

# BUILDING READERS®

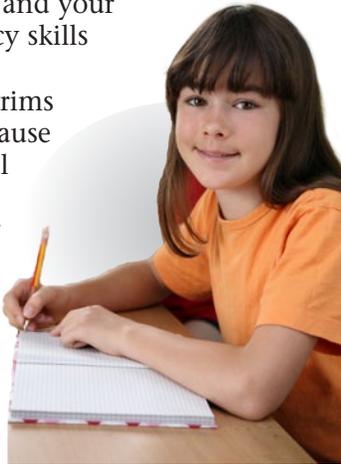
How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

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Educational Service Unit 10

## Thanksgiving offers literacy opportunities

Holidays can mean more than big meals and football games on TV. They can also offer you and your child a great chance to work on literacy skills together. Here are some ideas:

- **Work on writing.** In the U.S., the Pilgrims observed the first Thanksgiving because they were thankful for their survival in a new land. Have your child write a list of things for which your family is thankful. Post the list.
- **Read the poem** “Over the River and Through the Woods” by Lydia Maria Child with your child. It tells the story of a Thanksgiving long ago. As a family, write a story about your own holiday traditions.
- **Set aside some extra time** for reading aloud. Consider delaying bedtime over the holiday for a longer reading time.



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“It is not enough to simply teach children to read;  
we have to give them something worth reading.  
Something that will stretch their imaginations ... .”

—Katherine Patterson

## Build vocabulary by using words naturally

You’re reading a book aloud, and you come to a word your child doesn’t know. Should you stop and teach it to him? Experts say parents should try to naturally:

- **Provide an easy-to-understand definition.** “Asphalt is the black stuff used to make roads.”
- **Give an example of how the word is used.** “The driveway at our house is made of *asphalt*.”
- **Suggest that your child use the word.** “I bet you can make up a sentence that includes *asphalt*. Go for it!”
- **Use the word repeatedly.** Over the next week and more, make a point of using the new word in conversation.

Source: “Building Your Child’s Vocabulary,” Reading Rockets, [www.readingrockets.org/article/32444](http://www.readingrockets.org/article/32444).

## Teach about verbs and adverbs with a grammar game

To work on your child’s grammar, try verb-adverb charades. Write the same number of verbs and adverbs on index cards (one word per card). One player picks a verb, such as *run*, and acts it out. When someone guesses it, the player then chooses an adverb, such as *slowly*, and acts it out with the verb. (This sample player would act out *running slowly*.) Whoever guesses the adverb can be the next player.



Source: “Teaching Grammar Without the Hammer,” Education World, <http://tinyurl.com/69ye4r4>.

## Simplify long pages of reading

Textbooks require lots of reading. If your child is intimidated by seeing many words on one page, have him use a sheet of paper to cover some of the words. This way, he’ll focus on one paragraph at a time. As your child reads down the page, he can move the paper down to uncover more paragraphs.



## Synonyms and antonyms add variety to your child’s writing

Kids need to learn about *synonyms* (words that mean the same thing) and *antonyms* (words with opposite meanings) because they help with reading and jazz up writing. Imagine your child is describing a character who is incredibly *happy*.

It’s time to get out a thesaurus! She can look up synonyms and find *ecstatic* or *jubilant*. Or maybe the character isn’t happy. Your child might look up antonyms and find *depressed* or *morose*.



## Tackle book reports together

Your child has to write a book report, and she's not sure where to start—or finish! Guide her through basic steps, such as:

- **Choose an appealing book.** Make sure it matches her interests and abilities.
- **Take notes while reading.** Use an “organizer”—a worksheet that organizes information.
- **Write an introduction.** Include the book's title, author and genre (mystery, how-to, etc.).
- **Summarize the plot,** characters, setting and storyline.
- **Add a conclusion.** Include opinions about the book. Was it enjoyable? Why or why not?
- **Edit.** Read the report and have someone else read it, too. Make it the best it can be!



**Source:** “Book Report,” Time for Kids, [www.timeforkids.com/homework-helper/a-plus-papers/book-report](http://www.timeforkids.com/homework-helper/a-plus-papers/book-report).

## Try biographical nonfiction

Many kids stick with fiction when choosing books at the library. But don't overlook biographies and autobiographies! They're exciting because the stories are true. Explain that to your child. Then ask, “Who would you like to learn about?” Look for books about that person's life.



## For lower elementary readers:

- ***Are You Awake?*** by Sophie Blackall (Henry Holt and Co.). Edward isn't ready to sleep. He's curious about a lot of things! Despite his mom's answers, the questions keep coming.
- ***Press Here*** by Hervé Tullet (Chronicle Books). Follow the directions in this interactive book to find out just how fun simple dots can be! And check out the free activity sheets at <http://bit.ly/mkOcGD>.



## For upper elementary readers:

- ***Cars on Mars*** by Alexandra Siy (Charlesbridge). What is it like on Mars? Two real-life rovers, *Spirit* and *Opportunity*, find out—and the details (including photos) are amazing.
- ***Happy Happy Clover*** by Sayuri Tatsuyama (VIZ Media). This story about a bunny's adventures is told in comic-book style, which may appeal to reluctant readers.

## Reading can strengthen math concepts, too

Math skills go beyond adding and subtracting. Reading is an excellent way to introduce and practice other math concepts. While reading, your child can:

- **Compare and contrast.** For example, how are two characters alike? How are they different?
- **Make illustrations.** Have him pay attention to details and how they can be presented as graphs and charts.
- **Look for sequences.** How does the story progress? What parts lead to a whole? Name the conflict and how it's resolved.
- **Solve problems** in different ways. How else could the story have ended? Are there



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new ways to reach the same conclusion?

**Source:** C. Vanwilligen, “Reading and Mathematics: Integration in the Classroom,” [suite101.com](http://suite101.com), [www.suite101.com/article.cfm/math\\_education/14761/2](http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/math_education/14761/2).



**Q:** My child picks books that are too challenging. Then she gives up after one chapter. How can I help her make better choices?

**A:** Choose a few books that match her reading level. (She should be able to read a full page without struggling with more than about five words.)

Then let her pick her favorite. If she needs an extra boost, read part of it aloud. Consider taking turns reading to each other.

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

## Building Readers®

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