

BUILDING READERS

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How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

A plan can make book reports easier

What will happen when your child is assigned a book report? Will she dread reading the book or look forward to it? It all depends on the approach! To help your child get more out of book reports, have her:

- **Make time to read.** Don't turn reading into a chore or rush to finish the book quickly. Find quiet, regular times to read. Encourage your child to jot down information that may be useful in the report. You may even take turns reading the book aloud.
- **Write an outline.** This is a chance for your child to plan the introduction, main ideas and conclusion. It will act as her guide when it's time to write the report—your child just has to fill in the details.
- **Finish two drafts.** A rough draft doesn't require neatness or perfection. In fact, your child can make corrections all over it! Then she can make a final draft with confidence and pride.



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

Make the reading-thinking connection

Has your child ever finished reading something and then realized he didn't understand—or even pay attention to—its meaning? This happens because "reading" and "comprehending" are different skills. Research shows that to read well, students need to do both. To help your child read *and* comprehend:

- **Choose books that match his skills.** Look for materials that are slightly challenging—not too easy and not too tough. They should neither bore nor frustrate your child.
- **Ask questions throughout the reading.** "Why did he do that?" "Where do you think they're going?" "How would you feel in that situation?" "Does this remind you of other stories you've read?"
- **Be a role model.** Visit the library to find exciting books. Have fun discussing books. Keep "reading journals" about your reading accomplishments.

Source: Gina Carrier, "Comprehension," Reading Rockets, www.readingrockets.org/article/12376.

Properly caring for books builds responsibility, pride in your child

It's disappointing to check out a library book that's in poor shape, but it's also a chance to discuss responsibility with your child. Discuss questions like:

- **How did the book** get this way?
- **What could have prevented** the damage?
- **How should books be treated**, whether they're owned or borrowed?

When your child takes care of a book, such as by setting it on a shelf instead of the floor or using a bookmark instead of folding down the corner of the page, compliment his responsibility!



Create your own word puzzles online

Does your child like word searches and other puzzles? At www.puzzlemaker.com, use her spelling words—and other words she wants to learn—to create and print puzzles. It's free, easy and educational.



Encourage your child's fluency



He can sound out c-a-t. But when it's time for him to read a story, he slows down. Teachers would say your child's reading lacks *fluency*. So what's a parent to do? Here are some tips:

- **Try repetition.** If your child loves a book or poem, have him read it again. (And again.) Repeated readings help children gain fluency.
- **Take turns.** You read one sentence. Have your child read the next.

Source: "Tips for Parents of First Graders," PBS, www.pbs.org/launchingreaders/parenttips_3.html.

Sports can spark the use of language skills

Watching a sporting event can be a way to help improve your child's language skills. Encourage your child to listen carefully to the sportscaster. How does that person interest the viewer in what's going on in the game? When does the broadcaster let the picture tell the story? After watching for a while, turn down the volume and let your child do the on-air broadcast. Urge her to use vibrant language when describing what's happening on the field.



Source: Douglas B. Reeves, *20-Minute Learning Connection*, ISBN: 0-743-21171-5, Simon & Schuster.

Make reading a daily habit for your family

When parents and kids read together daily, research shows that kids are more likely to succeed in school and graduate. Try these family reading ideas:

- **Plan reading dinners.** Share a newspaper article or read a poem. Your child might describe a funny comic or favorite chapter in a book. Or let everyone bring a magazine to the table.
- **Watch movies based on books.** As a family, spend a week or more reading a book that has been made into a movie. When you finish, watch the film together. How do the versions differ? How are they the same? Which do you like better? Why?



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Source: "Prime Time Family Reading Time," Nebraska Humanities Council, www.nebraskahumanities.org/programs/PTInfoSheet.pdf.



Q: Part of my child's homework is to read every day, but he often refuses to do it. Should I handle this on my own or talk with the teacher?

A: This is a concern you can bring up at the parent-teacher conference or during another contact with your child's teacher. Share your ideas about possible causes of your child's refusal. The teacher will have suggestions that make reading time easier, such as taking turns reading aloud. Working together, you can get to the bottom of the problem and help your child.

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

Look outside the storybook when it comes to reading

You want your child to read for pleasure, but it just isn't happening. What should you do? Remember that reading doesn't always involve books. A child who balks at novels may love videogame instruction booklets, recipes, step-by-step craft directions, and more.



For lower elementary readers:

- *Lost and Found* by Oliver Jeffers (Philomel). A young boy finds a penguin at his door. Is it lost? Can the boy get it home? Together, they find friendship.
- *The Children Who Smelled a Rat* by Allan Ahlberg (Walker Books). The Gaskitt family is back in this fourth-in-a-series tale. Multiple storylines, including one about a teacher's odd behavior, keep readers turning pages.



For upper elementary readers:

- *The Small Adventures of Popeye and Elvis* by Barbara O'Connor (Farrar, Straus and Giroux). Popeye thinks life is boring until a boy named Elvis comes to town.
- *How Oliver Olson Changed the World* by Claudia Mills (Farrar, Straus and Giroux). Oliver's teacher planned a special event about space, but his parents' protectiveness is sure to get in the way. Now they're taking over his diorama project, too!

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