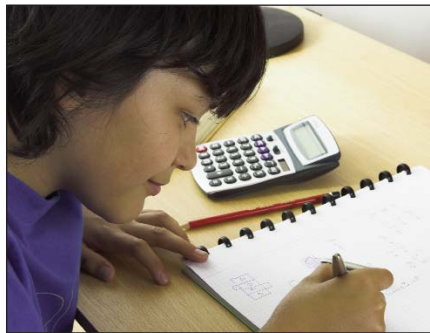
Source: Evelyn Vuko, "Expert Q & A: Getting Your Child Excited About School," PBS Parents, www.pbs.org/parents/experts/archive/vuko-school.html.

Reading skills make word problems easier

People often complain about word problems in math. But word problems are even tougher when kids struggle with reading. To solve word problems, your child should:

- **Take time to read the problem carefully.** It's important to understand exactly what is being asked.
- **Look for key words that show what operation** (such as addition) is being used. For example "What is the total?"
- **Do problems in steps.**

Tackle them one at a time. Remember that math helps with real-life problems, and



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word problems can show your child how!

Source: Marilyn Fenichel, "Math in Everyday Life," DiscoverySchool.com, <http://school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/everydaymath/>.

"Reading without reflecting is like eating without digesting."

—Edmund Burke

For lower elementary readers:



Actual Size, by Steve Jenkins (Houghton Mifflin). This award-winning picture book provides a fascinating look at actual sizes. For example, how does an ostrich compare to its egg?

Abuela, by Arthur Dorros (Puffin). What would it be like to fly over Manhattan? Young Rosalba finds out on a trip with her grandmother. This story includes some Spanish.

For upper elementary readers:

Jazz, by Walter Dean Myers (Holiday House). Introduce your child to jazz—or encourage a young musician—with this Coretta Scott King Award winner.

The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs! by Jon Scieszka (Viking Juvenile). If the wolf told the story of the three little pigs, what would he say? Readers find out—and laugh in the process.



Teach sight words through touch

Sight words are words that kids will see over and over—so often that they need to recognize them at first "sight." Knowing them makes reading much easier.

A fun way to practice sight words is to let your child illustrate them. Have your child write the words in glue and then add glitter, yarn or other items. When the words dry, your child can trace them with his finger as he reads.

Source: Ann Logsdon, "Top 8 Ways to Develop Early Sight Word Skills at Home," [About.com](http://learningdisabilities.about.com/od/infancyandearlychildhood/tp/earlysightword.htm), <http://learningdisabilities.about.com/od/infancyandearlychildhood/tp/earlysightword.htm>.



Q: How can I help my child learn more from her textbooks?

A: The "SQ3R" method can help. When your child is reading, have her:

1. **Survey.** Browse chapters before reading them. Notice parts that stand out—such as section headings, charts and summaries.
2. **Question and Read.** Think of questions the text will answer. Look for answers by reading.
3. **Recite.** Without looking at the book or notes, answer the questions once more.
4. **Review.** Look over the material again and double-check learning.

Source: "Literacy Strategies," Louisiana Public Broadcasting, www.lpb.org/education/classroom/itv/littlelearn/strategies/strat_sq3r.pdf.

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

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