

Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Royal Palm Exceptional School
Ms. Hickey, Reading Specialist

Make reading more exciting

It's important for children to read every day. But if your child is bored with this routine, add some excitement! You can:

- **Go on a picnic.** Be sure to pack books! Sometimes reading in a new place (indoors or out) makes reading extra fun.
- **Do "pocket reading."** Surprise your child after school with something special in your pocket to read, such as a comic strip or a note from Grandma.
- **Read on the phone.** Try some long distance reading. Call your child from work and read to him. Or let him call relatives and read to them.
- **Act out the story.** Use items from around the house as props. Invite family members or neighbors to come see your play.

Source: "Fifteen-Minute Reading Activities," FamilyEducation, <http://school.familyeducation.com/reading/family-learning/38301.html>.



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Turn reading into a game

Some kids think reading is boring. Playing reading games can change their minds! Teachers suggest activities such as:

- **Creating a cover.** Instead of "judging a book by its cover," wrap it in an old newspaper. Then read the book together. What would your child name it? Have her design and color a cover, then compare it to the real one.
- **Matching characters.** Read two stories with your child. Have her imagine that two characters from the books meet. What happens? Make up a new story about them.
- **Musical books.** Set up chairs with a book under each. Play music, and when it stops, have family members sit down. Read until the music begins. Talk about which books were most interesting—and then finish them!

Source: Gary Hopkins, "25 Ideas to Motivate Young Readers!" Education World, www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson/lesson035.shtml.

Start a writing journal



Your child has to write an essay—but she doesn't know where to start. To prevent this problem, suggest that she keep a writing journal. Whenever she thinks of a creative writing idea, she should jot it down. She'll always have a bunch of topics ready to go. Plus, the more often she writes, the better writer she'll become!

Source: Ted Scheu, "Writing Tips for Kids," Ted Scheu, That Poetry Guy! www.poetryguy.com/kidstips.php.

Show that words are fun



Even if you're not an avid reader, show that you value written words. Pick up a comic strip, magazine or even a recipe. Show your child that you're enjoying yourself. Your child learns by example—he just may follow your lead.

Ask how you can nurture your child's reading skills at home



In addition to written homework, many teachers expect children to read for a while each day. Ask your child's teacher about her expectations. How much time should your child spend reading? What reading level is best for your child? Have her read even more than is expected. Talk with your child about what she's reading at school. The more your child enjoys reading, the more likely she is to succeed in school.

Source: Iris Salters, "Parents remain key to success in school," *The Detroit News*, www.mea.org/press/pdf/salters_082407.pdf.

Offer tips for reading tough words

Sometimes children want to read on their own, but they get “stuck” without parents’ help. When your child has trouble reading a word, it’s good to:

- **Ask**, “Which word would make sense here?”
- **Look** at the pictures. Do they give any clues about the word?
- **Skip** the word and read to the end of the sentence. Then try the word again.
- **Cover** all the letters except the first one. Read the word one sound at a time, and then all together.
- **Try** an easier book if your child is making a lot of mistakes.

Source: “Reading Help at Home,” I Can Read! www.icanread.com/parentsfamilies/readinghelppathome.cfm.

Use textbook reading time wisely

If your child has just started using a textbook at school and she has a test coming up, she’ll probably need a few study tips. Encourage her to:

- **Rewrite** the chapter and section headings into questions. Write their answers, too.
- **Note** words that are in bold type. This indicates that they’re important.
- **Look** at information in other forms, such as graphs and pictures.
- **Read** information that is pulled out of the main text into sidebars.
- **See** if the chapter ends with review questions. Answering them is good practice.



Source: “Effective Study & Test-Taking Strategies for Kids with Learning Difficulties,” SchwabLearning.org, www.schwablearning.org/articles.aspx?r=878.



For lower elementary readers:

Gone Wild, by David McLimans (Walker Books for Young Readers). This “alphabet” book teaches about letters and much more. Pictures of endangered animals delight readers of every age.

Zelda and Ivy, by Laura Mcgee Kvasnosky (Candlewick). Two fox sisters, Zelda and Ivy, are off on adventures. This book is part of a beloved series about the duo.

For upper elementary readers:

Maniac Magee, by Jerry Spinelli (Scholastic). A boy with amazing athletic talents faces a town’s racial conflicts. This book won the Newbery Medal.

Penny from Heaven, by Jennifer Holm (Random House). This is the tale of a young girl who lost her father. The setting, 1950s Brooklyn, adds to the story’s appeal.

Stock up on summer books



Planning a special summer trip? Before you fill up at the gas station, fill up at the library! Spend time with your child choosing books together. Pick out audio books, too, and listen to them on the way. (They make time fly!) Then have fun reading and relaxing at your destination.

“There is no substitute for books in the life of a child.”

—Mary Ellen Chase



Q: Is it important for my child to read with expression?

A: Yes. And as your child’s reading skills improve, he’ll probably become more expressive. Set a good example by reading with enthusiasm yourself. The more comfortable your child is with reading, the easier it will be for him to read with “feeling.”

Source: “Reading Milestones,” PBS Parents, www.pbs.org/parents/readinglanguage/second/reading_milestone_second.html.

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

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