

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Title I Cooperative
Educational Service Unit 10

Improving vocabulary can be easy and fun

If your child has a strong vocabulary, he's more likely to understand what he reads. Thankfully, building vocabulary doesn't have to be boring or hard. Find creative ways to teach words by:

- **Exploring the world.** Introduce your child to new and memorable things. Try a new food, for example, and discuss its features. "This *marinara* sauce is a little *spicy*!"
- **Adding new words.** If your child learns the word *vehicle*, you might ask him to name three kinds of vehicles. Name words with similar meanings (called *synonyms*) and opposite meanings (called *antonyms*), too.
- **Practicing what you learn.** Find a variety of ways to work with new words, such as by writing them, drawing pictures, and acting out definitions.



George Doyle

Source: "10 Ways to Build Your Child's Vocabulary," North Shore Pediatric Therapy, <http://nspt4kids.com/parenting/10-ways-to-build-your-childs-vocabulary/>.

"I have this belief that children become readers before they can read. They become hooked on books because they were read aloud to as a child."

—Jacqueline Wilson

Reading and math aren't that different!

As your child builds his reading skills, he's also developing important math skills. Experts say reading and math have plenty in common. They both involve:

- **Language.** Stories and math problems both use kinds of "language." Practice "reading" them both.
- **Understanding.** Kids need to understand what they read in books and math problems. Talking about what your child is learning is a good way to review.
- **Connections.** Help your child relate what he learns in both subjects to real life. He might identify with a character in a book he's reading or use math skills to save for a special purchase.

Source: A.K. Balas, "The Mathematics and Reading Connection," EricDigests.org, www.ericdigests.org/2000-1/math.html.

Make grammar mistakes your child will notice and correct

Kids often enjoy catching the mistakes that adults make—including their grammar errors. Write an interesting paragraph for your child to read and edit. Include mistakes for her to find. For example, you can write, "Billy and me went on a drive to Grandma's house." Ask, "How would you correct that mistake?"



Online site offers reading tips

You will find fun reading-related activities that appeal to both kids and parents on the ReadWriteThink website. Families can create comic strips, do crossword puzzles, write poems and more. To learn more, visit www.readwritethink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/.



Silly sayings can simplify spelling

Your child is having trouble remembering how to spell a challenging word, such as *because*. How can you help?



Together, make up a funny phrase with each of the word's letters. "Big elephants can't always understand small elephants." Memorizing the phrase will make spelling that word

easier. Challenge your child to come up with the most creative sentence she can that will help her remember that tricky word.

Three steps lead to book report success

Writing a book report is one of the first big projects kids must tackle. It's a great way for children to build reading skills as well as analytical skills as they work with the book.

As with any long-term task, it helps to keep three steps in mind:

- 1. Get organized.** Your child will need a book, paper, writing utensils and a step-by-step plan for staying on track.
- 2. Stay focused.** Guide and encourage your child as he works. Be sure to prevent distractions during homework time, and help him stick to his schedule.
- 3. Finish.** Double-check that all instructions have been followed. Make sure he includes his name and puts the project in his backpack!



Source: "Help Your Child Get Organized," KidsHealth, http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/learning/child_organized.html.

Use the SQ3R method with textbook reading

"I have to read a chapter of my history textbook tonight," your child moans. Just the thought of all that reading is exhausting—for both of you! The SQ3R method makes things easier. Teach your child this strategy:

- **Survey.** Take a quick look at the material. What stands out?
- **Question.** Ask yourself interesting questions that you'll answer by reading.
- **Read.** Read the assignment part by part, taking breaks if needed.
- **Restate.** Talk about what you read. Reinforce information learned by asking and



answering questions with someone else.

- **Review.** Go over what you have learned. What were the main points? What information was surprising? How does this new information relate to your life?

Source: "SQ3R," Reading Educator, www.readingeducator.com/strategies/sq3r.htm.



Q: My child doesn't like to read. How can I get her to practice this important skill?

A: Think about what she *does* enjoy. Does she like to bake? Play soccer? Draw? Find reading materials (not necessarily books) about these subjects. She might read recipes, the sports section of the newspaper or instructions for drawing favorite characters. By focusing on what she loves, she may not even notice she's reading!

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

Reuse old newspapers to create a collage poem



Encourage your child to have fun with poetry. Challenge her to create a collage poem. Help her cut out a variety of words and phrases from old newspapers, magazines and boxes. Have her arrange the words into a poem and glue them onto a separate piece of paper. Remind her that her poem does not need to rhyme. Why did she arrange the words and phrases as she did?

Source: S. Izarek, "Playing with Poetry," Scholastic, www.scholastic.com/resources/article/playing-with-poetry.

For lower elementary readers:

- **Red Sled** by Lita Judge (Atheneum). What would forest animals do with a child's sled? This beautifully illustrated picture book shows them having lots of fun!
- **Stars** by Mary Lyn Ray (Beach Lane Books). It's easy to forget the beauty of stars. But this book inspires readers to imagine and appreciate them.



For upper elementary readers:

- **Junonia** by Kevin Henkes (Greenwillow Books). Young Alice hopes to find a rare shell—and a lot more—while visiting a Florida beach cottage.
- **Stars in the Shadows** by Charles R. Smith, Jr. (Atheneum). In 1934, the Negro League's fascinating East-West Game was played. This book provides all the details.

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Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

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Writer: Susan O'Brien.

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