

Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Pollard School Reading Room
Ms. Tozier and Mrs. Rockwell

Library cards encourage responsibility—and fun

Library cards open the door to a world of books. They also provide lessons in responsibility. Kids must help care for books, keep track of them and return them on time. While at the library:

- **Introduce your child to the librarian.** Explain that she is there to help. She might suggest a book, for example, or help with research.
- **Ask about other items.** Does your child like magazines or audio books? Take time to explore the variety of materials available.
- **Sign up for special events.** Perhaps a storytelling, craft or other book-related activity will interest your child.

Source: "My Child's Academic Success: Other Ways to Help—Helping Your Child Become a Reader," U.S. Department of Education, www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/reader/part6.html#library.



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Teach your child about synonyms and antonyms



"Synonym" and "antonym" are big words with simple definitions. Explain to your child that **synonyms** are words that mean almost the same thing. (For example, *little* and *small*.) **Antonyms** are opposites. (For example, *hot* and *cold*.) Have fun thinking of others!

Find answers to your reading questions online



How can I help my child with reading? What does the research say? These questions and many others are answered by the U.S. Department of Education online. Check out its reading resources at www.ed.gov/parents/read/resources/edpicks.jhtml.

Balance reading and other after-school activities

Does your child often say she "doesn't have time" to read? An activity chart may help.

Use a piece of poster board and highlighters or markers for color. Then help her make a simple chart of her after-school activities. For example: *Homework*, *Playtime*, *Snack Time*, *Fun Reading*, *TV Time* and *Chores*. Choose times for each of these activities. Fill out the chart together.

Keep the chart for a couple of weeks. It will help your family balance reading and other activities.

You can also try to incorporate reading *into* her TV time. Here's how:

- **Read the TV schedule** in your newspaper together.
- **Find shows** that focus on learning.
- **Use the "closed-captions"** from time to time.
- **Visit your local library** to find books related to your child's favorite programs.

Make reading a daily pleasure



Research shows that parents' interest and involvement is linked to kids' learning. So dedicate part of each day to reading. Pick books you and your child enjoy. Read for a while and then talk about the stories. Be open to other materials, too, such as comics, magazines and newspapers.

Source: "Help your children to learn," [parentscentre, www.parentscentre.gov.uk/educationandlearning/schoollife/helpyourchildrentolearn/](http://www.parentscentre.gov.uk/educationandlearning/schoollife/helpyourchildrentolearn/).

"I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go into the other room and read a book."

—Groucho Marx

Build understanding of words used in math

Your child has a math test coming up, and he knows all his facts. But how are his reading skills? Even if he's not solving word problems, he'll probably need to answer multiple choice questions. It helps to:

1. **Look over your child's homework** and past tests. Notice which math words appear often. Practice reading them with your child. Check his understanding.
2. **Do new problems.** Make sure your child applies his knowledge correctly. For example, is he comfortable with words such as *more*, *fewer* and *product*?

Encourage writing step by step

When authors write a story, they rarely finish their work in one sitting. Good writing involves a process. Suggest that your child:

1. **Brainstorm.** It's fun to think of cool topics. Sit down with your child and listen to her ideas. Help her pick her favorite.
2. **Draft.** At first, your child can write her story without focusing on mistakes. Cheer her on while she works.
3. **Revise.** Show interest when your child reads her story aloud. Ask questions if you're confused about something so your child can improve it.



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4. **Edit.** Have your child check for spelling mistakes and other little errors. Her age and abilities should be your guide; do not expect perfection! Celebrate her success!

Source: Dr. Wayne D. Lance, "Teaching Writing: The Elementary Years," International Children's Education, www.iched.org/cms/scripts/page.php?site_id=iched&item_id=teach_writing_elem.



Q: My child reads new words well, but sometimes I want to interrupt and see if he knows what they mean. Is that okay?

A: It's fine to ask questions in a casual manner. For example, "What does *tame* mean?"

Your child may know—and have a chance to show off—or he may need help. You can look up the word together and talk about the definition. Then try to use it later. "Thank goodness that cat is *tame*!"

Source: Raynette Eitel, "Reading is not enough," Partnership for Learning, www.partnershipforlearning.org/article.asp?ArticleID=2237.

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



For lower elementary readers:

The Adventures of Max and Pinky: Best Buds, by Maxwell Eaton (Knopf). Pinky the pig has disappeared. Where will his best friend find him? This simple story keeps children reading—and laughing.

Duck at the Door, by Jackie Urbanovic (HarperCollins). Max the duck didn't head south for the winter, so a woman and her pets take him in. He makes a funny, yet frustrating, roommate.

For upper elementary readers:

The Mouse Island Marathon, by Geronimo Stilton (Scholastic). It's not like Geronimo Stilton to run a marathon. But the newspaper-mouse gives it his all in this hilarious and educational adventure, which is part of a series.

The Invention of Hugo Cabret, by Brian Selznick (Scholastic). Unique art adds to the spellbinding story of Hugo, an orphan living in a Paris train station during the 1930s.

Encourage your child to check out a variety of books



When you visit the library, where do you browse first? Many families make a beeline for the fiction area. Consider the nonfiction aisles, too. Your child may be fascinated by a book about history, science or art. She may even research a topic in depth. When it comes up at school, she'll be more than prepared.

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