

BUILDING READERS®

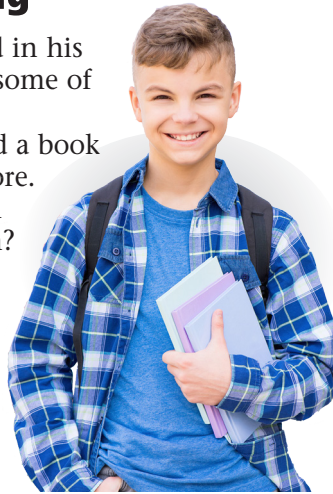
How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Vancouver Public Schools
Connecting Families and Schools

Everyday activities offer engaging opportunities for reading

Rather than force your child to read in his free time, incorporate reading into some of his favorite activities. For example:

- **Visit local sites of interest**, then read a book about area history to find out more. What additional information can your child learn about your town?
- **Talk about foods you love.** What would be fun to make? Let your child pick a recipe from a cookbook to follow together.
- **Watch or play sports together.** Then visit the library together to find books about famous athletes, statistics and training tips.
- **Go for a walk and bring a nature guide.** How many flowers, animals, bugs or trees can you both identify?
- **Start a craft project that requires following instructions.** Let your child read the directions and take charge of the craft.



"If one cannot enjoy reading a book over and over again, there is no use in reading it at all."

—Oscar Wilde

Use journals to encourage creativity

Keeping a journal is a great way to build reading and writing skills. There are lots of ways to journal. If your child doesn't know what to write, give her a notebook and suggest she try:

- **Drawing.** Many kids enjoy sketching things they see or imagine. Suggest that your child add stories or simple captions to accompany her drawings.
- **Reviewing.** What does your child think of books that she reads? What would she recommend to others? Why?
- **Recording.** Your child might like to keep track of the weather, books she reads or facts she collects. Show enthusiasm about what she writes.
- **Creating memories.** Let your child glue favorite pictures and mementos into the notebook—complete with her notes about them. This will be fun to read and remember in the future!

Improve your child's reading skills by reading aloud

Even if your child is able to read on his own, he will still benefit from being read to. When you read to your child, you can:

- **Build enthusiasm** for the story you're reading.
- **Expose him** to new words.
- **Learn more** about his interests.



Source: C. Matthiessen, "The hidden benefits of reading aloud—even for older kids," Great Schools, niswc.com/why_read_aloud.

Help your child practice for spelling tests

You can increase your child's odds of spelling test success by helping him prepare. When practicing, say each spelling word aloud in a sentence, then encourage your child to imagine the word before writing it down. You can also give practice tests in the same format as his real tests.



Context helps give words meaning

When your child gets stuck on a word while reading, show her how to figure out the word on her own. Suggest that she:

- **Sound it out.** Often, kids succeed when they tackle words sound by sound.
- **Finish the sentence.** She can look for clues about the confusing word in the rest of the sentence, then try reading it again.
- **Notice pictures.** Do they give hints about the story?



Source: J. Zorfass and T. Gray, "Using Context Clues to Understand Word Meanings," Reading Rockets, niswc.com/context_vocabulary.

Use textbooks to entertain as well as educate

Does your child think textbooks are boring? Do you? This fun activity might change your opinion. Ask your child to name his favorite subject in school. Then look with him at one of the books he uses in that class. Next:



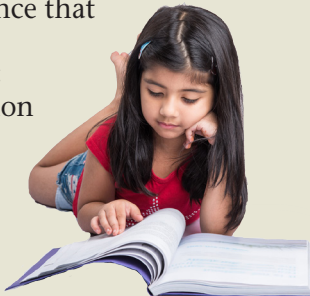
- **Flip through the book** and stop somewhere interesting. Or open to a random page and see what you find. Look at pictures and headings. What do they make you and your child wonder about?
- **Read with your child to satisfy his curiosity.** He can read aloud or you can take turns reading. If he gets bored, switch to a different section and read about a topic that he finds more interesting.
- **Ask each other questions** about what you've read. This will help your child grasp important concepts. Show enthusiasm for the material. This will entice your child to want to learn more.

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. Start by making 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.

Then, take turns leading these games:

- **What's the Word?** 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.
- **Guess the Definition.** 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 for the word you read.



Source: P. 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*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux.



Q: My child has to take notes from a book for a research project. How can I help with this?

A: Discuss how the book is organized. Your child's notes should be organized in a similar way. To show him exactly how this works, look at a chapter or section together. What is the main idea? Have your child write it down. Then notice the supporting details that follow. Your child can summarize them briefly in his own words.

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

Study illustrations and graphics to enhance reading comprehension

To help your child understand what she reads, talk about elements that add to the information in the text. Notice how pictures clarify what she reads.

For example, ask, "Why do you think that girl looks sad?" "Why did the author include this chart?"



For lower elementary readers:

- ***The Library Gingerbread Man*** by Dotti Enderle (Upstart Books). The Gingerbread Man runs away from his home at the library, causing the librarian and several book characters to chase after him!
- ***Chowder*** by Peter Brown (Little, Brown and Company). Chowder is an unusual dog with unusual owners. But when he meets the animals at a petting zoo, he strives to fit in with them.



For upper elementary readers:

- ***A Movie in My Pillow: Una película en mi almohada*** by Jorge Argueta (Children's Book Press). This collection of poetry is the poet's reflection on his life after he moved from El Salvador to San Francisco.
- ***When Mischief Came to Town*** by Katrina Nannestad (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt). Inge travels to live with her grandmother in Denmark, where she must adjust to stark differences in life.

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