

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Westview Elementary School
Mr. Alan Buttimer, Principal

Frequent conversations build your child's vocabulary

One component of being a good reader is having a strong vocabulary. By having regular conversations with your child and using advanced vocabulary, you will teach him new words—and he may begin using them on his own!

When introducing new vocabulary words:

- **Provide a definition** that your child will be able to understand. "It's a *brisk* fall day! The weather is getting cooler, but it's not quite cold enough for snow yet."
- **Help your child think** of a way to use and make connections to the word. "Can you think back to another time when we were out in the *brisk* fall air?"
- **Keep using the word** in your conversations. "It's another *brisk* day today—let's be sure to wear an extra layer for our walk!"

Source: C.A. Simon, "Talk It Up! Expanding a Child's Vocabulary," ReadWriteThink, nswc.com/newvocabulary.

"Books and ideas are the most effective weapons against intolerance and ignorance."

—Lyndon Baines Johnson



Encourage your child to write to music

Let your child use music as writing inspiration! Have your child select one of her favorite songs. Listen to it together. Then, encourage your child to:

1. **Draw one or more pictures** that describe the song as you listen to it again.
2. **Write captions below the pictures.** The captions can tell the story in the song but your child should use words that are different from the lyrics. Encourage her to use synonyms that replace some of the musical lyrics.
3. **Listen to different genres of music.** Have your child think about how her stories are different for pop, classical and rock music. What about jazz? How did she depict songs without words?

Encourage your child to read for fun

In addition to the reading your child does for school, it's important for him to read simply for fun, too! To promote reading pleasure, suggest that he:

- **Read aloud** to younger siblings or friends.
- **Play word games** and board games that include reading and wordplay.
- **Read the Sunday comics** together while you eat breakfast.



Find reading inspiration in autumn

Use time outdoors with your child to guide your reading and writing activities. Collect leaves and label them in a scrapbook.

Observe wildlife in a park or in your neighborhood, then give your child a journal to record what she sees. Read together about the plants and animals you have observed.



Help your child understand what she's reading

It's essential for your child to *comprehend*—to understand and analyze—her reading.

To help her build this skill:

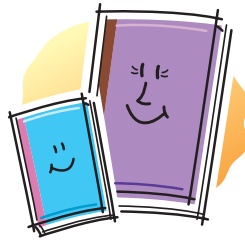
- **Encourage her to read** and reread familiar books. Often, when children reread books, they are able to get more information from them.
- **Suggest that she reread passages** that are complex or hard to understand.
- **Talk to your child about her reading.** It may be helpful for her to discuss confusing points.



Ask reading-related questions at your parent-teacher conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are a great time to check on your child's progress in reading. When meeting with your child's teacher, ask questions about your child's literacy such as:

- "What are my child's strengths and weaknesses in reading?"
- "How can I support my child's literacy development at home?"
- "What types of material does my child enjoy reading in school?"
- "Are there resources you can suggest that would be helpful to improve my child's reading?"
- "How are my child's writing skills developing?"
- "What reading strategies are you using with my child?"



Source: "Questions to Ask Your Child's Teacher," Stand for Children Louisiana, niswc.com/readingquestions.

You can read even when you're on the go

Build your child's reading skills when you're in the car or on the bus, whether you're going on a long trip or just across town! Here are two games you can play with your child:

- 1. Scavenger Hunt.** Before you leave home, brainstorm a list of things you might see along the way. It might include a license plate that ends with the letter G, a sign with four vowels or a town with three syllables. Who can find all of the items on the list first?
- 2. Alphabet License Plates.** Going in alphabetical order, look for every letter on the license plates of cars around you. Call out each letter as



you see it. Who can get to Z first?

Source: "Backseat Scavenger Hunt Game," Reading Is Fundamental, niswc.com/readandtravel.



Q: My child picks books that are too challenging, then gives up after one chapter. How can I help him make better choices?

A: Help him choose a few books at his reading level. (He should be able to read a full page without struggling with more than about five words.) Then let him pick his favorite. If he needs an extra boost, read part of it aloud. Consider taking turns reading to each other.

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

Play October-themed word games

Use the month name as inspiration for word games! With your child, you can:

- **Create words using the letters** in *October*. How many can she come up with?
- **Brainstorm a list of words** that begin with the letter *O*. Help your child put them in alphabetical order. Then ask her to write a sentence for each word and read it aloud to you.



For lower elementary readers:

- ***The Watcher: Jane Goodall's Life with the Chimps*** by Jeanette Winter (Schwartz & Wade Books). Jane Goodall's childhood enjoyment of animals developed into a passion for working with chimpanzees.
- ***Calvin Can't Fly: The Story of a Bookworm Birdie*** by Jennifer Berne (Sterling Children's Books). When Calvin learns to read, he is consumed by his love of books—so much so that he forgets to learn to fly!



For upper elementary readers:

- ***Kitchen Chaos: The Saturday Cooking Club*** by Deborah A. Levine and JillEllyn Riley (Aladdin MIX). Liza, Frankie and Lillian start work on a group social studies assignment—and set off on exciting adventures.
- ***Hermelin the Detective Mouse*** by Mini Grey (Alfred A. Knopf). Hermelin is a mouse that lives in the attic of 33 Offley Street. Join him as he helps the other residents of the building solve their mysteries.

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