

# Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Rochester Community Schools

## Characters in books can inspire your child

Parents work hard to build children's morals, and reading can help with this. Think of a trait that is important to you—such as perseverance, the ability to follow through—and then read books about it as a family. How do the characters show perseverance? What are the results? Discuss stories you read (such as *The Little Engine that Could*) and tell some of your own.

Remember that courage is often shown in small ways. A child might fear a new activity but give it a try anyway, for example. Or she might admit wrongdoing and apologize for it. Being courageous is tough. But in the end, it's worthwhile—kind of like reading sometimes!

**Source:** Charles A. Smith, Ph.D., "Stories of Strength," *Scholastic Parent & Child*, October 2006 (Scholastic, Inc., 1-800-724-6527, [www.scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com)).



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### Teach your child new words outdoors, too

Reading is often a stationary activity, which can be tough for energetic kids. Here's a vocabulary-building idea that involves walking, too. Start by taking a stroll somewhere interesting with your child. Then:

1. Let your child choose a letter of the alphabet.
2. Look for as many things as possible that begin with that letter.
3. Keep track of how many items you find.
4. Earn a point for each one.
5. Try to beat your record on another day with a different letter.
6. Remember to introduce your child to new words using this method.
7. Talk about what new words mean.

**Source:** "Helping Your Child at Home with Vocabulary Building," Child Development Institute, [www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/learning/vocabulary.shtml](http://www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/learning/vocabulary.shtml).

## Reading problems can be related to eyesight



Sometimes when kids resist reading, it's not a learning problem—it's an eyesight problem. But symptoms of eye problems can be so vague that eye screenings don't catch them. So consider a complete, professional eye exam for your child. The doctor may be able to help your child see—and read—more easily.

**Source:** Claire Yezbak Fadden, "Focus on Early Eye Exams," *Washington Parent*, March 2007 (Knollwood Publications, Inc., 301-320-2321, [www.washingtonparent.com](http://www.washingtonparent.com)).

### Read for exciting reasons



If your child doesn't enjoy reading for the sake of reading, link books to other hobbies. A child who loves cooking, for example, might have fun browsing through recipe cards or cookbooks. A child who loves soccer could read about scoring goals. Change the focus from reading to results!

## Comprehension doesn't happen instantly



Children (just like adults) can't be expected to understand everything they read on the first try. So be glad when your child rereads and asks questions about the material. Tell him that you're proud that he's trying to understand what he's reading—instead of just giving up.

**Source:** Beth Lewis, "A New Way to Teach Reading Comprehension," About.com, <http://k6educators.about.com/cs/languagearts/a/teachreading.htm>.

## Comic books can make reading fun

You may have noticed more comic books (sometimes called graphic novels) at the library and in kids' hands. But is this okay? Some experts believe that comics:

- Build reading skills.
- Boost interest in reading.
- Help kids see that reading is fun.
- Introduce important literary concepts.
- Encourage kids to write their own comics.
- Lead to useful discussions.

This doesn't mean that every comic book is okay for your child. But if he reaches for one at the store or library, take a look. If you approve of the content, use it to build your child's excitement about reading.

**Source:** Steven Grant, "Pow! Using Comic Books to Get Kids Reading," [Disneyfamily.com](http://family.go.com/education/article-62812-Pow--Using-Comic-Books-to-Get-Kids-Reading-t/), <http://family.go.com/education/article-62812-Pow--Using-Comic-Books-to-Get-Kids-Reading-t/>.

## Take advantage of programs at your local library

The library isn't just a place to find new books to read with your child. Libraries offer a wealth of information, programs and other helpful services. Here are just a few things you can find at the library:

- **Read-aloud programs.** Some programs feature discussions and presentations led by children.
- **Reference materials.** Get your child familiar with dictionaries, almanacs, atlases and encyclopedias. They'll come in handy as your child gets older.



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- **Audiovisual materials.** You can find educational toys and audio books at the library—and they're free!

**Source:** U.S. Department of Education, "Beyond Books: Library Services for Children," *Reading Rockets*, [www.readingrockets.org/article/130](http://www.readingrockets.org/article/130).



**Q:** Is it okay to schedule doctor visits and vacations during school hours to make life easier? I'm happy to help my child do make-up work, including reading at home.

**A:** Although it may be convenient to miss school for appointments and trips, it also puts a strain on kids (and teachers, too). Reading at home is helpful, but there is no substitute for classroom time. Reading skills build day by day, in every class, and your child needs to be there. In the long run, good attendance pays off!

Do you have a question about reading? Email [readingadvisor@parent-institute.com](mailto:readingadvisor@parent-institute.com).



## For lower elementary readers:

*Zack's Alligator*, by Shirley Mozelle (HarperCollins). Zack's uncle sends him a keychain. But why do the instructions say to water it? The answer leads Zack, his town, and readers on a big adventure.

*Junie B. Jones Is a Graduation Girl*, by Barbara Park (Random House). Irresistible Junie B. can't stop peeking at her kindergarten graduation outfit. Her peeking becomes a problem the whole class must solve.

## For upper elementary readers:

*Amber Brown Is Not a Crayon*, by Paula Danziger (Puffin). Amber's best friend Justin is moving, but they seem to feel differently about it. Can these appealing characters fix their friendship in time?

*Cody's Secret Admirer*, by Betsy Duffey (Puffin). Cody does not want a secret admirer. When he receives a valentine, he sees trouble ahead. The third-grader's "Top Ten" lists add laughs throughout the book.

## Use reading resources



Does your child rush through books just to get to the pictures? If so, look for books that have won the Caldecott Medal. This is an award for illustrated books, named after nineteenth century English artist Randolph Caldecott.

You can find Caldecott-winning books at the local library. Or visit the American Library Association online ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)) for a complete list.

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