

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Vancouver Public Schools
Connecting Families and Schools

Games can teach new vocabulary while they entertain

Improve your child's reading skills by building his vocabulary! With an increased knowledge of words and their meanings, your child will understand more as he reads.

To make learning new words fun, play:

- **Word of the Week.** Take turns choosing a challenging word from your child's vocabulary list. Use it often. Keep track of how many times you and your child use it in a sentence during the week.
- **Word Origins.** Find a book about the origins of common words. For instance, *salary* comes from *salarium*, the Latin word for *salt*. That's because Roman soldiers were paid in salt. Name some words and possible origins. Who can guess the correct origin?



Source: "Helping Your Child at Home with Vocabulary Building," Child Development Institute, niswc.com/play_vocabulary.

"Books are mirrors: you only see in them what you already have inside you."

—Carlos Ruiz Zafón

Suggest comics for reluctant readers

If your child hesitates to pick up traditional chapter books, encourage him to give comic books or graphic novels a try.

Experts say that comic books are just another type of reading material. They provide the same benefits as traditional books. In fact, picture books have adopted elements of comics, including motion lines and speech bubbles.

By reading comic books that you approve of, your child will understand how words and pictures come together to tell a story. He will also be able to see the progression of a story from beginning to middle to end.

So when your child says that he just doesn't want to read, suggest a comic book featuring some of his favorite characters—he may just change his mind about reading!

Source: P. Ciciora, "For improving early literacy, reading comics is no child's play," University of Illinois, niswc.com/reading_comics.

Help your child find time to read

Every minute that your child spends reading counts! Do all you can to encourage your child to read. You can:

- **Make sure your child** has a comfortable, quiet place to read.
- **Help your child schedule** reading time.
- **Avoid interrupting your child** when she is reading.
- **Tell your child** to pick up a book when she says she's bored.



What's a synonym for antonym?

A *synonym* is a word that means the same thing as another word. An *antonym* is a word with the opposite meaning. So a synonym for antonym might be *opposite*! If your child understands that, she knows some important stepping stones to literacy.



Following instructions requires reading

Even homework that doesn't include a reading assignment may involve reading directions in other assignments.

After your child looks at each assignment—but before she begins it—ask her to tell you what she's supposed to do in her own words.

She may have to reread, but she won't have to redo her work.



Source: N. Paulu, "Helping Your Child With Homework," KidSource OnLine, niswc.com/reading_directions.

Put some extra thought into reading time

Your family's reading time each day should include some "thinking time." Thinking about what she reads builds your child's understanding of it. Here are some ideas:

- **Talk about a book before reading.** Why does it look interesting? What is it about? What hints does the cover provide?
- **Think aloud while reading.** Encourage your child to ask questions and make comments while you read. Ask your child, "Why did that happen?" "Does the story make sense?" "What could happen next?" "Do you agree with that character's decision?"
- **Have a discussion after reading.** Did your child like the book? Why or why not? Do either of you relate to the characters' experiences or feelings? Discuss the book again days later, when your child has had more time to think about the story.



Source: "Helping your child learn to read: A Parent's Guide," Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, niswc.com/thought_reading.

Encourage your child to read 'actively'

If your child is tasked with reading a chapter of a novel or textbook, she might read it straight through. Instead, encourage her to read "actively." This involves doing things while she reads. Suggest that your child:

- **Stop once in a while and think.** What are the main points? What has she learned? Is anything confusing? How does the material relate to real life?
- **Restate what the book says.** Putting things into her own words will help your child understand what she has read.
- **Summarize the main points.** Making a list is a great way to prepare for comprehension questions, analysis and the next reading assignment.



Source: "Lesson #11—Textbook Reading, Part 2," PinkMonkey.com, niswc.com/active_reading.



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. Suggest that your child organize his notes in a similar way. Look at a chapter or section together. Have him point out the main idea and write it down. Then, ask him to 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.

Let your child's reading inspire family activities

Use what your child is reading for school to inspire family fun! Plan an adventure related to the book. For example, if your child is reading about Benjamin Franklin, he might learn that Franklin started the very first fire department. As a family, you could visit a fire department in honor of Franklin's work.



Source: "Summer Reading Activity Center," All Star Activities, niswc.com/activity_inspiration.

For lower elementary readers:

- ***Kate and the Beanstalk*** by Mary Pope Osborne (Aladdin). In this twist on the classic fairy tale, a brave girl named Kate takes on a mean giant.

- ***The Pros and Cons of Being a Frog*** by Sue deGennaro (Simon & Schuster). A pair of friends are deciding what costumes to dress up in. After trying out life as a cat, one boy decides to dress up as a frog.



For upper elementary readers:

- ***The Only Girl in School*** by Natalie Standiford (Scholastic Press). After a friend moves away, Claire finds herself as the only girl in her entire school. But her excitement wears off as the school year goes on.
- ***Love to Langston*** by Tony Medina (Lee & Low Books). In a tribute to Langston Hughes, the famed Harlem Renaissance poet, Medina has written new poems based on Hughes' life.

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Publisher: L. Andrew McLaughlin.
 Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.
 Editor: Stacey Marin.

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 (a division of PaperClip Media, Inc.)
 P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474
 1-800-756-5525, ISSN: 1533-3302
www.parent-institute.com