

Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Rochester Community Schools

Encourage reading all summer long

It's important for kids to keep reading during the summer. When children read every day, they learn to read faster and understand more of what they read.

When kids take the summer "off" from reading, they tend to lose much of the progress they've made during the school year—it's like taking two steps forward and one step back. But those who read during the summer start school ready to continue their progress. To promote summer reading:

- **Connect books to summer activities**—suggesting sports books for a summer league player, for example.
- **Encourage a change of venue.** Read books at the pool or the beach—or even just outside on the front steps.
- **Suggest a ghost-story camp-out** (or camp-in) where everyone selects a favorite scary story to read aloud.
- **Look at flea markets for collections of series books**, like Nancy Drew or the Hardy Boys. Series books keep kids reading to find out what happens to their favorite characters.



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Help your child connect with reading

Your child has learned to read, but he didn't learn to like it. Now what can you do? Thankfully, there are ways to help. For example, you can:

- **Ask questions** that encourage your child to relate to what he's reading. "The main character had to face a fear. What fears have you faced?"
- **Be flexible** about what your child reads. For example, have him read instructions for a favorite videogame. Then talk about what he learned.
- **Surround your child** with positive messages about reading. Keep interesting materials around the house. Make time for reading. Show respect for his reading choices.

Source: Cathy Puett Miller, "Motivating the Reluctant Reader," Education World, www.education-world.com/a_curr/columnists/miller/miller004.shtml.

How do you promote success?



You know your child can succeed—but have you told her so? When it comes to reading and other challenges, kids need to know that parents believe in them. Your encouragement goes a long way. It doesn't matter if your child can't read every word. What matters is that she tries hard. That's true success.

Source: "Tips for Parents: Starting the New School Year Right," National Education Association, www.nea.org/parents/startnewyeartips.html.

Discuss 'word families'



To make reading easier for your child, try reviewing word patterns. List words that sound and look alike, such as *walk*, *talk* and *chalk*. Grouping words can make them easier to learn.

Source: "Word Families," Literacy Connections, <http://literacyconnections.com/WordFamilies.php>.

Volunteer to boost fluency



There's a simple way to build your child's fluency (ease of reading) and support the school, too. Read to the class! When kids hear adults read well—and with feeling—it helps them do the same. By volunteering, you also remind your child that learning and reading are family priorities.

Source: Jennifer Cummings, M.Ed., "YAY for Volunteers!!" Families Online Magazine, www.familiesonlinemagazine.com/school/.

"There are many little ways to enlarge your child's world. Love of books is the best of all."

—Jacqueline Kennedy

Enjoy teaching about English idioms

Has your child heard of *idioms*, such as being “all ears” (which means “paying attention”)? Idioms are groups of words that have special meanings. Learning them—and what they mean—can be fun! Enjoy discussing idioms, such as:

- “**I’m all thumbs**” means “I’m *clumsy*.”
- “**He has an axe to grind!**” means “He has a *complaint*.”
- “**That’s a piece of cake**” means “That’s *easy*.”
- “**She’s cool as a cucumber**” means “She’s *calm under pressure*.”
- “**That really fits the bill!**” means “That is *perfect*.”
- “**He stole your thunder**” means “He *took your recognition*.”
- “**Let’s throw in the towel!**” means “Let’s *give up*.”
- “**She’s adding fuel to the flames**” means “She’s *making a difficult situation worse*.”

Source: “English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions,” learn-english-today.com, www.learn-english-today.com/idioms/idiom-categories/alpha-list_A.html.



For lower elementary readers:

Junie B., First Grader:

Aloha-Ha-Ha, by Barbara Park (Random House). Junie B. is off to Hawaii, and she’s bringing a camera with her. A too-tight swim ring is just one of her amusing challenges.

Stink and the Incredible Super-Galactic Jawbreaker, by Megan McDonald (Candlewick). What’s better than free candy? Readers will laugh while Stink (from the Judy Moody series) finds out.

For upper elementary readers:

Mayflower Treasure Hunt, by Ron Roy (Random House). Dink, Josh and Ruth Rose embark on an adventure involving the real-life Mayflower.

Dealing With Dragons, by Patricia C. Wrede (Magic Carpet Books). A strong princess rejects ordinary life in this exciting tale about life with dragons.

Take a ‘reading vacation’—right where you live!

This summer, enjoy a vacation with your child—without leaving your home town. How? By reading! To motivate your child to read about your hometown, have him:

- **Read the newspaper.** Encourage your child to look for free outdoor concerts, plays and festivals in your area.
- **Contact your local tourism office.** Ask them to send printed information about things to do. Have your child plan a “vacation” for the family.



- **Visit a local museum or zoo.** Read books together that tie in to your child’s favorite exhibits.



Q. My child gets tired of reading aloud to me. Is it okay to take turns?

A. Yes. It’s good to read to your child sometimes—even if she’s an excellent reader!

There are many reasons for this. When you read with clarity and enthusiasm, you can teach your child new, advanced words. (“The guard was *IRATE!*”) You’ll also set an excellent reading example for your child to follow!

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

Help your child learn to ‘decode’ unfamiliar words



Reading sentences and words is like breaking a code. Kids take symbols and turn them into

language. Experts even use the term “decoding” to describe this process. To help your child with this skill, have him:

- **Note** that words are in parts.
- **Blend** parts of words together.
- **Look** for punctuation marks and capital letters.

Source: “What are word attack skills?” SIL International, www.sil.org/lingualinks/literacy/ReferenceMaterials/GlossaryOfLiteracyTerms/WhatAreWordAttackSkills.htm.

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