BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Thomaston Bears

Spice up your ordinary reading routines

Reading with your child every day is one of the most important things you can do to help him succeed in school. To build your child's excitement about reading:

- **Find new reading spots.** Pick fun, unusual places to read. Build a fort with blankets and couch cushions. Or, bundle up and read outside.
- **Read as a team.** Have your child follow words with his finger while you read. Or, take turns reading pages to each other.
- **Plan a performance.** Choose a favorite passage to recite and help your child master it. Gather an audience to admire his skills.
- **Celebrate reading success.** When he reaches a goal (such as 100 reading minutes in a week), do something special!

"Whenever you read a good book, somewhere in the world a door opens to allow in more light."
—Vera Nazarian

Three ways to maintain your child's enthusiasm for reading

Even a child who loves reading can lose interest over time. Other hobbies can take up time that she once spent on reading. To keep your child's passion for reading alive:

1. **Use her current interests** as a springboard. You might offer your child a biography of her favorite athlete or singer.
2. **Respect her growing maturity.** Share interesting books or articles with your child. You might say, "I just read a great story online. I thought you might want to read it."
3. **Show you value her opinions.** Does your child like the book she is reading for English class? What does she think of the main character in the novel she is reading?

Create homemade greeting cards

Making greeting cards is a creative activity that involves reading and writing. With your child, make a list of birthdays, holidays and other events. Have her create a special card for each. She can decorate the front of a folded sheet of paper and write a short message inside.

Encourage her to read cards she sees in stores to get ideas about what to write.

Children need fluency role models

Did you know that just by reading to your child, you are building his fluency? When you set an example by reading smoothly—with emotion and enthusiasm—you show that good reading is similar to talking. It flows with ease.

You might also enjoy listening to audiobooks together and attending library story times.

Serve the community by reading aloud to others

Does your child enjoy reading aloud? If so, she can brighten other people's days by reading to them.

Together, research places where you and your child can volunteer to read to others. Look into local day care centers, nursing homes and hospitals. Not only will your child nurture her own love of reading, she'll also be sharing it with others.

Follow A–R–C when reading textbooks

Reading a textbook is a lot different from reading a novel. Yet students don't always have the skills they need to get the most from their textbooks. Go over the A-R-C method—Associate, Read, Connect—with your child. Encourage him to:

- **Associate.** Before reading, help him think about what he already knows about the subject. He should skim the chapter and look at the pictures, headings and words in bold type. Your child can also write down questions he expects to answer as he reads.
- **Read.** Your child should read one section, then stop. Does he understand what he just read? If not, he should reread it.
- **Connect.** Have your child go back and answer the questions he brainstormed at the beginning of the chapter. He can also answer the questions at the end of the chapter.

Practice using synonyms and antonyms with the whole family

Here's a way to work on *synonyms* (words with the same meaning) and *antonyms* (words with the opposite meaning) with your child during family time. Divide two pieces of paper into three columns. Then:

1. **In the first column,** describe yourselves in positive terms. For example, "I am … kind, generous."
2. **In the second column,** write a synonym for each word. ("I am … nice, giving.")
3. **In the third column,** write an antonym for each word. ("I am not … mean, stingy.")
4. **Exchange pages.** Read about each other. Then play the game again— this time describing the other person.

Q: I gave my child a journal, but he doesn't want to use it. How can I encourage him to write in it?

A: Journals are great for building reading and writing skills, but some kids don't want to write about their daily activities and feelings. They may respond, however, to prompts. Suggest that your child start entries with fun things like, "If I could design a school, I would …" or "If I could have one superpower it would be … ."

Use the dictionary to boost vocabulary

Open a dictionary to any page. Have your child point to a place on the page without looking. Then, try to define the word closest to where your child pointed. Take turns being the pointer and guesser. A correct definition equals one point. See who can get to 15 points first.

For lower elementary readers:

- *Luke on the Loose* by Harry Bliss. What's it like to be a pigeon in New York? Luke finds out when he chases a flock in this comic-book adventure.
- *Chloe and the Lion* by Mac Barnett. When Chloe gets lost in the woods, an argument breaks out between this book's author and illustrator, who have different views of how the story should end.

For upper elementary readers:

- *Adventures in Cartooning* by James Sturm, Andrew Arnold and Alexis-Frederick Frost. This humorous story is told in comic-book style— all while explaining how kids can create comics themselves.
- *The New Kid* by Mavis Jukes. Carson is moving from a small school where he knows everyone to a new town and a new school. Join him for all of the adventures he has in store!

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