

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Vancouver Public Schools

Make a New Year's reading resolution to promote family literacy

It's a new calendar year, the annual time for making resolutions. Why not make one that will entice your child to read and strengthen his reading skills at the same time?

Establish a weekly family reading time. This doesn't mean just reading aloud to your child—it means hosting a time when *everyone* in the family reads. Sometimes that may mean that you're reading emails from work while your child is reading a book. Anything goes—as long as everyone is together and reading.

All you need is:

- **Reading material** for each family member.
- **About 30 minutes** or longer.
- **A comfy spot** for everyone to relax and read.

When your child sees family members reading—and that they enjoy it—he will want to read, too.



Strengthen your child's reading fluency

Try the following ideas to increase your elementary schooler's reading *fluency*—the ease with which she reads:

- **Encourage your child to reread** books out loud so words become more familiar.
- **Read stories with rhyming words.** These show the connection between spelling and pronunciation.
- **Don't correct incorrect words** immediately. Ask if the word made sense when she read it in the passage. Then look at it again together.
- **Find books that are a little more advanced** and read them to your child. Just hearing more difficult vocabulary will help her build fluency. You can also try listening to audiobooks together.

Boost your child's creativity with collage poetry

To encourage your child to have fun with poetry, challenge him to create a collage poem. Help him cut out a variety of words and phrases from catalogs, newspapers and old magazines. Then, have him arrange the words into a poem and glue them onto a separate piece of paper. His poem does not need to rhyme. When your child is finished, ask him why he chose to arrange the words and phrases as he did.



Go to the library—online!

If you haven't visited your local library's website lately, take a look. You might be surprised by what's there.

Many libraries offer amazing (and free) online services. You may find book lists, free digital books, free audiobooks to download, information on upcoming in-person and virtual events and more.



Learn how to 'attack' words

When teachers talk about "word attack" or "decoding" skills, they are referring to your child's ability to figure out tricky words. To help your child build these skills, review a word's beginning or end. For example, even if your child knows the word *do*, she may be confused by *redo*. Have her read just the familiar part of the word. Then try the entire word again.



Help your child persevere through reading problems

It can be frustrating for both parents and children when a child struggles with reading or simply doesn't like to read. You may feel as if you've tried everything—reading aloud, offering different kinds of books, looking at magazines. But don't give up! It can help to:

- **Watch movie versions** of books to build interest.
- **Find books with large print** or exciting pictures.
- **Read whenever your child** suggests reading.
- **Explore various sections** of the newspaper, such as sports, arts and technology.
- **Play audiobooks** in the car and at bedtime.
- **Talk with your child's teacher.** The teacher may have insight into your child's reading habits—and other ways you can help.



Encourage the writing process step by step

When authors write a story, they rarely finish their work in one sitting. Good writing involves a process. Help your child follow these steps:

- 1. Brainstorm.** It can be fun to think of things to write about. Sit down with your child and listen to her ideas.
- 2. Draft.** At first, your child can just write, without worrying about mistakes. Cheer her on while she works.
- 3. Revise.** Show interest when your child reads her story aloud. Ask questions if there is anything that confuses you so your child can fix her writing.
- 4. Edit.** Have your child check for spelling and punctuation errors.



Read the final product together and celebrate her success.



Q: My fifth grader enjoys listening to me read aloud. Is he too old for this?

A: Definitely not! Children of all ages benefit when they are read to. You can select books and stories slightly above your child's reading level. As you read with feeling, he'll learn new concepts and words. Talk about the story and explain anything confusing. Most importantly, enjoy the time together.

Silly sayings simplify spelling

To remember the spelling of a tricky word, make up a phrase using each of the word's letters. For example, for the word *because*, say "Big elephants can't always understand small elephants." Memorizing the phrase will make spelling that word easier.



For lower elementary readers:

- *Tía Isa Wants a Car* by Meg Medina. Tía Isa decides that she wants a car—but that doesn't fit into the family's priorities. One family member works to help her aunt achieve her dream.
- *The Obstinate Pen* by Frank W. Dormer. Uncle Flood gets a new pen—that has a mind of its own! No matter what he writes, the pen writes something else.



For upper elementary readers:

- *Worse Things Happen at Sea!* by Alan Snow. Step aboard the Nautical Laundry, a ship run by rats who embark on a silly adventure.
- *Daredevil: The Daring Life of Betty Skelton* by Meghan McCarthy. Betty Skelton was one of the first women in aviation. Learn about her fascinating life, from the records she set to her time training with the NASA Mercury 7 team.

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