

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Westview Elementary School
Mr. Alan Buttimer, Principal

Expose your child to rich, varied vocabulary

Having a robust vocabulary is essential to your child's development as a reader. The more words she knows, the more she'll understand when she's reading!

To build your child's vocabulary:

- **Read aloud often.** Even when your child is older, reading aloud is one of the best ways to expose her to new words.
- **Model curiosity.** Ask questions about new words. Talk about what they might or might not mean. Explain your reasoning to your child. When she is reading on her own, she'll be able to imitate this process in order to figure out the meanings of new words.



Source: G. Pappalardo, "Techniques for Teaching Vocabulary to Elementary Students," edutopia.com, niswc.com/vocabularytechniques.

"Education begins the gentleman, but reading, good company and reflection must finish him."

—John Locke

The newspaper encourages critical thinking

When kids read, they benefit from thinking critically and analytically about the material. To help your child build his critical thinking abilities, get a newspaper. Then, you can:

- **Look through the newspaper** and choose something age-appropriate to discuss with your child. Does he find your choice of articles interesting? Why or why not?
- **Scan the paper together.** See what topics appeal to your child. Guide him to articles that may interest him, such as ones on science or sports. Talk about what he reads. How does it relate to his life? Would he like to read more articles like that?
- **Start a scrapbook of favorite clippings.** Perhaps you laughed about a comic or debated a certain article's viewpoint. Make a weekly habit of adding clips to your collection.

Source: S.D. Garrett, "Developing Comprehension and Research Skills with the Newspaper," Reading Rockets, niswc.com/newspapercomprehension.

Task your child with reading the weather

Put your child in charge of the weather report. Each evening, ask him to read tomorrow's forecast in the paper or online. Then he can tell the family how to dress the next day. Not only will he be practicing a bit of reading each day, he'll also see science in action as he observes trends in the weather.



Show off your child's writing

Post your child's writing efforts on the refrigerator alongside his drawings! Or "publish" his collected written work in a special volume. Make a construction paper cover and punch holes in the paper. Tie everything together with string. When your child sees his work showcased, he may be more inclined to write!



Let license plates inspire letter-based fun!

Use the license plates you see while on the go to inspire a letter-based game. Have your child call out the letters on a license plate she sees. Take turns thinking of silly phrases that use words beginning with those letters.

For example, if the letters on the plate are YPZ, you might say, "young painted zebras" or "yellow potted zinnias." The person who thinks up the wackiest phrase wins!

Source: "License Plate Lingo," PBS Between the Lions, niswc.com/licenseplatealphabet.



Teach grammar lessons by allowing your child to correct mistakes

Everyone makes mistakes, and it can be fun for your child to see you make mistakes—especially if he can correct them! To help your child practice basic grammar skills, challenge him to “edit” your work:



- 1. Write down several sentences** that contain errors. Leave out a period, for example, or use lowercase letters when you should capitalize. Also add incorrect punctuation marks, such as a period instead of a question mark. (“i went to the store on friday” or “did you see that dog today.”)
- 2. Have your child review your sentences.** He should mark his edits on your paper.
- 3. When your child is finished,** review and admire his work. Need to simplify the task? Make the same mistakes in every sentence. For example, “All of these sentences need to start with a capital letter and end with a period. Can you fix them?”

Use coupons to turn shopping into a reading experience

If you use coupons while grocery shopping, let your child help you—and work on her reading skills. Before going to the store, ask your child to write a shopping list based on the coupons you plan to use. At the store, have her read the list aloud to you, find the coupons you need and match them to the correct products.



For lower elementary readers:

- ***My Teacher is a Monster (No, I Am Not)*** by Peter Brown (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers). Bobby thinks that his teacher, Mrs. Kirby, is a monster! But when he sees her in the park, his views begin to change.
- ***Whale Trails: Before and Now*** by Lesa Cline-Ransome (Christy Ottaviano Books). Hop aboard the *Cuffee* and go whale watching with a child and her father. Along the way, learn about how whale expeditions have changed over time.



For upper elementary readers:

- ***Starring Jules (as Herself)*** by Beth Ain (Scholastic Press). Jules has a lot of pizzazz. And she has a lot to accomplish, from writing jingles to starring in TV commercials!
- ***Yellowstone Moran: Painting the American West*** by Lita Judge (Viking). Tom Moran was a talented artist who became a great explorer in a land called the Yellowstone.

Graphic organizers are helpful while reading

Graphic organizers are tools your child can use in order to keep track of and visualize what she has read! Explain how the following organizers work:

- **Venn diagram.** A Venn diagram compares and contrasts with interlocking circles. Put similarities between objects in the overlapping parts of the circles and differences in the outer areas of the circles.
- **KWL charts.** A KWL shows what you Know, Want to Know, and have Learned. Have your child make three columns and fill out the K and W parts before reading and the L column after reading.



- **Time line.** Keep track of the order in which events happened. This helps when memorizing their sequence.

Source: “Graphic Organizers for Reading Comprehension,” Scholastic, niswc.com/graphicorganizers.



Q: How can I help my child remember the difference between synonyms and antonyms?

A: Remind your child that *synonyms* have the same, or similar, meanings (such as *happy* and *cheerful*). Point out that synonym, same and similar all start with the letter s. *Antonyms*, on the other hand, are words with opposite meanings (such as *fast* and *slow*).

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

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