

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Vancouver Public Schools
Connecting Families and Schools

Strengthen your child's thinking skills by reading the newspaper together

When children read, they benefit from thinking critically and analytically about the material. To help your child build his critical thinking abilities, get a newspaper or head to a news website. Then:

- **Choose** an age-appropriate article to read and discuss with your child. Does he find your choice interesting? Why or why not?
- **Scan** the paper or website together. See what topics appeal to your child. Guide him to articles on those topics or any others that may interest him. Talk about what he decides to read. How does it relate to his life?
- **Start** a scrapbook of favorite clippings. Perhaps you both laughed about a comic or debated a certain article's viewpoint. Make a weekly habit of adding clips to your collection.



“Education begins the gentleman, but reading, good company and reflection must finish him.”

—John Locke

Reading is vital to test success

No matter what tests your child takes at school, strong reading skills will help her do well. Experts recommend using several reading techniques. Tell your child to:

- **Read the instructions carefully**, and underline key words. If the directions say, “Circle words with the same meaning,” your child should underline the word *same*.
- **Read each question** and consider what she knows. On multiple choice tests, your child should cross out incorrect answers. If she doesn't know an answer, she can mark the question and come back to it later.
- **Reread unanswered questions**. Remind her that the first answer she chooses is quite often the right one.

Use coupons to turn shopping into a reading experience

If you use coupons when you shop, let your child help you—and work on his reading skills. Before going to the store, ask your child to write a shopping list based on the coupons you plan to use. At the store, have him read the list aloud to you, find the coupons you need and match them to the correct products.



It's time for the weather forecast

Put your child in charge of the weather report. Each evening, ask her to read tomorrow's forecast in the paper or online. Then she can tell the family how to dress the next day.

Not only will your child be practicing a bit of reading each day, she'll also see science in action as she observes trends in the weather.



Let license plates inspire letter-based fun!

Use the license plates you see while on the go to inspire a letter-based game. Have your child call out the letters on a license plate he sees. Take turns thinking of silly phrases that use words beginning with those letters.

For example, if the letters on the plate are YPZ, you might say, “young painted zebras” or “yellow potted zinnias.” The person who thinks up the wackiest phrase wins!



Challenge your child to correct grammar and punctuation mistakes

Everyone makes mistakes, and it can be fun for your child to see *you* make mistakes—especially if he can correct them! Challenge your child to edit your work:



- 1. Write down several sentences** that contain errors. For example, use lowercase letters when you should capitalize. Use incorrect punctuation marks, such as a period instead of a question mark. Use the incorrect tense with a few verbs.
- 2. Have your child review your work.** He should mark his edits on your paper.
- 3. When your child is finished,** review and admire his editing. To simplify the task, make the same mistakes in every sentence. For example, “All of these sentences need to start with a capital letter and end with a period. Can you fix them?”

Graphic organizers boost comprehension

Graphic organizers are tools your child can use to visualize and keep track of what she has read. Explain how the following organizers work:

- **Venn diagrams** use overlapping circles to compare and contrast. Put similarities between objects in the overlapping sections and differences in the separate circle areas.
- **KWL charts** show what you Know, Want to Know, and have Learned. Have your child make three columns. She should fill out the K and W columns before reading and the L column after reading.
- **Time lines** keep track of the order in which events occur. This helps your child remember their sequence.



Q: My child’s teacher says he needs to become more “fluent” in reading. What does this mean?

A: A “fluent” reader progresses through material confidently and without stumbling over words. With more fluency, it is easier for your child to understand material. Reading often, and reading the same material repeatedly, can help. Model fluency by reading aloud to him with clarity and expression. Ask the teacher for more ideas.

Show off your child’s writing

Post your child’s writing on the refrigerator alongside her artwork. Or “publish” her written work in a special book. Make a construction paper cover and punch holes in the papers. Tie them together with string. When your child sees her work showcased, she may be inclined to write more!



For lower elementary readers:

- **Whale Trails: Before and Now** by Lesa Cline-Ransome. Hop aboard the *Cuffee* and go whale watching with a child and her father. Along the way, learn about how whale expeditions have changed over time.
- **My Teacher is a Monster (No, I Am Not)** by Peter Brown. Bobby thinks that his teacher, Mrs. Kirby, is a monster! But when he sees her in the park, his views begin to change.



For upper elementary readers:

- **Wild Wings** by Gill Lewis. An 11-year-old boy works hard to protect an osprey. What will happen when the bird migrates from Scotland to Africa?
- **Starring Jules (as Herself)** by Beth Ain. Jules has a lot of pizzazz. And she has a lot to accomplish, from writing jingles to starring in TV commercials!

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