

# BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

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## Suggest ways for your child to practice writing every day

Reading and writing go hand in hand. The more your child reads, the better his vocabulary and ability to construct complex sentences will be. In turn, your child's improved writing ability will improve his reading ability! To encourage your child to write every day, suggest that he:



- **Keep a journal** in which he writes about his thoughts and his day's activities.
- **Write notes and letters** to friends and family members.
- **Create text** to go along with wordless picture books.
- **Continue a favorite story** by writing a sequel.
- **Convert a book** into a play by writing a script. Then, he can perform it for the family!
- **Maintain a log** of all the books he reads.

*"Sleep is good, he said, and books are better."*

—George R.R. Martin

## Teach your child how to read for meaning

Even though your child may be able to sound out all the words on a page, it's important that she understand what those words mean. To make sure your child is reading for meaning:

- **Set aside a regular time for reading** every day. This indicates to your child that it's time to grab a book.
- **Encourage reading aloud.** When your child says the words on the page out loud, it may help her focus on the meaning of those words.
- **Suggest ways to interact** with the text. When your child asks questions or makes predictions about what she reads, she is thinking critically about the text. That helps her understand its meaning.
- **Keep a dictionary handy.** This way, your child can easily and quickly look up unfamiliar words to ensure she knows what they mean.

## Mnemonic devices help kids remember information

To help your child remember long lists of information, teach her how to use *mnemonic* devices. A mnemonic device is a memory aid. For example, if your child is learning the names of the Great Lakes in her social studies class, she can use the acronym HOMES to remember Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie and Superior!



**Source:** "Using Mnemonics to Improve Your Memory," Psychologist World, [niswc.com/usingmnemonics](http://niswc.com/usingmnemonics).

## Offer a variety of reading material

Suggest that your child read books and magazines on many different topics. This will help her learn about new things and discover new interests. And she'll be strengthening her reading skills in the process!



## Patience pays off in textbook reading

Some kids rush through reading assignments just to be finished quickly. But when they do that, they miss out on learning. When reading a textbook, your child should:



- **Skim the text**, noticing main ideas.
- **Turn headings into questions**, and then answer them by reading the text.
- **Restate main ideas** after each section.
- **Pause and review** what he learned.

**Source:** "Textbook Reading Systems," Center for Learning & Teaching, Cornell University, [niswc.com/textbookreadingmethod](http://niswc.com/textbookreadingmethod).

## Build your child's vocabulary with synonyms and antonyms

One of the best ways to expand vocabulary is by looking for *synonyms*—words that have the same or almost the same meaning—and *antonyms*—words that mean the opposite. For example, instead of saying something is *large*, your child could say it's *colossal* or *gigantic*. And instead of the opposite of large being *small*, he could also say that it's *miniscule* or *infinitesimal*.



A thesaurus is a useful reference work for children who want to improve their vocabulary because it contains both synonyms and antonyms. Show your child a thesaurus online and look for one in print the next time you're at the library.

Encourage your child to use synonyms and antonyms by playing a word game. You give a word and ask him to give you a synonym (or an antonym). Then switch places.

**Source:** "Challenge Your Child to Learn and Use Synonyms and Antonyms," *What Parents Can Do to Help Students with Vocabulary*, The Parent Institute.

## Integrate TV time and reading time

With a little planning, the television can become an effective tool for learning. You can even use it to encourage your child to read. To use the TV to promote reading:

- **Have your child read** reviews and descriptions of TV shows and movies with you. Decide together if you'll watch them.
- **Encourage your child to look** up new words and concepts that she hears on TV.
- **Watch the news with your child** (making sure that it's age-appropriate). Then, look in the newspaper or online to learn more about current events.



- **Look for books and articles** that relate to a story that interests your child.

**Source:** "Learning Partners – Let's Use TV!" KidSource Online, [niswc.com/usingtv](http://niswc.com/usingtv).



**Q:** My child has trouble reading. Will his reading struggles hurt his comprehension?

**A:** When kids struggle to read, sometimes they're so busy trying to figure out words that they don't absorb information. Work with the teacher to find ways to increase your child's fluency (ease of reading). As his fluency improves, so will comprehension. You can also talk with your child about the material he's reading before, during and after he reads it.

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

## Encourage rereading to improve fluency

When your child rereads a favorite book, it builds her *fluency*, or the ease with which she reads. Familiarity with the words she's reading helps your child pick up speed. And this will help your child become a more confident reader!



## For lower elementary readers:

- ***A Second is a Hiccup: A Child's Book of Time*** by Hazel Hutchins (Arthur A. Levine Books). How long is a second, a day or a week? This book explores all a child can do within certain lengths of time.
- ***Ish*** by Peter H. Reynolds (Candlewick Press). Ramon loves to draw, but he's discouraged when his brother tells him his drawing of a vase doesn't look realistic. That is, until his sister tells him that it looks vase-ish!

## For upper elementary readers:

- ***Nuts*** by Kacy Cook (Two Lions). When Nell and her brothers find two baby squirrels in their yard, the children's lives change. Together, they figure out a way to take care of the animals.
- ***Rosalie, My Rosalie: The Tale of a Duckling*** by Jacquelyn Mitchard (HarperCollins Publishers). Henry wants a little more excitement in her life—like a baby sibling or a cat. Instead, she gets a pet duck she promptly names Rosalie.



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