

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Vancouver Public Schools
Connecting Families and Schools

Engage your child in frequent conversations to build vocabulary

When you have regular conversations with your child and use advanced vocabulary, you can teach her new words—and she may begin using them on her own! That's great because having a large vocabulary makes reading easier.

When using words your child doesn't know:

- **Provide a definition** that she will understand. "It's a *brisk* fall day! The weather is getting cooler, but it's not cold enough for snow yet."
- **Help her think** of a way to make connections to the word. "Can you remember another time when we were outside in the *brisk* fall air?"
- **Keep using the word** in your conversations. "It's another *brisk* day today. Let's be sure to wear an extra layer for our walk!"



Play October-themed word games

Use the month as inspiration for word games! With your child, you can:

- **Create words** using the letters in the word *October*. How many can he come up with?
- **Brainstorm** a list of words that begin with the letter *O*. Ask your child to put them in alphabetical order. Then have him write a sentence for each word and read it to you.



Suggest fun ways to read

In addition to the reading your child does for school, it's important for her to read for fun, too! Suggest that she:

- **Read aloud** to her younger siblings or friends.
- **Play word games** and board games that include reading and wordplay.
- **Read the Sunday comics** while you eat breakfast together.



Find reading inspiration in autumn

Use time outdoors with your child to guide your reading and writing activities. Here are a few ideas:

- **Collect leaves** and label them in a scrapbook.
- **Observe wildlife** in a park or in your neighborhood. Ask your child to record what he sees in a special journal.
- **Do some research** together to learn more about the plants and animals your child has observed.



"A room without books is like a body without a soul."

—Marcus Tullius Cicero

Ask reading-related questions at your parent-teacher conference

Parent-teacher conferences are a great time to check on your child's reading progress. Ask questions such as:

- "What are my child's strengths and weaknesses in reading?"
- "How can I support my child's literacy development at home?"
- "What types of material does my child enjoy reading in school?"
- "How are my child's writing skills developing?"
- "What reading strategies are you using with my child?"
- "Are there resources you can suggest that would be helpful to improve my child's reading?"

Encourage your child to write to music

Let your child use music as writing inspiration! Have her select one of her favorite songs. Listen to it together. Then, encourage your child to:

- 1. Draw one or more pictures** that describe the song as you listen to it again.
- 2. Write captions below the pictures.** The captions can tell the story in the song but your child should use words that are different from the lyrics. Encourage her to use synonyms to replace some of the lyrics.
- 3. Listen to different genres of music.** Have your child think about how her stories could be different for pop, jazz, classical and rock music.



Take your child on a reading adventure!

Looking for an educational activity that's fun for the whole family? A visit to a child-friendly museum can strengthen your child's reading skills, observation skills and curiosity.

Before you go:

- **Build excitement** by viewing the museum's website together.
- **Read museum brochures** and maps with your child in order to plan your trip.
- **Check out books** from the library related to the museum's exhibits.

During and after your visit:

- **Read the museum notes** about the exhibits with your child.
- **Challenge your child** to find things he saw in the museum in books.



Q: My child picks books that are too challenging, then gives up after one chapter. How can I help her make better choices?

A: Ask the teacher or librarian to help you find books that are at your child's reading level. (Your child should be able to read one page without struggling with more than five words.) Then, let your child pick one to start reading. If she needs an extra boost, read part of it aloud. Consider taking turns reading to each other.

Combine reading and math

Want to get an extra boost out of reading time? Choose a book about math. Early readers enjoy books about counting, such as *Curious George Learns to Count from 1 to 100*, by H.A. Rey. Older readers can handle more complex material, such as *Math-terpieces: The Art of Problem-Solving* by Greg Tang.

For lower elementary readers:

- **Calvin Can't Fly: The Story of a Bookworm Birdie** by Jennifer Berne. When Calvin learns to read, he is consumed by his love of books—so much so that he forgets to learn to fly!
- **Clink** by Kelly DiPucchio. Clink is a rusty old robot. As he watches his friends leave with their new owners, he wonders if he will ever find a family who wants him.



For upper elementary readers:

- **Kitchen Chaos: The Saturday Cooking Club** by Deborah A. Levine and JillEllyn Riley. Liza, Frankie and Lillian start work on a group social studies assignment—and set off on exciting adventures.
- **Guys Read: Funny Business** edited by Jon Scieszka. This collection of humorous short stories is designed for boys—including those who avoid reading. But girls will enjoy it, too!

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