

# BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Title I Cooperative  
Educational Service Unit 10

## Spend some time thinking like Dr. Seuss

March 2, the birthday of the late Theodore Geisel—also known as Dr. Seuss—is Read Across America Day. This day provides a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the joy of reading.

Did you know that when legendary author Dr. Seuss was a kid, he loved drawing zoo animals? This inspired him later when writing about zany creatures.

If your child enjoys art, it can encourage her to write, too. After she draws a picture, ask what's happening in it. Record her response, or let her do it. She might write a sentence—or a whole story, complete with more illustrations. Don't be surprised if the job is challenging, just as it was for Dr. Seuss. Then read the story aloud with enthusiasm and pride!



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*“Without the ability to read, excellence in high school and beyond is unattainable.”*

—R. Anderson, E. Hiebert, J. Scott and I. Wilkinson,  
*Becoming a Nation of Readers: the Report of the Commission on Reading*

## Post the five keys to writing success

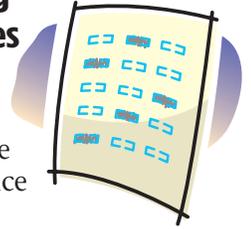
Whether your child loves or dreads writing assignments, five steps will make them easier. Post these tips in a visible spot so they're always handy.

- 1. Prewrite.** This is a fun time to brainstorm and talk. Bounce ideas off someone else before moving on.
- 2. Draft.** Write a first copy—*without* worrying about mistakes! It can be messy, as long as it's readable.
- 3. Revise.** Read through the paper at least once. Does everything make sense? Are there more exciting or sophisticated ways to say things?
- 4. Edit.** Read through the paper again and check small details, including grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- 5. Review.** You're almost finished! Read the paper aloud to catch any remaining mistakes.

**Source:** Dr. F. Nace, “A Tip for Creating Good Writers,” State of New Jersey Department of Education, [www.nj.gov/education/parents/articles/tips/tip.htm](http://www.nj.gov/education/parents/articles/tips/tip.htm).

## Attendance & reading are yearlong priorities

As the end of the school year approaches—often along with state testing—good attendance is still important. Kids who arrive on time and prepared (with plenty of sleep, a full breakfast and school supplies) have a better chance of doing their best. And a daily dose of reading is critical, too. After all, most tests involve reading. Try to spend at least 10 minutes a day reading with your child.



## Try making flash cards online

Studying with flash cards is helpful for many students. But making them can be tedious. To spice things up for your child, help him try the Time for Kids “flash-card maker” at [www.timeforkids.com/homework-helper/study-helper/flashcard-maker](http://www.timeforkids.com/homework-helper/study-helper/flashcard-maker). Using it is easy and fun!



## Read about spring cleaning safety



Will your older child be helping you with household cleaning chores this spring? Reading safety labels is an example of how reading is essential to our daily lives. With your child:

- **Read the safety labels** on cleaning products before beginning chores.
- **Have your child** explain the label directions to you after reading them to be sure she understands.

**Source:** “Poison Prevention for Big Kids At Home,” National Safe Kids Campaign, [www.safekids.org/safety-basics/big-kids/at-home/poison-prevention.html](http://www.safekids.org/safety-basics/big-kids/at-home/poison-prevention.html).

## Bookmarks can make textbook reading more productive

Reading a textbook is different than reading a novel. Sometimes it's harder to stay focused on a textbook. To help with this, place three bookmarks throughout your child's textbook. One goes toward the beginning of the reading assignment. Another goes in the middle. A third goes at the end. Explain that:



- **When your child reaches the first bookmark**, she should jot down how the book's features (such as subheadings and charts) have helped her understand what she has read.
- **When your child reaches the second bookmark**, she should try to summarize what she has learned so far.
- **When your child reaches the third bookmark**, have her write down what she remembers most about the reading. Then spend some time talking about it.

Source: C. Forsten and J. Grant, *Differentiating Textbooks*, Crystal Springs Books.

## Improve comprehension in a surprising way

Which would help a child remember more after reading: an easy-to-read font (print type) or a tougher-to-read one?

In a study, kids remembered more after reading the tougher font! Why? Researchers suspect it required more focus, so the students learned more. This doesn't mean, however, that kids should have to read unappealing print!

Instead, it shows the importance of paying attention. Thankfully, there are other ways to accomplish this. You and your child might take



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turns reading aloud, for example. Or your child might follow along with his finger while reading. Such simple steps may lead to better concentration—and learning!

Source: C. Hebblethwaite, "Making things hard to read 'can boost learning,'" BBC, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-11573666](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-11573666).



**Q: My child loves math—but will do anything to avoid reading. How can I combine the two?**

**A:** There are many books about math subjects, such as *Why Pi?* by Johnny Ball. You can also do reading activities that involve math. For example, read sale signs (such as "20% off all shirts" or "Buy one pair of shoes, get the second pair free.") Have your child figure out how much you'd pay for certain items. And challenge her to solve interesting word problems, too!

Do you have a question about reading? Email [readingadvisor@parent-institute.com](mailto:readingadvisor@parent-institute.com).

## Help struggling readers gain interest in books

To find high-interest books for older students reading below grade level, look for books by publisher Barrington Stoke ([www.barringtonstoke.co.uk](http://www.barringtonstoke.co.uk)). These children's books combine interesting topics with short chapters and simple vocabulary—resulting in stories that will have even the most reluctant readers begging for more!



## For lower elementary readers:

- **LMNO Peas** by Keith Baker (Beach Lane Books). Reviewing letters is fun with this book's pea-sized characters. Kids enjoy hearing the tale aloud—and inspecting pictures closely.



- **First Grade Jitters** by Robert Quackenbush (HarperCollins). This popular story has been re-illustrated for today's students, who still worry, "What will school be like next year?"

## For upper elementary readers:

- **Sent** by Margaret Peterson Haddix (Simon & Schuster). Two 13-year-old boys have been kidnapped from another time. What will happen when they're sent into the past?
- **The Magical Ms. Plum** by Bonnie Becker (Yearling). Every student does well with star teacher Ms. Plum. But why? The answer is in her special supply closet!

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