

# BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Vancouver Public Schools

## Suggest three literacy resolutions for 2022

Ring in the New Year by helping your child make resolutions that will strengthen her reading skills. Here are three to encourage:

- 1. Read more.** Your child could aim to read one book each week or each month. If she is already an avid reader, suggest she try reading a new genre each month.
- 2. Write more.** Ask your child to set aside time each day for some writing. She could write a poem, a letter, an entry in her journal—or anything else she wants. If she has writer's block, show her a picture and ask her to write about it.
- 3. Learn more.** Challenge your child to look through a dictionary and learn one new word a day. Use these words together often, and at the end of the year, she'll have 365 new words under her belt.



*“Children should learn that reading is pleasure, not just something that teachers make you do in school.”*

—Beverly Cleary

### Share a plan of attack for decoding

What should your child do when he sees a challenging word? Attack it! *Word-attack strategies* help readers figure out the meanings of unfamiliar words.

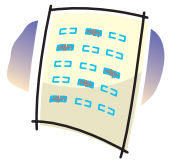
Encourage your child to:

- **Notice pictures.** Photographs and illustrations can give him clues about unfamiliar words.
- **Identify chunks.** Have him look for familiar sounds—or “chunks”—within words, such as “call” and “ing” in *calling*.
- **Keep reading.** He should try reading the sentence again. Or read the next sentence for more information.
- **Make connections.** If the unfamiliar word reminds your child of another word, the two words may be related.

## Practice reading skills that improve test success

To succeed on tests, your child must comprehend what she reads—including the directions. To help her practice for tests:

- **Play board games.** Have your child read the directions before you play.
- **Read homework carefully.** What words are used often? Practice any that give your child trouble. For example, math tests may often include words like *measure* or *amount*.



### Spin some word webs

Word webs help kids make connections that build comprehension. To make one, have your child:

- 1. Pick a word,** such as *veterinarian*.
- 2. Write the word** on a piece of paper, and draw a circle around it.
- 3. Write words** that go with his word (*doctor* and *animal*, for example) on the paper and draw a line connecting each to the main word.



### Read up on the daily weather

Check out the weather page of your newspaper (or use a weather app) for an activity that combines reading and science. Have your child start with today's weather. Is the prediction correct? What's the forecast for the rest of the week?

Focus at first on simple words, like *cloudy* and *rainy*. Then introduce and practice more challenging words, such as *report*, *forecast* and *predict*, or even *Celsius* and *Fahrenheit*.



## Avoid these motivation pitfalls when encouraging your child to read

It is important not to unknowingly discourage your child from reading, especially if she's reluctant to read in the first place. To motivate your child:

- **Don't nag.** Lecturing your child is unlikely to help.
- **Don't bribe.** It's good to recognize effort, but your child shouldn't expect a prize every time she reads.
- **Don't judge how well** your child reads. Offer help when she needs it, but remember that she should see reading as fun, not a test.
- **Don't criticize your child's reading choices.** Reading just about anything is better than not reading at all.



## Writing summaries boosts comprehension

Elementary school assignments often involve reading something—a passage on a worksheet or a few pages in a library book. One way to make sure your child understands what he has read is to have him write a summary.

From time to time, after your child has finished his reading, tell him you'd like to find out what it was about and what he learned. Ask him to write down the most important points in his own words.

Your child may need to go back and read the material again. When he knows he has to write about it, he'll read more carefully. He'll also think more as he reads.



**Q:** My fourth grader says she hates reading. I bring home books on the things she used to love reading about, but she says they're boring. What can I do?

**A:** As children get older, their interests change. Your daughter may have loved horses in second grade, but now she may see them as "little kid stuff."

Ask what topics interest her now, and think about the topics she talks about. Look for reading material on those. Share them with your child, but don't force her to read them. Just keep trying new things.

## Keep reading aloud!

There are so many reasons to read aloud to your child—even if he can already read beautifully!

Reading aloud:

- **Improves** vocabulary and listening skills.
- **Helps** your child enjoy new literature.
- **Gives** you and your child chances to discuss stories and how they relate to real life.



## For lower elementary readers:

- *Ada Twist, Scientist* by Andrea Beaty. Ada is a natural born scientist who likes to question everything. Find out what she discovers when she investigates an unpleasant smell.
- *A Piece of Home* by Jeri Watts. Hee Jun has a hard time adjusting when his family moves from Korea to America. Will he ever feel like he fits in?



## For upper elementary readers:

- *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio. Because he has severe facial abnormalities, August Pullman has never been to school—until he starts fifth grade.
- *The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate* by Jacqueline Kelly. Growing up in Texas in 1900, Calpurnia Virginia Tate, better known as Callie Vee, would much rather learn about science than cooking and sewing.

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