

# BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Westview Elementary School  
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## Motivate your child by making reading irresistible

When kids like reading, they do more of it. This boosts their reading skills and school success. You can make reading fun if you:

- **Celebrate.** Instead of simply checking out books at the library, make an event of it. Choose a special place in the library to read together.
- **Explore.** Help your child find an appealing book series. If he likes the first book, he'll be more likely to reach for another.
- **Investigate.** If your child isn't sure what a word means, have him take a guess. Look it up together and see if he is right.
- **Play.** Make up a game based on a book your child has read. Or challenge him to summarize a story in three sentences.
- **Experiment.** Try new kinds of books with your child. If he's used to reading fiction, have him try a biography or how-to book.



**Source:** "Reading Tips for Parents of Third Graders," Reading Rockets, niswc.com/irresistiblereading.

*"It is what you read when you don't have to that determines what you will be when you can't help it."*

—Oscar Wilde

## Play 'Alphabet Words' to boost thinking

"Alphabet Words" is an engaging game that can help your child build cognitive skills. To play:

1. **Create a playing board.** Have your child draw a line down the center of a sheet of paper and write letters A through M down the left side, and N through Z down the right. The object of the game will be to think of a word for each letter. Each word must begin with one of the letters—*apple* for A, *brown* for B, etc.
2. **See how many letters** your child can match up with words. If she's stuck, try giving her hints for possible words. (For the letter *I*, you might say, "I'm thinking of something cold and hard that starts with *i*.")
3. **Have your child write** the words onto the piece of paper!
4. **Help your child tally up** the words she got. Can she beat her score next time you play? For an extra challenge, make all the words in a game match a theme, like animals or foods.

**Source:** P. Kaye, *Games for Reading*, Pantheon Books.

## Boost literacy with maps

Making maps can be a fun way to read and write. Have your child draw a map of your community. She should include places important to her, like school, stores and friends' houses.

Give your child directions to move her finger around the map. Then have her give you directions. Use words like *left*, *right*, *east* and *west* that explain which way to go.

**Source:** "Reading Maps Background Information for Teachers and Parents," Brainpop Educators, niswc.com/readingmaps.



## Pets make great listeners

If your child has trouble with reading, he may feel self-conscious reading aloud. But it's important for him to practice so he can improve. A family pet can be a nonjudgmental audience that will make your child feel at ease reading aloud. If you don't have a pet, he can read to a stuffed animal!



## Focus KWLs on reading

Before she opens a new book, encourage your child to make a KWL (Know/Want to Know/Learned) chart. Divide a piece of paper into three columns, and then have her write what she:

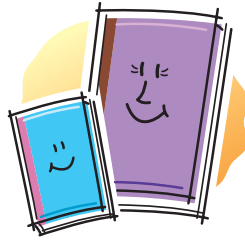
- **Knows.** She should briefly preview the book. What does she already know about the topic?
- **Wants to know.** What questions does she have?
- **Learned.** When she finishes reading, have her jot down what she learned.

**Source:** "KWL," North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, niswc.com/kwlchart.



## Plan summer reading activities with your child

Develop a summer reading plan to keep your child engaged in reading—and make the activities you plan exciting! Here are some ideas for making a plan together:



- **Look into books** and magazines that complement your child's interests.
- **Vary where you plan to read.** Read at home, on trips and in the library.
- **Choose titles to read** from a list of your child's favorites, and ask your local librarian for additional recommendations.
- **Plan meals that are based** on the theme of a book your child just read. If he reads a book that takes place in France, for example, try French recipes!
- **Host reading sessions.** Let your child invite a friend over. Plan a special treat to reward their reading efforts.

## Help your child read aloud with fluency

Children who read aloud with fluency are most likely to have a clear understanding of what they've read. Your child reads with fluency if she reads aloud smoothly and with expression.

To help your child improve fluency:

- **Set aside time** for your child to read to you, in addition to the time you spend reading to her daily.
- **Let your child pick** the books she wants to read. Even if a book is too easy, reading it boosts her confidence and feelings of success.
- **Try not to interrupt** if your child pronounces a word incorrectly. If she asks for help pronouncing a word,



provide the word and then let her keep reading.



**Q:** I want to help my child think about what she reads. How can I do this?

**A:** Helping your child think about reading materials will also help her understand them. Ask questions such as, "What happened in the beginning of the story? The middle? The end?" "Why do you think the author wrote this book?" "What did you like or dislike about it?" "Can you teach me something you learned from the book?"

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

## Engage family and friends in a reader's theater



Invite friends and family to read a play out loud together. Encourage your child to research plays at the library and choose a short one with enough parts. Then make copies for each person and highlight individual parts. Assign roles and have fun!

**Source:** L.A. Henry, Ph.D., "Readers Theatre," Read\*Write\*Think, [niswc.com/readers theatre](http://niswc.com/readers theatre).

## For lower elementary readers:

- ***I Need My Monster*** by Amanda Noll (Flashlight). Ethan's monster has gone fishing, leaving only a note behind. How will Ethan get to sleep without his monster under the bed?
- ***Waiting Is Not Easy*** by Mo Willems (Disney-Hyperion). Piggie tells Gerald he has a big, special surprise for them to share—and Gerald just cannot wait!



## For upper elementary readers:

- ***Fortunately, the Milk*** by Neil Gaiman (Harper). A quick errand to get milk turns into an unforgettable adventure filled with aliens, time travel and more!
- ***The Invention of Hugo Cabret*** by Brian Selznick (Scholastic). Meet Hugo, a young boy who lives in the clock tower of a busy Paris train station. When he's not making sure the clocks are on time, he's working on his secret invention.

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