

Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Title I Cooperative
Educational Service Unit 10

Reading for information is important, takes practice

Writing research reports can be tough for even the best readers. Instead of reading for entertainment, your child has to read for a purpose: to find information. This skill takes practice. To help your child get started with it:

- **Offer a “road map.”** Look at the table of contents and the index together. Talk about where to find the information she needs. Show your child how to look up bold-faced words in the book’s glossary. Do these things before your child starts reading so her reading time will be more productive.
- **Clarify the material.** Research books can be confusing. If this is the case, help her find books with easier vocabulary to introduce her to the main ideas of her topic.

Source: Betty Holcomb, “The Research Report Blues,” Scholastic, <http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=1537>.



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Compare and contrast books and movies

Chances are your child has enjoyed a movie based on a book—or a book based on a movie! Next time this happens, compare the versions. Instead of just asking which one was better, probe for details, such as:

- **What was added?** For example, the movie might have a narrator, new characters or an unexpected romance.
- **What was missing?** Perhaps the movie focuses on the story’s action, while the book is more emotional.
- **What was emphasized?** Were certain characters, themes or qualities played up or toned down? What stood out the most?
- **What did your child like or dislike?** Was the movie or book what he expected? What, if anything, would he change about them?

Source: Evelyn Porreca Vuko, *Teacher Says*, ISBN: 0-399-52997-7 (The Berkley Publishing Group, www.penguin.com).

Connect reading and math



Does your child like reading but struggle in math? Make reading part of the solution. Many children’s books help with counting, numbers and math concepts. For example, Greg Tang’s *The Grapes of Math* focuses on patterns and grouping. Its catchy, rhyming words help readers solve puzzles.

Source: Martin D. Hartog and Patricia A. Brosnan, “Doing Mathematics with Your Child: ERIC Digest,” Math.com, www.math.com/parents/articles/domath.html.

Library leaders name top websites for children



Children love to use computers. Encourage your child to learn while enjoying his computer time. When your child wants to play a game online, check out the American Library Association’s list of “Great Web Sites for Kids.” Find it at www.ala.org/greatsites.

Study finds more ways to improve reading skills



When parents read with kids, we know it boosts reading skills! Now a study finds that having lots of books at home also helps. Encouraging children to play with reading materials and games is also good. Even an orderly, less chaotic home with routines (like a regular bedtime) can improve reading success.

Source: Debra Lau Whelan, “An Orderly Home Affects Early Literacy Skills, Study Says,” *School Library Journal*, www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA6638990.html.

Reluctant readers need support of parents

If your child resists reading, don't give up. There are ways to help! First, make sure your child is able to read well. Discuss any concerns with her teacher. Then follow some advice from reading expert Dr. Marie Carbo. She explains that:

- **In the past, reading was the best entertainment around.** Now kids have lots of other options—like TV and video games. Try to grab your child's interest with topics she can't resist. For example, look for books based on her favorite TV shows. Or find articles about people she admires.
- **The less kids read, the less interested they are in reading.** That's because they aren't building their skills, so books become more intimidating. Instead of forcing your child to read aloud to you, start by reading aloud to her. This familiarizes her with the material. Then she'll be more comfortable and motivated to read it herself.

Source: Anne Svensen, "When Kids Hate to Read," Reading Rockets, www.readingrockets.org/article/200.

Help your child develop a strong vocabulary

To be good writers, kids need good vocabularies. To help your child develop his vocabulary, encourage him to:

- **Examine the context** of new words. See if he can tell what a word means by the text around it.
- **Look up words** he doesn't know in the dictionary. Keep a list of new words and their meanings in a special notebook.
- **Learn the roots of words.** See how many words he can think of that contain the same root—*predict*, *verdict*,



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dictionary and *dictate*, for example.

- **Play word games** like Scrabble®. Do crossword and other word puzzles.
- **Read!** The more he reads, the more new words he'll encounter.



Q. What grammar skills should I practice with my child?

A. Start with the basics, including capitalization, parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives) and punctuation (periods, question marks and exclamation points). Review quotation marks as well. To make practice fun, write sentences with mistakes in them. Then let your child correct your work!

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



For lower elementary readers:

Andy Shane and the Queen of Egypt by Jennifer Richard Jacobson (Candlewick). Delores is Andy's friend, but she's also bossy. Should they work together on a school project? Andy must decide.

Bubble Trouble by Margaret Mahy (Clarion). Uh oh! Mabel's baby brother is stuck in a floating bubble! Readers may enjoy the book's tongue twisters as much as its plot.

For upper elementary readers:

Into the Volcano by Don Wood (Blue Sky Press). How will two brothers be able to escape the danger of an erupting volcano? Comic-book style art adds to the drama of this thrilling story.

Moonshot: The Flight of Apollo 11 by Brian Floca (Atheneum). What is it like to reach the moon? This book for readers young and old provides striking artistic and factual details.

Look for reading incentives



Reading shouldn't be all about rewards. But an occasional incentive can be fun. Check your local library for contests that offer a small prize for reading a certain number of books. Or create your own—for example, go out for a treat after your child has read two chapter books.

Source: Reading Is Fundamental, "What Parents Can Do: Reading Tips From Kids," www.readingrockets.org/article/191.

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