

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Vancouver Public Schools
Connecting Families and Schools

Create a regular family reading time

One of the best ways to entice your child to read is to make sure the whole family reads together. This doesn't mean reading aloud to your child—it means establishing a time when *everyone* in the family reads. Sometimes that may mean that you're reading your newspaper while your child is reading a book on her own. Anything goes—as long as you're together and reading!

All you need is:

- **Something for each person** to read.
- **About a half hour**, or longer, if you wish!
- **A comfy spot** for everyone to relax and read together.

When your child sees you reading—and that you enjoy it—she will want to read, too.



“Books are lighthouses erected in the great sea of time.”

—Edwin Percy Whipple

Encourage thinking by discussing books

Your child has just finished a book, and you want him to think about what he read and share what he's learned. Instead of asking him to write a formal report, do something simple and natural: Have a conversation. You can:

- **Discuss the book one-on-one.** Ask your child what the best parts of the book were. What did he think of the main character? Is there anything he'd change about the book if he were the author?
- **Have a family discussion.** Suggest that everyone read the book. Gather to share your views.

If your child enjoys talking about what he's read, encourage him to start a book club. He can ask friends to join, and together they can choose what to read. Then, they can meet regularly to discuss their selections.

Source: J. Trelease, *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, Penguin Books.

Reading mistakes are opportunities for learning

When your child reads aloud, you may notice that he reads the wrong word or pronounces a word incorrectly. Don't immediately correct him.

Let him continue reading so he has the chance to realize the word doesn't “fit.” If he continues without realizing his error, point it out to him. When your child learns to notice when something doesn't make sense, he will be able to correct mistakes and move on.



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!



Use old magazines and newspapers to create new poetry

To encourage your child to have fun with poetry, challenge her to create a collage poem. Help her cut out a variety of words and phrases from old newspapers and magazines.

Then, have her arrange the words into a poem and glue them onto a separate piece of paper. Remind her that her poem does not need to rhyme. Ask her why she chose to arrange the words and phrases as she did.



Source: S. Izarek, “Playing with Poetry,” Scholastic, nswc.com/collage_poem.

Teach your child the SQ3R method for reading and understanding textbooks

Reading textbook chapters might be overwhelming for your child. But the SQ3R method can make it easier. Teach your child to:

- **Survey.** Your child should take a quick look at the material. What stands out? What are the headings? What words or phrases are in italics or boldface?
- **Question.** After surveying the reading, your child should ask herself what questions she might find answers for in the reading.
- **Read.** She should read the assignment one part at a time, taking breaks if needed.
- **Restate.** Talk about what she read. Teaching information to someone else reinforces learning.
- **Review.** What were the main points? What information was surprising? How does this new information relate to your child's life?



Source: "SQ3R," Reading Educator, niswc.com/sq3r.

Encourage the writing process step by step

When authors write a story, they rarely finish their work in one sitting. Good writing involves a process. Suggest that your child:

1. **Brainstorm.** It can be fun to think of things to write about. Sit down with your child and listen to his ideas.
2. **Draft.** At first, your child can just write, without focusing on mistakes. Cheer him on while he works.
3. **Revise.** Show interest when your child reads his story aloud. Ask questions if you're confused so your child can fix his writing.
4. **Edit.** Have your child check for spelling and punctuation errors. Read the final product together and celebrate his success!



Source: Dr. W.D. Lance, "Teaching Writing: The Elementary Years," Global TCK Care & Education, niswc.com/writing_process_steps.



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

A: Definitely not! Children of all ages benefit when they are read to. You can select books and stories slightly 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. Most importantly, enjoy the time together!

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

Silly sayings can simplify spelling

If your child is having trouble spelling a tricky word, make up a funny phrase using each of the word's letters.

For example, for *because*, say "Big elephants can't always understand small elephants." Memorizing the phrase will make spelling that word easier!

Challenge your child to come up with creative sentences that will help her remember spelling words.



For lower elementary readers:

- *Tía Isa Wants a Car* by Meg Medina (Candlewick Press). Tía Isa decides that she wants a car—but that doesn't fit into the family's priorities. One family member works to help her aunt achieve her dream.



- *The Everything Machine* by Matt Novak (CreateSpace Independent Publishing). The residents of Planet Quirk are tired of taking care of themselves, so they delight in a new invention: the Everything Machine, which does everything!

For upper elementary readers:

- *Girl Wonder: A Baseball Story in Nine Innings* by Deborah Hopkinson (Aladdin). Talented Alta Weiss was determined to play baseball, even though all of the teams were all-male.
- *Full of Beans* by Jennifer L. Holm (Random House Books for Young Readers). During the Great Depression, Beans is determined to make some money for his family.

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