

# BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Vancouver Public Schools  
Connecting Families and Schools

## Fill the shortest day of the year with winter fun and learning

December 21 is the winter solstice—the day with the fewest daylight hours of the year. Learning about this astronomical phenomenon can strengthen your child's:

- **Reading skills.** Head to the library or go online and have your child research why there is so little daylight on this day.
- **Vocabulary.** List words like *orbit*, *equator*, *hemisphere*, *celestial*, etc. Have your child put them in alphabetical order, then find and write their definitions.
- **Observation skills.** Have your child look online to research the sunrise and sunset times in different parts of the country. Ask him if he notices any patterns.
- **Oral language skills.** Since it gets dark so early, share stories around a flashlight “campfire” after dinner.



*“The best advice I ever got was that knowledge is power and to keep reading.”*

—David Bailey

## A strong vocabulary helps in every subject

Vocabulary words are assigned in almost every subject because they help students understand what they read, learn more and succeed on tests. To study vocabulary words, suggest that your child:

- **Make crossword puzzles** with the words to practice their spellings and definitions.
- **Make flash cards** and use them to quiz herself throughout the week.
- **Draw a sketch** that connects the word to something that is personally meaningful to her.
- **Play charades** with words. One player acts out the definition while others guess the word.
- **Challenge herself** to use as many vocabulary words as she can in conversations throughout the day.

## Have your child try graphic novels

Graphic novels—books that use pictures and words to convey their stories—offer more than just entertainment. Many address relevant and complex social issues. They cover and stimulate reading in many types of literature, like mystery, fantasy and historical fiction.



Help your child find a graphic novel she'd like to read. For suggestions, talk to the librarian or check out the link in the source below.

**Source:** “Graphic Novels Reading Lists,” American Library Association, [niswc.com/br-es-graphic](http://niswc.com/br-es-graphic).

## Track reading with a journal

A reading journal can help your child keep track of what he reads. In his journal, have your child:

- **List the title** and author of each book he reads.
- **Write a summary** of the book.
- **Rate the book** and list the reasons he liked it or didn't like it.



## Boost your child's reading skills with news articles

Here's a fun way to help your child stay informed and practice the skill of summarizing:

Cut the headline off a news article before giving it to your child to read. After she reads the article, ask her to create a headline for it.



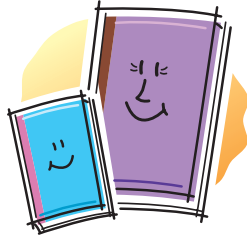
Is the headline she wrote similar to the actual one? Compare and find out!

## Reluctant readers need a little support

Do you have a child who knows how to read, but avoids books? If so, don't worry. Remember that interest in reading blossoms when adults are encouraging.

To foster your child's love of reading:

- **Accept your child's reading choices.** It's great to suggest books that match his skills and interests. But let your child pick what to read, even if you think it is too easy. And if he's bored with a book after reading two chapters, don't make him finish it.
- **Help your child get hooked.** If you read the first chapter of a book aloud, he may keep reading it himself. Also, try to link books to other interesting materials, including magazines and newspapers. "Here's an article about poodles, just like the dog in your book!"



## Cultivate thinking skills

Strong readers tend to be curious. They often stop to ask questions about what they're reading.



Talk with your child about why characters do what they do. If you're reading *Charlotte's Web*, you might ask, "Why do you think Charlotte decided to help Wilbur by writing words in her web?" Ask your child if she would have ended the book differently.

## For lower elementary readers:

- **Ollie the Purple Elephant** by Jarrett J. Krosoczka (Alfred A. Knopf). When Ollie the Purple Elephant comes home, everyone loves him—except for the cat.



- **Rosie Revere, Engineer** by Andrea Beaty (Harry N. Abrams). This rhyming story is about a young inventor named Rosie. Inspired by her aunt, who built planes in WWII, Rosie sets her sights on the skies.

## For upper elementary readers:

- **Love, Amalia** by Alma Flor Ada and Gabriel M. Zubizarreta (Atheneum). Amalia has a special relationship with her Abuelita. Abuelita always knows the right thing to say and do.
- **The Terrible Two** by Mac Barnett and Jory John (Abrams/Amulet Books). Miles is not happy to be moving. But then he meets a fellow prankster and they join forces.

## Time lines can help when reading history

Your child is reading about the American Revolution, but she's having trouble remembering all those names and dates. Help her put things in order by having her make a time line.

Time lines make it easier to see how one event led to another, how much time passed between events and how to put ideas into context. They help give a sense of sequence to history.

Encourage your child to create a time line for each significant event she reads about in her history book.

Offer these tips:

- **Set boundaries.** When did the event begin? When did it end?
- **Identify important events.** Help her summarize key points.
- **Add color.** She might mark battles in green, or birth and death dates in blue.



**Q: Is comprehension something that happens during or after reading a story?**

**A:** Both. The more easily your child can read, the better he understands a story—not just its individual words—while he's reading it. So, help your child work on his fluency. Then, help him build comprehension after reading by asking questions: Where did the story take place? How did it end? Does it remind you of anything in your life?

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

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