

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Westview Elementary School
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Share six strategies that will help your child read to learn

As your child progresses in school, he will begin to apply his reading skills in all of his classes. To help your child get the most out of his reading, you can encourage him to:

1. **Look through the reading**, noting interesting details, illustrations and charts.
2. **Describe what he reads** using his own words.
3. **Ask himself**, "What was the main idea?"
4. **Review key words** and any terms that might be confusing. He should pay special attention to words that are in bold or italics in his reading.
5. **Consider the purpose** of the reading. Why does your child think the author chose to write about this?
6. **Wonder aloud**. For example, does a plotline in a novel remind your child of a historical event he's learned about? What does your child think about what he learned?



Source: L. Healy, "Reading Across the Curriculum," Wisc-Online, Wisconsin Technical Colleges, nswc.com/reading_curriculum.

"To acquire the habit of reading is to construct for yourself a refuge from almost all the miseries of life."

—W. Somerset Maugham

Help your child develop important vocabulary and comprehension skills

Having a large vocabulary helps children understand what they read. It means they don't have to stop reading often to figure out a word's definition and lets them grasp the meaning of the entire passage. To build vocabulary:

- **Make definitions easier for your child to understand.** When defining *curious*, for instance, you might say, "A *curious* person is eager to learn more."
- **Give relatable examples.** "When the big box arrived from Grandma, you were *curious* about what was inside."
- **Ask your child to give examples.** "Can you think of someone who was *curious*?" "Fernando was *curious* about how Amy's book ended."
- **Keep using the new word.** "I'm *curious* about countries in South America. Let's do some research together."

Source: "Building Your Child's Vocabulary," Reading Rockets, nswc.com/comprehension_vocabulary.

Teach sight words through touch

As your child progresses as a reader, it is important for him to continue committing new and more difficult sight words to memory.



A fun way to practice sight words is to add texture when writing them. Have your child write the words in glue and then add glitter, yarn or other items. When the words dry, he can trace them with his finger as he reads.

Source: A. Logsdon, "Top 8 Ways to Teach Your Child Early Sight Word Skills at Home," Verywell, nswc.com/sight_word_touch.

Anytime is a good time to talk!

Is time with your child often spent in silence? Maybe you're busy with chores or traveling between places. Keep in mind that *any* time together is an opportunity to talk. It's good for your relationship—and your child's vocabulary.



Source: M.M. Kevorkian, "Communicating with Children: You Make the Difference," BlueSuitMom, nswc.com/anytime_conversations.

Graphic organizers can boost reading comprehension

Graphic organizers are diagrams that help kids think about what they read. Try drawing a large star with five points. Your child can write the title of a story or article she has read in the center. Then, in the points of the star, she can use information from the reading to answer *who*, *what*, *when*, *where* and *why*. She'll have a clearer picture of what she's read in no time!



Source: "Graphic Organizers," EnchantedLearning, nswc.com/star_graphic_organizer.

Get your child ready to read for success on standardized tests

Certain reading skills are especially useful for taking standardized tests. Help your child work on:

- **Comprehension.** Standardized tests often ask students to find the “main idea.” Help your child practice by reading news articles together. For each article, encourage him to summarize the article and name the main idea.
- **Speed.** Standardized tests are usually timed, so it’s important for your child to read at a reasonable pace. Reading every day will improve his reading speed naturally. Have your child read silently, since whispering or mouthing words silently slows reading.
- **Vocabulary.** Introduce your child to new words daily. Look them up together and use them often to commit them to memory.



Source: “Standardized Tests—Helping Children Succeed,” Newark Unified School District, niswc.com/reading_standardized_tests.

Make your child the family reporter

Writing is an important part of reading. When your child practices writing, she sees how authors put together their thoughts to come up with their stories.

Your child can find inspiration for her own stories in her regular life. Ask your child to become the family reporter. She can write stories such as:

- **A sports recap.** It could be about a sibling’s little league game or a professional game.
- **An interview** with a family member. Help your child think of questions to ask a relative.

After your child gathers her information, she is ready to write. Remind her to check



spelling and grammar. Print the articles in a family newsletter.



Q: My third grader has always loved to read, but lately she has begun to complain about books being “boring.” What can I do to make sure she doesn’t lose interest in reading?

A: Your child may be bored because she is choosing books that are too easy. Many third graders can handle increasingly complex story lines. Help her find books on topics that interest her and that include some challenging words. Ask your child’s teacher for recommendations.

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

Cook and read together!

To get your child excited about reading, try cooking together. Appoint your child your kitchen helper and:

- **Take turns** reading a recipe aloud.
- **Make a shopping list together** and use it at the store.
- **Cook and enjoy the meal you prepared.** Then, read a book related to the type of food you made.



Source: “Kids in the Kitchen,” Reading Is Fundamental, niswc.com/cook_read.

For lower elementary readers:

- ***Who Wants a Tortoise?*** by Dave Keane (Alfred A. Knopf). What do you do when you want a puppy for your birthday—and get a tortoise instead?
- ***Princess Easy Pleasy*** by Natasha Sharma (Karadi Tales Picturebooks). Princess Easy Pleasy has lots of demands, and she requires that everyone in the palace respond to her whims.



For upper elementary readers:

- ***Mr. Ferris and His Wheel*** by Kathryn Gibbs Davis (HMH Books for Young Readers). See the inspiration behind George Ferris’ magical creation, the Ferris wheel, which amazed audiences at the 1893 World’s Fair.
- ***Flat Stanley: His Original Adventure*** by Jeff Brown (HarperCollins). Stanley wakes up one morning and is shocked to see that he’s been flattened! Enjoy all of Stanley’s adventures in the fiftieth anniversary edition of this classic book.

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