

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Title I Cooperative
Educational Service Unit 10

Help your child build vocabulary and comprehension skills at the same time

A big vocabulary helps children understand what they read. This reduces how often they have to stop reading and ask, "What does this word mean?" To build vocabulary, it's important to read often, use new words in conversation, and teach words by explaining them. It also helps to:

- **Make definitions easy to understand.** When defining "curious," for instance, you might say, "A *curious* person is eager to learn more."
- **Give relatable examples.** "When the big box arrived from Grandma, you were *curious* about what was inside."
- **Ask your child to give examples.** "Can you think of someone who was *curious*?" "Fernando was *curious* about how Amy's book ended."
- **Keep using the new word.** "I'm *curious* about countries in South America. Let's do some research together."



Source: "Building Your Child's Vocabulary," Reading Rockets, www.readingrockets.org/article/32444/.

"The reading of all good books is like conversation with the finest men of the past centuries."

—Descartes

Find exciting ways to motivate your reader

It can sometimes be difficult to get children to pick up a book or magazine for reading time. In one study, kids were asked what motivates them to read. The results showed that kids like:

- **Getting ideas from parents,** teachers, friends and libraries about which books to read.
- **Sharing reading** by talking about books, reading with others and receiving books as gifts.
- **Being entertained** by funny stories. Kids also enjoy books that present new and interesting information.
- **Reading books that match** their interests. Sometimes it's good for kids to pick books themselves.

Source: K.M. Edmunds and K.L. Bauseman, "What teachers can learn about reading motivation through conversations with children," International Reading Association, <http://olms.cte.jhu.edu/olms/data/resource/4740/RT-59-5-Motivation%20Edmunds.pdf>.

Graphic organizers boost reading comprehension

Graphic organizers are diagrams that help kids think about what they read. Try drawing a large star with five points.

Your child can put the title of the story or an article he has read in the center. Then use the points to write or talk about *who*, *what*, *when*, *where* and *why*. He'll have a clearer picture of what he's read in no time!



Source: "Graphic Organizers," EnchantedLearning.com, www.enchantedlearning.com/graphicorganizers/star/.

Look online for resources on rhymes

Rhyming with kids is a great way to teach about letters and sounds. At RhymeZone.com, you can enter a word and get a list of rhyming words. You'll also find definitions, synonyms and much more!



Practicing letter sounds leads to improved reading and spelling skills

Matching letters to the sounds they make, also called *phonics*, is one way



that children learn to read and spell. For example, the letters *tion* combine to say "shun." Research shows that *phonics* helps with reading, so practice these skills at

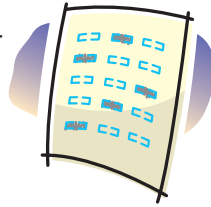
home! Challenge your child to name words that start with a certain letter or end with a letter combination.

Source: "Phonics Basics," PBS Parents, www.pbs.org/parents/education/reading-language/reading-tips/phonics-basics/.

Read for success on standardized tests

When children read well, they do better on tests. And certain reading skills are especially useful with standardized tests. Help your child work on:

- **Comprehension.** Standardized tests often ask children to find the “main idea.” Practice this by reading news articles with your child. For each article, summarize the main idea together.
- **Speed.** Standardized tests are usually timed, so it’s important for kids to read at a reasonable pace. This improves naturally as children practice reading every day. Reading silently boosts speed, too, since whispering or mouthing words silently slows reading.
- **Vocabulary.** When kids recognize a lot of words, it’s easier for them to understand test questions. Introduce your child to new words daily. Look them up together and use them repeatedly to increase memory.



Source: “Standardized Tests—Helping Students Succeed,” Newark Unified School District, www.nusd.ca.schoolloop.com/cms/page_view?d=x&piid=&vpid=1321265888204.

Three strategies to overcome reading challenges

Reading is an important part of many home and school activities, so when a child struggles, it can feel as if every part of life is affected. If your child is having difficulty with reading:

1. **Consult experts,** including his teacher. Ask about realistic expectations. Is your child reading at grade level? If not, what help is available?
2. **Use reading materials at home** that minimize frustration. Choose books that are easy to read and understand. They should have very few difficult words.
3. **Stay positive** about your child’s learning. Focus on how his strengths can help him.



Source: C.B. Smith and R. Sensenbaugh, “Helping Children Overcome Reading Difficulties,” KidSource OnLine, www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content2/help-overcome.html.



Q: My third grader is a strong reader and has always loved to read, but lately she has begun to complain about books being “boring.” What can I do to make sure she doesn’t lose interest in reading?

A: Your child may be bored because she is choosing books that are too easy. Many third graders can handle increasingly complex story lines. Look for interesting books that include some challenging words.

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

Connect to the past by reading history books

Reading helps children in every school subject, and history is no exception! Next time you’re at the library, check out biographies, autobiographies and books about historical events. Remember to look at historical fiction books, fiction stories that are set during fascinating historical times.



For lower elementary readers:

- ***The Cloud Spinner*** by Michael Catchpool (Knopf). A boy weaves beautiful fabric from the clouds. But there are consequences when a king demands too much clothing.



- ***Homework*** by Arthur Yorinks (Walker Childrens). What happens when Tony falls asleep while doing his homework? Does it really do itself?

For upper elementary readers:

- ***Kaspar the Titanic Cat*** by Michael Morpurgo (HarperCollins). A bellboy becomes Kaspar the cat’s unexpected owner. When they board the Titanic with an heiress, they’re in for an adventure.
- ***Wonder*** by R.J. Palacio (Knopf). Things change when fifth grader August Pullman, who has a facial deformity, attends school for the first time.

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