

BUILDING READERS

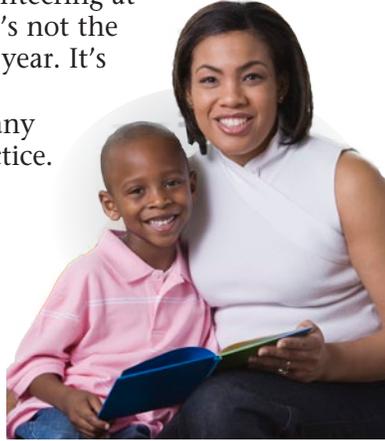
How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

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Educational Service Unit 10

Your help improves children's reading skills

Research shows that when families get involved, students' reading scores go up! Volunteering at school is a great way to help—but it's not the only way to support your child this year. It's also important to:

- **Read with your child at home.** Like any skill, reading gets easier with practice. It's good for kids to read outside of school, so make this part of your family routine. You might read together after dinner or at bedtime each night. Always be sure to choose materials your child will enjoy.
- **Make reading accessible.** When you visit the library, look for all kinds of reading material. Some kids love biographies, for example, while others prefer novels, magazines or comics. Have these materials around the house so there's always something tempting for your child to read.



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Source: "Parent Involvement," Anchorage School District, www.asdk12.org/parents/involvement/.

Find out about reading program now

It's a new school year and a new chance for reading success! Whether your child excels or struggles in language arts, learn about the school's reading program and what to expect this year. Talk with the teacher about:

- **Reading levels.** How are reading skills assessed at school? What do levels mean? How can parents use them to help kids pick good books?
- **Progress.** How often is reading evaluated at school? When and how do parents receive results? How can you help your child make the most progress?

Communicate with your child's teacher now to set the stage for the entire year. Introduce yourself and show your enthusiasm about working together. Ask about the best ways to help your child with reading at home. The teacher—and your child—will see how important reading is to your family.

Comprehension is the key to your child's reading success

Your child is assigned a chapter to read for homework. When she closes the book, she's done, right? Not so fast! Include some time in your family's homework routine to make sure your child understood what she read. Ask her to tell you the story or information in her own words. Request details, such as where events took place or which character she liked best.



Be a human thesaurus!

Here's a vocabulary game to play with your child. Choose a word. Then challenge yourselves to think of as many words as possible with similar meanings. (Set a time limit, such as five minutes.) Finally, look up the word in a thesaurus. Are all of your suggestions there?



Journals bring joy and benefits



Journal writing helps children explore their feelings, track progress toward goals and enjoy writing. To encourage this, assure your child that journals don't require correct spelling or grammar. They can be private. And your child can choose when and how often to write. Suggest that he write the date on each entry so they all make more sense later. Rereading a journal later is one of its rewards!

Source: "Write On! Help Your Child Start a Journal," Brigham and Women's Hospital, <http://healthlibrary.brighamandwomens.org/library/wellness/1,86>.

Reading counts when it comes to your child's math success

Reading and math may not seem related, but they are. Students often have to read—and reread—math textbooks to understand new concepts. They must also learn math vocabulary words and solve word problems. You can help by saying things like:



- **“Did you read everything on the page, including the charts and diagrams?”**
- **“How would you state that problem in your own words?”**
- **“What new math terms have you learned?”**
- **“What information are you trying to figure out?”**
- **“Circle the most important words in that problem.”**
- **“Cross out the least important words in that problem.”**

Source: “Reading and Writing Count in Math,” Peel District School Board, www.peel.edu.on.ca/parents/tips/lit-math.htm.

Turn reading into a social activity with friends

Children who only read what is required for school can fall behind in their reading skills. Reading with others can sharpen those skills, however. Think of creative ways to blend friends and books. Try having a:

- **Book swap.** Have your child invite friends over to exchange and talk about their favorite books.
- **Joke party.** Invite children to bring books with jokes or riddles. Let them take turns reading aloud to the group.
- **Play-reading party.** Give a copy of a short, easy-to-read play script to all guests. Encourage them to be dramatic and ham it up.



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Source: Mary Leonhardt, “Bringing Books to Life,” *Family Fun*, Disney.



Q: My child dreads reading textbooks. How can I make it more pleasant and productive?

A: Sit down with your child and notice what makes it difficult. The amount of reading? Disinterest in the subject? New vocabulary words? Then work on a solution. You might take turns reading, review vocabulary words, or take breaks for lively discussion about the topic. Also talk with the teacher about helpful steps.

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

Celebrate what your child reads

How many books will your child read this year? Help him create a standard form like this:



- **Title:**
 - **Author:**
 - **Date I finished reading this book:**
 - **I liked this story because:**
- Each time your child finishes a story, help him fill out a form for it. Keep the forms in a decorated folder. Look at the folder together often.

For lower elementary readers:

- ***The Wolves are Back*** by Jean Craighead George (Dutton). What happens when wolves are removed from, and then returned to, the wild? Detailed pictures enhance this amazing tale.
- ***Redwoods*** by Jason Chin (Flashpoint). The author combines a picture-book adventure with interesting facts about redwoods. This helps the story appeal to beginning and advanced readers.



For upper elementary readers:

- ***Umbrella Summer*** by Lisa Graff (HarperCollins). Annie Richards' brother died. Does that mean the world is unsafe? A new neighbor helps her find out.
- ***Turtle in Paradise*** by Jennifer L. Holm (Random House). It's 1935 when 11-year-old Turtle is sent to live with relatives in Florida. Instead of hiding, she comes out of her shell.

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