

# Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Rochester Community Schools

## Biographies can be fun

Many children love biographies, but encouraging them to read their first one can be challenging. To spark your child's interest (without being pushy):

- **Mention something fascinating about the story.** "George Washington Carver created so many things with peanuts! Did you know he ...?"
- **Read part of the book aloud.** Choose a section—and use a voice—that will engage your child.
- **Find a book related to your child's hobbies.** If he loves sports, for example, read about a successful athlete.
- **Discuss what your child learns.** Ask him to jot down his favorite parts and share them with you.



**Source:** "Biographies and Memoirs," Carol Hurst's Children's Literature Site, [www.carolhurst.com/subjects/biographies.html](http://www.carolhurst.com/subjects/biographies.html).

*"The humble little school library ... was a ramp to everything in the world and beyond, everything that could be dreamed and imagined, everything that could be known, everything that could be hoped."*

—Lee Sherman

## Self-correction builds reading skills

Your child is reading aloud and she gets stuck on a word. Should you tell her what it is? Not right away. Instead, help her correct herself. Ask her to:

- **Sound it out.** Often, kids succeed when they tackle words letter by letter (or sound by sound).
- **Finish the sentence.** Look for clues about the missing word. Then try reading it again.
- **Notice pictures.** Do they give hints about the story? They may reveal which word would make the most sense.

When your child corrects herself, show pride! "You solved that mystery like a reading detective!"

**Source:** "Reading Tips for Parents," Copenhagen International School, [www.cis-edu.dk/CISLibWeb/Book%20Worm%20Challenge%20Reading%20Tips%20Becoming%20Proficient%20Reade%20%80%A6.pdf](http://www.cis-edu.dk/CISLibWeb/Book%20Worm%20Challenge%20Reading%20Tips%20Becoming%20Proficient%20Reade%20%80%A6.pdf).

## Good attendance boosts children's reading success



Schools take attendance seriously—and for good reason. Missing school means missing important lessons, including those about reading. When your child is absent, talk with the teacher. See how you can help. If the teacher reads a chapter of a book to students, for example, perhaps you can read it to your child at home.

## Write 'real' book reviews



Whether your child loved or despised a book, she can share her views with others. Suggest that she write a short book review that you will post online. (Libraries and booksellers often allow this.) But never reveal identifying information about you or your child.

**Source:** Barbara J. Feldman, "Publish Your Book Reviews," [Surfnetskids.com](http://Surfnetskids.com), [www.surfnetskids.com/bookreviews.htm](http://www.surfnetskids.com/bookreviews.htm).

## Make reading irresistible



Even if your child says he doesn't like to read, try placing a variety of reading materials around the house. You may be surprised by what he picks up! For example:

- **Magazines.**
- **Grocery and to-do lists.**
- **Instructions.**
- **Joke books.**
- **How-to books.**
- **Books that teach** about drawing.
- **Cookbooks**—especially those with photos.

## Dictionary games build language skills

To build your child's vocabulary, have some fun with the dictionary. Use a dictionary that is appropriate for your child's age. Before starting, make sure your child understands how a dictionary works. Show how the entry word is in bold letters. It's followed by one or more definitions and perhaps a sentence that includes the word.

Take turns leading these games:

- **Read just the definition of a word.** Have the other player or players try several times to guess the word. If no one can guess, then tell the word.
- **Find an unusual word in the dictionary.** Say the word. Then read its definition and the definition of another word. Ask the players to guess which is the correct definition.

**Source:** Peggy Kaye, *Games with Books: 28 of the Best Children's Books and How To Use Them To Help Your Child Learn—From Preschool to Third Grade*, ISBN: 0-374-52815-2 (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1-888-330-8477, [www.fsgbooks.com](http://www.fsgbooks.com)).

## Create a cozy reading spot

Does your child have a special place to read at home? Designing a reading "nook" sends an important message: Our family values reading. Thankfully, you don't need a lot of space. Just include:

- **A selection of appealing materials.** You don't need a bookcase or bookshelf. A small basket or container is fine.
- **Comfortable seating.** A bed, chair or couch is great. A corner filled with pillows works well, too.



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- **Good lighting.** It's no fun to read in a dim area. And you don't want your child to miss a word!

**Source:** "Reading Strategies," KidsKonnnect.com, [www.educatorskonnnect.com/ReadingInformation/ReadingStrategies/ReadingStrategies.html](http://www.educatorskonnnect.com/ReadingInformation/ReadingStrategies/ReadingStrategies.html).



**Q:** My child's teacher uses a lot of reading lingo, such as "fluency" and "decoding." Should I understand what she's saying?

**A:** Parents should not be expected to know reading terms like these. And teachers should be happy to explain them. So when one of these words comes up, ask what it means and how it relates to your child's learning. For example, *fluency* is the ability to read with ease and expression. *Decoding* involves figuring out written words.

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



## For lower elementary readers:

### *Drawing and Learning*

**About Bugs** by Amy Bailey Muehlenhardt (Picture Window Books). Bugs have always been fascinating. But who knew they were this easy to draw? This step-by-step book also includes bug facts in simple language.

**The Great Race** by Dawn Casey (Barefoot Books). China needs a calendar to separate years from each other. Creating one begins with a "great race" involving 13 animals.

## For upper elementary readers:

### *Diary of a Wimpy Kid Do-It-Yourself Book*

by Jeff Kinney (Amulet Books). Fans of the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series can join the fun by keeping their own hilarious journals.

**My Louisiana Sky** by Kimberly Willis Holt (Yearling). Tiger Ann Parker faces a big decision after her grandmother's death. Should she care for her mentally slow parents? Or should she escape with her Aunt Dorie Kay?

## Enjoy your local library



The library is more than a place to check out books. It's also a place for your child to:

- **Listen** to stories read by professional storytellers.
- **Enjoy** fun activities, such as summer reading programs.
- **Work** quietly on a project with plenty of resources nearby.
- **Meet** fascinating people, including performers and authors.

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