

# BUILDING READERS

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

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Educational Service Unit 10

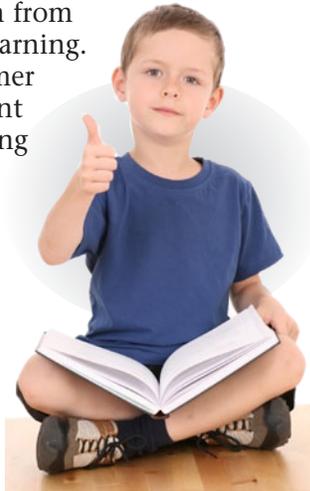
## To help students beat the summer slide, any book is better than no book at all!

Summer vacation should be just a vacation from school, not a vacation from reading and learning. Many studies have documented the “summer slide”—that children can lose the equivalent of *two months’* worth of being taught reading and spelling skills.

But this doesn’t mean you have to turn into a teacher all summer! A new study found that simply **making sure kids read what interests them** significantly decreases the summer slide.

The biggest surprise was that children who read over the summer improved their reading skills *no matter what they read!* So if your child would rather read about skateboarding than a classic novel or prefers graphic novels to traditional paperbacks, don’t panic. Remember this: *That* he’s reading is more important than *what* he’s reading.

**Source:** T. Parker-Pope, “Summer Must-Read for Kids? Any Book,” The New York Times, <http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/08/02/summer-must-read-for-kids-any-book/?scp=1&sq=Summer%20Must-Read%20for%20Kids%20Any%20Book&st=cse>.



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### Strong skills help on multiple-choice tests

Children tackle multiple-choice questions often at school, and reading skills help a lot. Share these tips for answering multiple-choice questions with your child:

- **Read them carefully.** Notice key words, such as *who*, *what*, *when* and *where*. Also pay attention to tricky words like *not* and *except*. (“Which of these does not describe the Civil War?”)
- **Think about the answer.** Before looking at the choices, put the answer in your own words. Then see if an option matches what you were thinking.
- **Read every choice.** If you think you see the answer immediately, still consider all the possibilities. One may be more complete than another.
- **Eliminate wrong answers.** Even if you don’t know the right answer, you may recognize wrong answers. Cross them off to boost your chances of guessing correctly.

**Source:** Jennifer Humphries, *Know It All!* ISBN: 0-375-76378-3, Random House.

### Reading together now positively impacts your child’s later success

Research shows many high schoolers don’t read well enough to use textbooks properly or to go on to college. Fixing this problem, experts say, starts when kids are much younger.

Parents can help by making reading a family priority. Let your child have a say in what you read together. Talk about materials, and show that reading is fun. Keep audio books handy, too, for times when reading isn’t possible.

**Source:** J. Kuersten, “Motivating Your Child to Read,” National PTA, [www.pta.org/2525.htm](http://www.pta.org/2525.htm).



### Find fun and help at Dr. Seuss site

Dr. Seuss books appeal to kids (and adults!) of all ages.

So does the Dr. Seuss online site, *Seussville.com*. It

has activities for kids and information for parents, including recommendations for which books are best for different ages.



### Get involved in your child’s reading!

What’s the top predictor of how well a child will read? Parent involvement!

Research shows that when kids read more at home and at school, they do better on reading tests.

Help your child by setting a good example. Read yourself. Keep books around the house. And enjoy reading together.

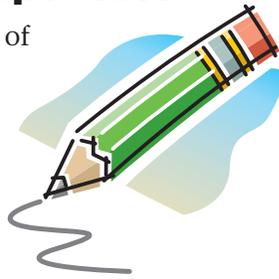
**Source:** “How Parents Help Reading Achievement,” Scholastic.com, [www.scholastic.com/administrator/success/parent.htm](http://www.scholastic.com/administrator/success/parent.htm).



## Make writing a rewarding experience

Writing is an important and valuable part of life. Help your child realize that it's:

- **Practical.** Ask your child to help make shopping and to-do lists. He can write reminders and instructions, too.
- **Professional.** Pretend you and your child are coworkers. Exchange memos, letters, reports and proposals.
- **Friendly.** It's fun to write letters to friends and relatives. When someone gives your child a gift, have him write a thank-you note.
- **Therapeutic.** Writing about feelings is different than talking about them. Some children find it helpful to keep a diary or journal.



**Source:** "Help Your Child Learn to Write Well," U.S. Department of Education, [www2.ed.gov/pubs/parents/Writing/index.html](http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/parents/Writing/index.html).

## Children can check comprehension

Sometimes kids read materials but don't understand them. Research suggests they should stop when a word (or a part of the reading) doesn't make sense and look for context clues or reread that section. Then, if they're still confused, kids should ask for help.



**Source:** M. Pressley, "Comprehension Instruction: What Works," Reading Rockets, [www.readingrockets.org/article/68](http://www.readingrockets.org/article/68).

## For lower elementary readers:

- *Uh-oh, Cleo* by Jessica Harper (Putnam). Uh oh! A minor accident sends eight-year-old Cleo to the doctor for stitches. This story is a good introduction to chapter books.
- *Oh No! (Or How My Science Project Destroyed the World)* by Mac Barnett (Hyperion). A girl's science project—a robot—is out of control! Comic-book style pictures add to the tale's excitement.



## For upper elementary readers:

- *Storyteller* by Patricia Reilly Giff (Wendy Lamb Books). When young Elizabeth goes to live with her aunt and uncle, she discovers fascinating stories about the past.
- *The Unusual Mind of Vincent Shadow* by Tim Kehoe (Little, Brown). Eleven-year-old Vincent has an incredible skill: inventing toys! Winning a toy invention contest could be just the boost he needs.

## Record thoughts in a reading journal

Summer is a perfect time to relax with books. When your child finishes one, suggest that she write about it in a reading journal. She can answer thought-provoking questions such as:

- **Did your opinion** of the book change while you read it? How?
- **What would it be like** to be one of the characters?
- **How did you feel** while reading the book?
- **If you could change** anything about the book, what would it be?
- **Are you interested** in reading other books by this author?
- **Would you recommend** this book to someone else? Why or why not?



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**Source:** E. Lombardi, "How To Keep a Reading Log or Book Journal," About.com, [http://classclit.about.com/od/forstudents/ht/aa\\_readinglog.htm](http://classclit.about.com/od/forstudents/ht/aa_readinglog.htm).



**Q:** I want my child to rely on books more than television for entertainment. How much should I let him watch?

**A:** Experts say kids spend no more than one to two hours per day on "screen time." (This includes watching TV, going online and playing video games.) Unfortunately, many kids exceed this limit. Enforcing screen time rules is tough, but critical. It's also important to make reading appealing. Take reading time outside or allow your child to stay up a little later to read.

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

## Building Readers®

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Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

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Writer: Susan O'Brien.

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