

Building Readers[®]

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How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Playing simple 'review' game builds language confidence

Some children are not confident readers and writers. To help your child build confidence, make reading and writing fun. Here is an idea that may help your child enjoy these activities:

1. **Have your child** "review" a favorite TV show or video game aloud. Ask, "What did you like most about it?"
2. **Write down** what your child says word-for-word. Don't add or change things. Print (don't use cursive) her review to make it easier to read.
3. **Look over** what she "wrote" together. A young child may enjoy adding illustrations.
4. **Ask your child** to read her review aloud. Then encourage her to share it with a relative or friend.

Source: "The Language Experience Approach: A Method to Reach Reluctant or Struggling Readers," Literacy Connections, www.literacyconnections.com/InTheirOwnWords.html.

Tip You know your child should read in his free time. But how much? The U.S. Department of Education suggests at least 30 minutes every day. Provide materials your child can't resist, such as magazines.

Source: "Helping With Reading," U.S. Department of Education, www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/questions/part_pg5.html#sec5.

Q: My child doesn't have reading problems now. How can I keep her from developing them?

A: Follow three simple steps to keep your child's reading skills on track:

1. **Read** to your child.
2. **Watch** for any signs of concern and address them right away.
3. **Communicate** with your child's teachers. Working as a team is the best way to help your child achieve.

Source: "Frequently Asked Questions," Reading rockets, www.readingrockets.org/faq.php#risk.

Questions & Answers



Keep talking after you reach 'the end'

When your child finishes a book, help him get more out of it by asking some questions.



For example:

- **Who was your favorite character?** Why?
- **Did you like the ending?** Why or why not?
- **What was the best or worst part of the book?** Why?
- **Do any other books** remind you of this one? What makes them similar?

Source: "A Parent's Guide to Helping Your Child Learn To Read," National Education Association, www.nea.org/parents/learnstoread.html.

Got a boring book? Suggest solutions

Your child complains about a book. "It's boring!" she says. Use this as an opportunity to encourage thinking. Say, "Imagine you could change the story. What could make it interesting?" She might suggest a new plot, for example, or new characters.



Resources for families

Kids have questions about grammar throughout their school years. (So do parents, for that matter!) Grammarstation.com (www.grammarstation.com) can help. Your child can use it to check his work for mistakes. Best of all, the information is easy to find and understand.

Do you keep in touch with your child's teachers?

It's important to communicate with the school about reading, especially if your child is having problems. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see how you're doing.

- ___ 1. **Do you attend** parent-teacher conferences?
- ___ 2. **Do you talk with teachers** about how your child reads at home?
- ___ 3. **Do you discuss** your child's reading strengths and weaknesses with the teacher?
- ___ 4. **Do you understand** how the school teaches reading?
- ___ 5. **Do you ask for tips** on helping with reading at home?



How did you do?

Each *yes* answer shows you're working with the school to promote your child's success in reading. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

Source: "Misunderstood Minds: Reading Responses," PBS.org, www.pbs.org/wgbh/misunderstoodminds/readingstrats.html#collab.

Incorporate reading into this year's holiday fun

During winter vacation, families often enjoy special activities. Here are ways to connect holiday fun with reading:



- **Sharing.** Suggest that your child send holiday cards. She can write messages and include drawings.

- **Looking at maps.** Give your child a map or directions to review. Ask questions such as, "What city is next?" or "Are we going North, South, East or West?"
- **Cooking.** Dictate a shopping list to your child and find ingredients together. Let her read you recipes.

Source: Just Read, Florida! "Summer Reading Activities Kit," www.justreadflorida.com/docs/kit.pdf.

Help your child become a more 'fluent' reader

It's exciting when young readers become fluent—have the ability to move quickly through sentences. They understand words and overall meaning. Here are some ways to promote fluency:

- **Practice together.** Have your child read the same text aloud several times. It should be something short and fairly easy. Give helpful feedback. Be patient.
- **Read to your child.** Be a "fluent reading role model." You should sound natural, as though you're speaking rather than reading. You'll improve his comprehension and vocabulary.

Source: Bonnie B. Armbruster, Ph.D., Fran Lehr and Jean Osborn, M.Ed., "Put Reading First," Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement and National Institute for Literacy, www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/reading_first1.html.



Susan Laughs, by Jeanne Willis (Holt). Susan has normal kid feelings and hobbies. At the end of

the book, readers find out this appealing character also uses a wheelchair.

Time of Wonder, by Robert McCloskey (Viking Books) The story's young characters are lucky enough to vacation in Maine. The state is brought to life through rhythmic text and beautiful illustrations.

Tackle writing problems quickly

When a child resists writing, does he need extra help at school?

Talk with his teacher if he:

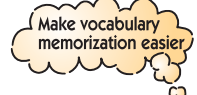
- **Has trouble** forming letters.
- **Avoids** writing.
- **Is frustrated** with writing.
- **Has poor** written communication.
- **Struggles** with spelling.

Source: Holly Hanke, "How to tell when your child needs extra help with writing," Parent Center, <http://parentcenter.babycenter.com/refcap/bigkid/glearning/68103.html>.

Make vocabulary memorization easier

To help your child memorize vocabulary words, have her:

- **List** other words that mean the same thing.
- **Write** other forms of the word.
- **Use** the words in sentences.



Source: Laura Robb, "Reading Clinic: Vocabulary: The Key to Improving Comprehension," Scholastic, <http://teacher.scholastic.com/lessonrepro/lessonplans/instructor/readclin4.htm#primary>.

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