

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Vancouver Public Schools
Connecting Families and Schools

Help your elementary schooler use six strategies to learn from reading

As your child progresses in school, she will need strong reading skills to excel in every subject. To help your child get the most out of what she reads, encourage her to:

- 1. Look through the text,** noting interesting details, illustrations and charts.
- 2. Summarize what she reads** using her own words.
- 3. Ask herself,** “What is the main idea of this passage?”
- 4. Review key words** and terms. She should pay attention to words that are in bold or italics.
- 5. Consider the purpose** of the reading. Why does your child think the author chose to write about this?
- 6. Wonder aloud.** Does a plot in a novel remind your child of a historical event she’s learned about? What does your child think about what she learned?



Review language with word games

It’s much easier to remember grammar rules if you use them often. Playing word games with you is a fun way for your child to do this. Here are some examples:

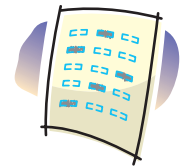
- **Take turns thinking of adjectives** that describe something, such as a rainy day. You might choose *wet*, *misty*, *damp* or *overcast*. How many can your child think of?
- **Use the pronouns *I*, *me*, *we* and *us*** in sentences. Have one person say a sentence, and the other guess if it’s grammatically correct. For example, “My friends and *I* will go together” is correct. “My friends and *me* will go together” is not.
- **Define prefixes and suffixes** (the beginnings and ends of words). For example, the prefix *non* means “not,” as in *nonstop*. The suffix *ful*, means “having,” as in *healthful*.

Practice reading before tests

To succeed on tests, children must comprehend what they read. Even math tests involve reading instructions and questions.

To help your child prepare for tests:

- **Boost reading skills** whenever possible. Read together daily. Introduce your child to new words.
- **Review schoolwork directions carefully.** What words are used often? Help your child practice following complex directions.



Graphic organizers get to the point

Graphic organizers are diagrams that help kids think about what they read.

Draw a large star with five points. Have your child write the title of a story he has read in the center. Then, in the points of the star, he can use information from the reading to answer *who*, *what*, *when*, *where* and *why*. He’ll have a clearer picture of what he’s read in no time!



Make time to cook and read!

To get your child excited about reading, try cooking together. Appoint your child your kitchen helper and:

- **Take turns** reading a recipe aloud.
- **Have him make a** grocery list of the ingredients you need.
- **Cook and enjoy** the meal together. Then, read a book related to the type or style of food you made.



Ask your child to be your family's 'reference librarian'

Give your child practice searching for and finding accurate information online. Make it fun by asking her a series of questions and challenging her to find the answers.



Get started with questions like these:

- **Who was the first astronaut** to walk on the moon? What else happened on that space mission?
- **What was the largest dinosaur** that ever lived? Where did it live?
- **What happens if people** don't get enough sleep?

Remember to adjust your questions to match your child's interests and ability. When your child finds the information you requested, say, "I'm impressed. Tell me where you found that information." Talk about ways to tell if a source is reliable.

Build your child's vocabulary to boost reading comprehension

Having a large vocabulary helps children understand what they read. They don't have to stop reading to figure out a word's definition and they can focus on the meaning of the entire passage.

To boost vocabulary:

1. **Provide simple definitions.**
When defining *curious*, say, "A *curious* person is eager to learn more."
2. **Give relatable examples.**
"When that big box arrived in the mail, you were *curious* about what was inside."
3. **Ask your child** for examples.
"Can you think of someone who was *curious*?" "
4. **Keep using the new word.**
"I'm *curious* about countries in South America. Let's do some research."



Q: My third grader has always enjoyed reading, but lately she has begun to complain about books being "boring." What can I do to make sure she doesn't lose interest?

A: Your child may be bored because she is choosing books that are too easy. Many third graders can handle increasingly intricate story lines. Help her find books on topics that interest her and that include some challenging words. Ask your child's teacher for recommendations.

Suggest graphic novels

Graphic novels offer more than just entertainment. Many address relevant and complex social issues. They cover diverse genres of literature, like mystery, fantasy and historical fiction.



Ask the teacher to suggest one your child might enjoy.

For lower elementary readers:

- **Pluto Visits Earth** by Steve Metzger. When Pluto finds out that astronomers have renamed him a dwarf planet, he gets upset and travels to Earth to demand that he be a real planet again.
- **Who Wants a Tortoise?** by Dave Keane. What do you do when you want a puppy for your birthday—and get a tortoise instead?



For upper elementary readers:

- **Mr. Ferris and His Wheel** by Kathryn Gibbs Davis. See the inspiration that led George Ferris to create the Ferris wheel, which amazed audiences at the 1893 World's Fair.
- **Love, Amalia** by Alma Flor Ada and Gabriel M. Zubizarreta. Amalia has a very special relationship with her Abuelita. Abuelita always knows the right thing to say and do, no matter what Amalia is feeling.

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