

# Building Readers<sup>®</sup>



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How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

## Libraries don't have to be intimidating

If you feel overwhelmed when you visit the library's children's section, you're not alone. With so many books—and so many reading levels—it's hard to know what to choose. Here are some tips from parents, teachers and reading specialists:

- **Ask the librarian** which books have won awards. Newberry awards, for instance, are for children's writing.
- **Check best-seller lists** to see what other families enjoy. Ask the school for a suggested reading list.
- **Reminisce about** your favorite children's books. Chances are they're still on library shelves.
- **Relax and let** your child's interests be your guide. If a book looks good to him, he'll probably enjoy it.

**Source:** Maile Carpenter, "How to choose the best books for your intermediate reader," ParentCenter.com, <http://parentcenter.babycenter.com/refcap/bigkid/glearning/67848.html>.



**Tip** Here's an alternative to reading aloud or listening to your child read: Read in unison! This takes the pressure off your child and helps him through tough parts.

**Source:** Marie Faust Evitt, "10 Ways to Make Reading Fun," Parents.com, [www.parents.com/articles/ages\\_and\\_stages/3186.jsp](http://www.parents.com/articles/ages_and_stages/3186.jsp).

**Q:** My child reads at an advanced level. Should I let her read middle school books?

**A:** Books for older kids (and even adults) can be okay if the content is age-appropriate. Check this carefully. If your child's advanced skills make her feel left out, try a novel about an exceptional character—someone with whom your child can identify. Also consider poetry. She may love its complexity.

**Source:** Toby Leah Bochan, "Choosing Books for Your Advanced Reader," Scholastic.com, [www.scholastic.com/familymatters/read/adv/choosebooks.htm](http://www.scholastic.com/familymatters/read/adv/choosebooks.htm).



Questions & Answers

## Improve grammar with 'alpha sentences'

This fun game builds grammar skills, teaches sentence structure and encourages creativity:

- **Choose a sentence** from a book your child read.
- **Challenge your child** to write a new sentence in which the words begin with the same first letters.
- **Give your child** an example. "The path went over the hill" might become: "Ten people wanted orange ten-gallon hats."

**Source:** Gary Hopkins, "Five Quick Games Build Reading Skills," EducationWorld.com, [www.educationworld.com/a\\_lesson/03/lp301-01.shtml/education-world](http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/03/lp301-01.shtml/education-world).

## Monitor Internet reading time

The Internet is a great resource for reading activities. But experts say parent help is essential. Kids learn to read best when an adult is involved. While your child plays reading games online, for example, sit with her. Ask questions and applaud her progress.

**Source:** Monika Guttman, "Cyber Story Hour," *Child*, February 2001 (Gruner + Jahr USA Publishing, 1-800-777-0222, [www.child.com](http://www.child.com)).

## Resources for families

You have a dictionary. Maybe even an atlas. But how about an almanac? An encyclopedia? You can find these at Factmonster.com ([www.factmonster.com](http://www.factmonster.com)). It lets kids type in a topic and get resources instantly.

# How do you read aloud?

Reading aloud to children of all ages is important. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're doing this key step properly:

- \_\_\_ 1. **Do you choose** books at or above your child's reading level?
- \_\_\_ 2. **Do you read** your child's favorite books more than once?
- \_\_\_ 3. **Do you find** books that interest your child?
- \_\_\_ 4. **Do you read** with enthusiasm?
- \_\_\_ 5. **Do you discuss** what happened—and what might happen—in the storyline?



### How did you do?

Each *yes* answer shows you're reading aloud well. For each *no* answer, try to change your answer to *yes* by using ideas from the quiz.

**Source:** Elizabeth Kennedy, "How to Read Aloud to Your Child," About.com, <http://childrensbooks.about.com/cs/readalouds/ht/readaloud.htm>.

## Protect self-esteem from reading problems

If your child has trouble with reading, you may worry about how it affects her self-esteem. Here are some things to do:

- **Avoid people and situations** that might embarrass your child.
- **Stay positive.** Be honest, yet optimistic, about your child's reading problems.

- **Explain that everyone** learns differently and struggles at times. Give examples from your life.
- **Create supportive** relationships with others, such as teachers and siblings. Tell them how your child learns best.
- **Compliment and build** your child's strengths. If she's good at math, for example, do math activities together.

**Source:** "Reading: Responses," PBS.org, [www.pbs.org/wgbh/misunderstoodminds/readingstrats.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/misunderstoodminds/readingstrats.html).

## Hearing stories builds comprehension

Have you ever read something that didn't make sense to you, and then understood it when someone read it aloud? You can do the same thing for your child. When you read aloud, you can place emphasis on certain areas.

You can raise and lower your voice. You can change characters. You can even discuss difficult concepts. Your understanding will help your child comprehend ideas he wouldn't "get" on his own. Meanwhile, you'll improve his vocabulary and be a strong reading role model.

**Source:** Bonnie B. Armbruster, Ph.D., Fran Lehr and Jean Osborn, M. Ed., *Put Reading First: Second Edition* (Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement, 734/647-6940).



**Make Way for Ducklings**, by Robert McCloskey. (Viking Press) This classic follows a

duck family on their search for a Boston home. It's an amusing adventure for the large "Mallard" family—and for young readers.

**Farmer Duck**, by Martin Waddell (Candlewick). Life isn't so good for a duck. But then he and his pals overtake the lazy farmer. The story is as entertaining as the illustrations.

## Make the most of favorite books



If your child loves a certain book, use it as a foundation for other activities. You might re-enact a scene, for example, complete with costumes. You can also expand on themes in the book. If the story is about a baker, try a bread recipe or shop at a bakery. If it's about an artist, visit a gallery or museum.

**Source:** Jessica Snyder, "Tips for Encouraging Kids to Read," Reading rockets, [www.readingrockets.org/article.php?ID=393](http://www.readingrockets.org/article.php?ID=393).

## Be patient with boys' handwriting

You may notice a difference between girls' and boys' handwriting early on. But don't blame boys if their handwriting doesn't start off as neat. They can take longer than girls to develop fine motor skills.

**Source:** Kristin Kane, "Bad Handwriting: A Gender Thing?" *Parenting*, November 2003 (Time Inc., 1-877-604-7858, [www.parenting.com](http://www.parenting.com)).

### Building Readers®

*How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers*

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Managing Editor: Pat Hodgson.

Editor: Amanda Blyth. Writer: Susan O'Brien.

Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

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

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

[www.parent-institute.com](http://www.parent-institute.com)