

Building Readers[®]

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Rochester Community Schools

Reading about science can be fascinating for your child

Often, children will ask a scientific question (“Why does it rain?”), and reading can provide the answer. Look for books on scientific subjects that interest your child, such as space or ocean life. Other examples include:

- **Living things.** Go for a walk. What kinds of trees, birds or insects can you find? Bring along a book to help you identify them.
- **Weather.** Look out the window and wonder. “Where does wind come from?” “What is lightning?” Have your child write down his questions. Find answers at the library.
- **Experiments.** Check out a book of kids’ experiments. Your child might enjoy making a volcano, for example, or raising plants under different lights.



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“If you read a lot of books you are considered well-read. But if you watch a lot of TV, you’re not considered well-viewed.”

—Lily Tomlin

How should students write book reports?

Writing a book report is a way of explaining facts learned from reading. If your child is assigned a book report, she will probably need to:

- **Read a book.** It may be one your child chooses or one the teacher picks. Aim for a book your child will enjoy. She can even read it twice!
- **Write an outline.** Be sure to include the book’s setting, time period, main characters, plot and a review by the reader.
- **Prepare drafts.** Use the outline to make a rough draft. Mistakes are okay! Do some editing. Then create a final version.

Source: “The Book Report,” Lakewood Public Library, www.lkwdpl.org/study/bookrep.

Simple steps make reading appealing to reluctant readers



If reading doesn’t appeal to your child, it’s time to get creative. Kids who enjoy reading tend to read more and for longer. You might:

- **Read** a book that’s been made into a movie, then view the film together.
- **Plan** a trip and have your child read about the destination.
- **Provide** books about your child’s interests, such as dance.
- **Add** a link to a paper chain every time your child finishes a book.

Source: “Motivating Kids to Read,” Reading Is Fundamental, www.rif.org/parents/motivate/default.aspx.

Get kids fired up to read



Looking for a way to encourage your son to read? *Guysread.com* focuses on boys and books. Reading suggestions are based on age—“young guys,” “middle guys” and “older guys.” (Your daughter may enjoy these recommendations as well!)

Play office to boost key skills



It’s time to go to the office! Not you—your child. Playing “office” is a great way to practice important reading and writing skills. Provide envelopes, index cards, safety scissors, paper and other supplies. Your child can make signs, business cards and stationery. Want to see what she’s doing? “Call” her to schedule an appointment!

Source: Jill Frankel Hauser, *Wow! I’m Reading!* ISBN: 1-885593-41-4 (Williamson Publishing, 1-800-234-8791).

Think about exciting writing topics

Writing doesn't start with putting pen to paper. It begins with an idea. If your child isn't sure what to write, suggest that he:

- **Brainstorm.** Is there a place your child would like to visit or something he'd like to do? What are his favorite experiences so far?
- **Take notes.** While on a trip or at a special event, your child can jot down his impressions.
- **Make contact.** It's fun to write letters to relatives or faraway friends. Encourage more than signing a card!
- **Keep a journal.** This is a good way to express feelings and hopes. If your child shares his journal with you, take time to discuss it.

Source: "Help Your Child Learn to Write Well," U.S. Department of Education, www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/Writing/index.html.

Support your student's school library

How is your school library? Are there new books and magazines that capture your child's imagination?

Plan a visit to the library. Look over popular items and new books. Is funding a major problem? Offer to help. Work with other parents to raise money. Ask a local business to purchase a book or "adopt" a magazine subscription. Even small sums can go a long way to purchase new materials.

Most importantly, make sure your school library has exciting resources. And make sure that your child uses them!



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Q: Is there a simple way to help my child with reading comprehension?

A: Yes. After your child reads something, talk about it together. Ask questions that encourage critical thinking. Try these:

- "What was it about?"
- "How did it end?"
- "What did you think of the story?"
- "Who were the characters?"
- "If you rewrote it, what would you change?"
- "Can you relate to anything in the story?"

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



For lower elementary readers:

Mr. Rabbit & the Lovely Present by Charlotte Zolotow

(HarperCollins). In this award-winning classic, Mr. Rabbit helps a little girl with a challenge: buying her mother a birthday present.

Ira Says Goodbye by Bernard Walker (Houghton Mifflin). Seeing your friend move away is tough. And what if he's actually excited about leaving? Ira and his best friend work through this trying dilemma.

For upper elementary readers:

Harry's Mad by Dick King-Smith (Random House). Harry's parrot "Mad" does more than repeat words. He plays chess and holds conversations. What will happen when Mad is stolen?

Rufus M. by Eleanor Estes (Harcourt). Young Rufus Moffat has high expectations and amusing adventures. This is the third book in the celebrated Moffat series.

Celebrate family reading



Family reading (such as everyone reading the same book) should be a source of pride! So document the event in photos and words. Take a picture of each relative reading the book, for example. Put the photos in a journal. Under each one, include the person's "book review."

Source: "The Great American Family Read-In," National Education Association, www.nea.org/readacross/readin.html.

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