

# Building Readers<sup>®</sup>

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How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

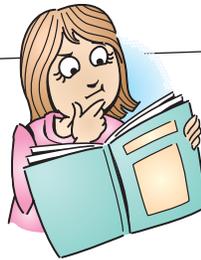
## Reading problems may signal other learning troubles

In early elementary school, kids learn to read. By about third grade, they read to learn. This is when some learning disabilities stand out. Look for these warning signs:

- **Strong thinking skills** combined with trouble reading.
- **Slow progress** in reading and writing.
- **Frequent hesitation** (such as, "Ummm ... ") when figuring out words.
- **Not understanding** the meaning of what is read.
- **Disinterest** in reading for fun.
- **Messy handwriting** but good typing skills.

If you're worried that your child may have a learning disability, talk with the teacher. There are many excellent resources available to help.

**Source:** Margery D. Rosen, "Falling Behind," Scholastic.com, [http://scholastic.com/family\\_matters/read/gr3\\_5/roadblocks.htm](http://scholastic.com/family_matters/read/gr3_5/roadblocks.htm).



**Tip** Research shows that many kids don't get enough sleep. Reading is a great way for them to settle down at night. Make this part of a relaxing bedtime routine.

**Source:** Neepa Shah, "Survey: Kids Need More Sleep," *TIME for Kids*, March 31, 2004, (Time Inc., 1-800-777-8600).

**Q:** Mornings are so rushed that sometimes our family skips breakfast. Is that okay?

**A:** It's best for children to eat a nutritious meal before school. Studies show that kids who always eat breakfast do better as students. Think of breakfast as "fuel" for your child's mental "tank." This is especially important on test days, when memory is critical. Missing breakfast could mean missing spelling words on a quiz!

**Source:** "Good Nutrition Leads to Better Learning," International Reading Association, [www.reading.org/downloads/parents/pb1054\\_nutrition.pdf](http://www.reading.org/downloads/parents/pb1054_nutrition.pdf).



### Questions & Answers

## Motivate your child to write



Beloved children's author Beverly Cleary (who wrote *The Mouse and the Motorcycle*) loved reading as a child. Yet she wished for funny stories about kids she knew. So she grew up to write them! Tell your child that many people enjoy writing about their interests. What would your child like to read about? Perhaps she could write about it, too.

**Source:** Christen Shaw, "Beverly Cleary," Spectrum Home and School Network, [www.incwell.com/Biographies/Cleary,Beverly.html](http://www.incwell.com/Biographies/Cleary,Beverly.html).

## Studies link TV to reading problems

Research shows how important family TV rules are. In one study, young kids with high TV viewing had lower reading comprehension at ages six and seven. In another, kids with TVs in their rooms did much worse on reading tests. Keep the TV where you can monitor its use.

**Source:** Greg Toppo, "Three studies suggest TV hampers kids' academic skills," USA TODAY.com, [www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-07-04-too-much-tv\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-07-04-too-much-tv_x.htm).



## Resource for families

Many parents remember consulting World Book Encyclopedias as kids. Now World Book is online. Find games, quizzes, maps and more at [worldbook.com](http://worldbook.com) ([www.worldbook.com](http://www.worldbook.com)). There's even help for kids' school projects. Click on "Student Resource Center," then "Feature of the Month."

# Is your child learning to love reading?



Kids who like reading have an advantage in school. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're helping your child enjoy reading:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you keep** interesting reading materials around the house, including in your child's room?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you set** a good example by reading often and discussing books with your child?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you give** your child regular opportunities to browse at the library or bookstore?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you let** your child read what he likes (even comic books), as long as the material is age-appropriate?

### How did you do?

Each *yes* answer shows you're encouraging a love of reading. For each *no* answer, find ways to change your answer to *yes*.

**Source:** "Quiz: Are you teaching your child to love reading?" ParentCenter, <http://parentcenter.babycenter.com/refcap/preschooler/plearning/64488.html>.

## Pack lunch with a fun note tucked inside

Here's a fun way to squeeze more reading into your child's day: Pack a note in her lunch. It doesn't have to be "mushy" or embarrassing. For example:



- **Say something nice.** Give a compliment or wish your child well on a test. Include whatever message will mean the most to her.

- **Write down** a "joke of the day." Kids' joke books and calendars can provide lots of ideas.
- **Include a silly poem**, such as, "Roses are red. Violets are blue. Don't trade this sandwich. I made it for you!"
- **Share some good news:** "Surprise! Grandma's coming over today. She'll be at the bus stop with me."

**Source:** "Lunchbox Love Notes," FamilyEducation.com, [www.familyeducation.com/printables/package/0,2358,66-9117,00.html](http://www.familyeducation.com/printables/package/0,2358,66-9117,00.html).

## Keep track of computer time

Computer time can be worthwhile, such as when kids research topics or write papers. But it's important to monitor computer use. You might consider changing "TV" rules to "screen time" rules. For example, your child could get 10 hours per week of TV, computer and video game time combined—no more. Also, make sure you know what she sees during "screen time." Talk with her about how to stay safe online. Make a list of "screen time" guidelines she must follow.

**Source:** Holly St. Lifer, "The 'Net Generation," Parents.com, [www.parents.com/articles/family\\_time/5257.jsp?page=1](http://www.parents.com/articles/family_time/5257.jsp?page=1).



**Gilbert the Great**, by Jane Clarke (Sterling) What's a great white shark to do when his best friend moves? Gilbert finds out in this relatable ocean tale.

**The Classroom Pet**, by Grace Maccarone (Scholastic) Students get to care for classroom pets during a vacation. But one animal causes problems. Simple text makes this book perfect for beginning readers.

## Fiction and nonfiction are both valuable

Is it better for kids to read fiction or nonfiction? Both are great, says reading expert Lucy McCormick Calkins. She says fiction encourages dramatic thought, while non-fiction books require organized thinking. The bottom line: Let kids read what they love. If your child sticks to one kind of book, try something new and see what happens.

**Source:** "Specialist Stresses Enjoyment and Understanding of Reading," *The Washington Post*, October 12, 2004 (The Washington Post Company, [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)).



## Are you in the reading 'habit'?

Reading is like other habits—some people take time to develop them. Have your child read daily. A time may come when he'll miss reading if he can't do it.

**Source:** Jennifer Horsman-Flowers, "Want Your Children to Love Books? Read On," *Los Angeles Times*, August 21, 2004 (Los Angeles Times, [www.latimes.com](http://www.latimes.com)).

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