

Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Rochester Community Schools

Expect reading to be a habit

Does your family have certain routines that are “just the way you do things”? Do you eat breakfast together every day? Go out to eat on Friday nights? Take walks on Saturdays? You can make reading one of those habits, too.

Add reading to your schedule in appealing ways. You can:

- **Visit the library** on Fridays (or any day of the week—pick one and stick to it).
- **Stay up later** to read on weekend nights.
- **Have once-a-week** reading dinners, when adults read aloud to kids.
- **Try browsing** the Sunday comics or kids’ sections together as well. (Even coupons can be fun!)

Make reading a regular family activity. It’s likely to lead to more reading, less resistance and maybe even some enthusiasm!

Source: “Inspire Kids ... Encourage Reading ...,” teAchnology, www.teach-nology.com/tutorials/teaching/reading/print.htm.



Cerly Images

Reading, talking may improve test performance

Many families worry about standardized tests. You may be surprised to learn how great of an impact you can have at home on your child’s test score. One way to prepare your child is to practice reading strategies. For example:

- **Ask about a book’s plot, characters and setting.** How does the story begin, unfold and end? Who are the major characters? Where does the story take place?
- **Discuss television and movies in detail.** Who are the characters? What problems do they face? What happens to them? Where do scenes take place?
- **Talk with the teacher about the test.** What will be expected of students? How can you prepare at home?

Source: “Standardized Test Success,” FamilyEducation.com, <http://school.familyeducation.com/educational-testing/teaching-methods/37502.html>.

Teach your child about types of literary ‘genres’ at home



Before middle school, your child will probably learn the reading term “genres.” It refers to different types of writing. You can help by discussing them at home. Your child’s class might study the following genres:

- **Folk tales.**
- **Fables.**
- **Realistic fiction.**
- **Poetry.**
- **Humor.**

Notice these styles at home as you and your child read together. What makes each one different?

Source: Gary Hopkins, “Checkpoints in Reading,” Education World, www.education-world.com/a_curr/curr009.shtml.

Go to the library—online



If you haven’t visited your local library’s website lately, take a look! You might be surprised by what’s there. Many libraries offer amazing (and free) online services. You may find book lists, information on upcoming events and more!

Learn about reading levels



If your child has been given a “reading level,” and you’re not sure what it means, don’t be shy about asking his teacher. It’s important to understand how your child is doing. You might also ask, “What level do you hope he’ll reach by the end of the year?” and “How can I support his progress at home?”

Librarians can help children enjoy books

For some kids, learning to read does not come easily. Once they learn to read, continuing to read can be challenging, too. That's why it's important to find books that keep kids turning pages—such as funny books that make them laugh, suspenseful books or books that teach amazing facts.

The good news is that the library is filled with these materials! Ask the librarian to help you find them. Also remember that magazines and comic-style books are fun alternatives. Once your child is “hooked,” the library will be an endless source of entertainment.

Source: “Library Services,” U.S. Department of Education, www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/Library/Services.html.

Use flags to improve reading, geography skills

Does your older elementary child enjoy the color and design of flags? Flags offer an enjoyable way to learn about the world and practice reading skills.

Many books and websites provide information about what flags represent. From online sources, you and your child can print out a set of U.S. or world flags. Then match the pictures to the correct state or country. Say the names of the places with him. Practice spelling them. Locate the places on a map. Your child will expand reading, spelling and geography skills at the same time.



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Here are two online sources about flags:

- www.theodora.com/flags.html.
- www.nationalgeographic.com/homework.

“Books are not made for furniture, but there is nothing else that so beautifully furnishes a house.”

—Henry Ward Beecher



Q: My fifth-grader enjoys listening to me read aloud. Is she too old for this?

A: Definitely not! Children benefit when parents read to them. For example, you can read books and stories above your child's reading level. As you read with feeling, she'll learn new concepts and words. Talk about the story and explain anything confusing. Enjoy the time together!

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



For lower elementary readers:

My Big Lie, by Bill Cosby (Cartwheel). Uh oh. Little Bill hasn't been honest, and now he's in trouble. How will he survive being sent to his room?

Who Eats What? by Patricia Lauber (HarperTrophy). People and animals are connected in many ways, including by what they eat. This book introduces a science concept in simple language.

For upper elementary readers:

Tornado, by Betsy Byars (Harper Trophy). There's a storm outside, but inside, stories about a dog named Tornado calm a worried group.

Author: A True Story, by Helen Lester (Walter Lorraine Books). Ever dream of becoming an author? This amusing book reminds kids of all ages not to give up.

Book reports can be simple



Writing a book report can be easy, if students follow four basic steps. Help your child:

- 1. Pick a book.** If one hasn't been assigned, help him choose one that is interesting.
- 2. Read the book.** Encourage him to enjoy this task. Find a quiet, comfortable spot for relaxing.
- 3. Make an outline.** This organizes what his report will say.
- 4. Write drafts.** It's a good idea to have him write a rough draft and then fix mistakes.

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

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Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.
Managing Editor: Pat Hodgdon.

Editor: Jennifer McGovern. Writer: Susan O'Brien.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474
1-800-756-5525, ISSN: 1533-3302
www.parent-institute.com