

Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Royal Palm Exceptional School
Ms. Hickey, Reading Specialist

Tackle research projects with confidence

Your child is assigned his first research project. He has no idea where to start—and neither have you. Start with these tips:

- **Divide the project into small parts.** For example, choose a topic, read, take notes, organize, write a draft and edit. Help your child manage his time.
- **List three or four key questions.** What does your child want to learn about the topic? These questions can guide his research, notes and writing. Each answer might take up a paragraph in the report.
- **Find kid-friendly materials.** Many encyclopedias and books are written for kids. Ask a librarian to help your child find them. Some may be accessible by computer, too.



iStockphoto

Source: Judy Caragher, "Surviving Your Child's Research Report," Discovery Education, <http://school.discoveryeducation.com/parents/teacherlink/articles/reports.html>.

*"We shouldn't teach great books;
we should teach a love of reading."
—B. F. Skinner*

Prepare for all kinds of reading

Reading helps students in every subject. Even if your child doesn't read books about math, for example, she'll have to read instructions for solving problems. When reading directions in any subject, encourage your child to:

- **Skim the material.** What is the assignment? Is it organized sensibly?
- **Read and reread the directions.** Put them in your own words. Imagine each step you'll take.
- **Note any useful pictures.**
- **Reread instructions you don't understand.** Ask for help if needed.
- **Keep resources handy,** such as a dictionary.
- **Review your plans** to complete the assignment, and when you're ready, get started!

Source: "Checklist for Reading Purposes," Prince George's County Public Schools, www.pgcps.org/~elc/readingacross3.html.

Turn reading mistakes into opportunities for learning



When your child reads aloud, you may notice that she says a word incorrectly. Don't immediately correct her. Let her continue reading so she can realize the word doesn't "fit." Research suggests that this is a good strategy. If kids learn to notice when something doesn't make sense, they can correct mistakes and move on.

Source: Michael Pressley, "Comprehension Instruction: What Makes Sense Now, What Might Make Sense Soon," reading online, www.readingonline.org/articles/art_index.asp?HREF=/articles/handbook/pressley/index.html.

Enjoy classic stories with your child—online!



Does your family love Beatrix Potter's books, such as *Peter Rabbit*? Many of her tales can be read online, and some can be played aloud. Find them at <http://wiredforbooks.org/kids.htm>.

Encourage children to answer questions in reading journals



Some children keep reading journals. If your child keeps one, but isn't sure what to write, help by asking creative questions, such as:

- **What were your feelings** after the first chapter? Did they change later in the book? At the end?
- **If you were the author,** would you change anything about the book? What about characters? Names? Settings?

Source: Esther Lombardi, "How To Keep a Reading Log or Book Journal," About.com, http://classclit.about.com/od/forstudents/ht/aa_readinglog.htm.

Make building vocabulary a family goal

Imagine *talking* about something. Now imagine *reading* about it. They're two experiences that involve different kinds of words. That's why both are important ways to build vocabulary. Research suggests that learning new words involves hearing:

- **The same words many times.**
- **Words when their meaning is clear.** For example, "They're putting new *asphalt* on the road. See that *black stuff* they're using to pave the road?"

Spend time talking and reading with your child. Introduce new words in ways that show what they mean. Use the words often—and know that you're making a difference.

Source: West Bloomfield Township Public Library, "Oral Language: Expanding Your Child's Vocabulary," Colorin Colorado, www.colorincolorado.org/article/15566.

Focus on reading at home

Children need a space at home that encourages reading. Provide an area that fits your child's individual needs. If your child is easily distracted, create a "focus zone" where reading is the number one priority. This area should have essentials, such as:

- **Good lighting.**
- **A comfortable chair.**
- **Favorite books and magazines.**

Keep TV and computer games in a separate place. An adult or older sibling working nearby can help answer questions.



Gerty Images

Create an environment in your home that says, "Reading is important!"



For lower elementary readers:

I'm Special, I'm Me! by Ann Meek (Magi Publications). No two children are alike. One little boy learns that being yourself is more than okay. It's great!

Annie and Snowball and the Dress-Up Birthday, by Cynthia Rylant (Scholastic Inc.). What's more exciting than living with your adorable pet bunny Snowball? Living near your cousin Henry and his beloved dog Mudge—and throwing a party!

For upper elementary readers:

The All-New Book of Lists for Kids, by Sandra and Harry Choron (Houghton Mifflin). Described as an "information sandwich," this collection of lists fascinates kids with all kinds of interests.

Ferno the Fire Dragon, by Adam Blade (Scholastic Inc.). This adventure (the first in a series) is full of action. Fans appreciate that freeing the dragon—not hurting it—is the goal.

Make reading part of your child's everyday routine



You want your child to read every day, but he resists. Try creating a reading routine. If he knows the family reads for 15 minutes at bedtime every night, for example, he'll probably get used to it. Make this time pleasant, too, by keeping fun materials handy. You might also take turns reading pages aloud.



Q: My child struggles with reading. What are some signs of reading disorders?

A: According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, some red flags include trouble with:

- **Understanding words** when they're read aloud.
- **Spelling.**
- **Reading familiar words** quickly.
- **Sounding out words** well.
- **Comprehending how sounds** and letters make words.

No matter what your child's symptoms, talk about them with the teacher or another professional.

Source: "Parenting Corner Q&A: Learning Disabilities," American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org/publiced/BR_LearningDisabilities.htm.

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

Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.
Managing Editor: Pat Hodgdon.

Editor: Jennifer McGovern. Writer: Susan O'Brien.

Copyright © 2008, The Parent Institute® (a division of NIS, Inc.)

P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525, ISSN: 1533-3302

www.parent-institute.com