

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Vancouver Public Schools
Connecting Families and Schools

Cook up some reading and math success

What simple daily activity involves reading and math? Cooking! And it's something you and your child can do together.

When you prepare a dish:

- **Take turns reading the recipe.** Ask your child to read the list of ingredients aloud, for example, while you collect them.
- **Let your child measure.** Set out measuring cups and spoons and teach your child how to use them.
- **Use math terms.** Say things like, "We need to *add* sugar," "Let's *divide* that into *quarters*" or "That's *half* of what we need."
- **Make more—or less.** Take an uncomplicated recipe and double—or halve—it. Do the math together. How many people will it serve?



"The greatest gift is the passion for reading. It is cheap, it consoles, it distracts, it excites, it gives you knowledge of the world and experience of a wide kind."

—Elizabeth Hardwick

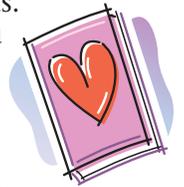
Descriptive words make your child's writing more interesting

People, places and things come alive when writers use descriptive words. Here's a fun way to give your child practice writing interesting sentences:

1. **Write several short sentences** on a piece of paper. For example: "The dog ran to get the ball." "The cat lay on the window sill."
2. **Ask your child to enhance** each sentence by adding some adjectives and adverbs. Encourage her to use a thesaurus to replace some words, too.
3. **Have your child read** her new sentences out loud. For example: "The *huge yellow* dog ran *quickly* to *fetch* the *red* ball." "The *fat striped* cat *lounged* on the *large sunny* window sill."

Ask questions about what your child is reading

To show your support and interest in reading, ask your child questions about the things he reads. Ask, "What page are you on?" "Who's the main character?" "How did you pick that book?" Pay attention to his answers. Does he seem to be enjoying the book? Does it sound like he understands it? Find ways to help if needed.



Sound effects increase attention

Here's an engaging way to help your child think about stories you read aloud: Make an audiobook, and have her add sound effects. While you record the story, your child can create thunder or wail like a siren.

Listening carefully will help her add the right noises—and later, she'll have fun hearing the results!



Make words meaningful to help your child recall information

To help your child remember what he reads, show him how to make words memorable.

Encourage your child to:

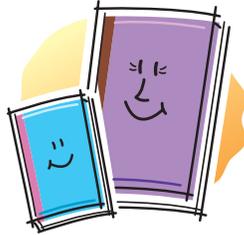
- **Draw pictures** that represent new or difficult words.
- **Use mnemonic devices** to remember lists or spelling words.
- **Add excitement.** If he's learning about another country, suggest he learn a traditional song from that country.



Make the most of your library visits

Encourage your child to take full advantage of all that the library has to offer. Try some of these activities during your next trip to the library:

- **Have a scavenger hunt.** Write down a list of facts that your child should look up, such as Thomas Jefferson's birthday, the tallest mountain in the world and the capital of Thailand. Help your child learn to navigate the reference section of the library.
- **Check out the news.** Grab a newspaper and an atlas. Locate the places where news events are happening around the world.
- **Explore different resources.** Does your library have a genealogy room? What about a special section with information on your town's history? Check out these parts of the library together.



Have your child read a wide variety of books

Encourage your child to read about different people, places and things. And tell him not to worry: He doesn't have to finish a book if he doesn't like it.

Reading different kinds of books will help your child discover new interests and ideas. And he'll be strengthening his reading skills in the process!



Introduce your child to the world of poetry

There are countless types of poetry. Explore several of them with your child!

First, read a few books of poetry together. Notice elements of each poem such as the rhythm of words, repetition or the location of line breaks.

Then, experiment with reading and writing different types of poems, including:

- **Haiku.** This Japanese form of poetry consists of three lines, with a specific number of syllables on each line.
- **Song lyrics.** Have your child write down the lyrics to a favorite song, then compare the structure of the lyrics to that of some of the poems she's read.



For lower elementary readers:

- **Looking at Lincoln** by Maira Kalman (Nancy Paulsen Books). Follow along as a young girl researches Abraham Lincoln's early life, political career and more.
- **I Stink!** by Kate and Jim McMullan (Weston Woods). In this audiobook, listen to the sounds of jazz and the city as a garbage truck eats trash while people sleep.



For upper elementary readers:

- **Black and White** by David Macaulay (HMH Books for Young Readers). Four different stories are interwoven in this story—or are they? Can your child make sense of this unusual book?
- **Fort** by Cynthia DeFelice (Farrar, Straus and Giroux). Two friends spend a summer building a fort and protecting a boy from bullies.



Q: My first-grader's teacher says I should not worry about misspelled words in writing homework. Won't that affect my child's ability to write—and read—well later on?

A: When children first begin to write, they use *invented spelling*. They write words the way they sound.

When they don't have to worry about spelling, kids are more likely to write freely and think writing is fun. As children get older, learning to spell correctly is important. In the meantime, continue to practice reading correctly spelled words with your child.

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

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