

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Vancouver Public Schools

Strengthen your elementary schooler's interest in reading with creative activities

Artistic activities develop children's imaginations and can keep reading interesting. To boost your child's creativity and reading interest, encourage her to:

- 1. Draw pictures** of characters and scenes from her favorite books.
- 2. Design a comic book** based on one of her favorite stories. Or, she can create a brand new adventure with the characters.
- 3. Design a bookmark.** She can decorate it, write a quote from a favorite book or write an encouraging slogan, like Read On!
- 4. Make up a song** about story characters. For example, what might the three little pigs sing when the wolf is looking for them?



"A great book should leave you with many experiences, and slightly exhausted at the end. You live several lives while reading."

—William Styron

Help your child analyze information online

When your child is doing a research project, he should use his reading skills to find reliable information. To evaluate the information he finds online, your child should ask himself three questions:

- 1. Is the source reputable?** Be sure your child checks to see where the information is coming from.
- 2. Is the source biased?** Information that comes from a company might be designed to sell their product. Information from an organization might reflect a particular agenda. Your child should consider these biases as he reads.
- 3. Is the information up-to-date?** Science studies, for example, may become outdated when newer research is completed.

The spring is a great time to read about nature

Now that the weather is getting a bit warmer, challenge your child to conduct a nature study. How many animals, birds and insects can she find in your backyard or in a local park?



Have your child make a list and then go to the library or online to research the critters on her list.

Exposure to correct grammar will improve your child's language

Learning grammar rules can be tough—but reading makes it easier! When your child reads well-written text, he sees how language should be used. When he's used to that, mistakes in other materials will stand out.



Ask questions to support your child's reading progress

Working with your child's teacher is one of the best ways to support your child's reading efforts. Ask:

- **How are my child's** reading skills developing?
- **Is my child** reading at grade level?
- **Does my child** enjoy reading in class?
- **Is my child** showing any signs of reading difficulties?
- **How can I help** my child strengthen reading skills at home?



Mealtime talks leads to school success

With a little imagination, mealtime can be a time for the whole family to have fun together and learn. The language skills children learn during meals can help them improve their reading, listening and speaking skills.

During mealtime, have family members:

- **Give book reports.** Have everyone share plots, characters and opinions about what they are reading.
- **Take turns selecting a topic** to discuss. Make sure everyone gets a turn.
- **Place an interesting object** in the center of the table to spark discussion.
- **Play Did You Know?** Have each person write three facts, one on each of three index cards. Place the cards face down and take turns drawing and reading them. Discuss what you learn.



Boost vocabulary with three strategies

Reading at home is one of the best ways to boost your child's vocabulary. That's because reading exposes your child to new ideas, concepts and words. Here are three effective strategies to try:

1. **Read a variety** of books to your child. Read a book that explains how something works. Find a book about a sport your child loves. Or, read a biography about a person your child admires.
2. **Look for words** your child might not know as you read. Write down the words and look up their definitions.
3. **Use a thesaurus.** Help your child find synonyms for words he uses often when writing or speaking.



Q: How can I help my child remember the difference between synonyms and antonyms?

A: Remind your child that synonyms have the same, or similar, meanings (such as *happy* and *cheerful*). Point out that *synonym*, *same* and *similar* all start with the letter *s*. Antonyms, on the other hand, are words with opposite meanings (such as *fast* and *slow*). Point out that antonym starts with *ant-*, a prefix which means *against*.

Reinforce the value of reading

Take a picture of your child reading her favorite book. Positive images of reading will remind your child of how important and exciting reading is.

Place the picture where she'll see it regularly. Post it on the refrigerator. Tape it to the mirror. Send a copy to a relative to show how proud you are of your reader.



For lower elementary readers:

- ***Mine-o-saur*** by Sudipta Bardhan-Quallen. The Mine-o-saur refuses to share his toys and his snacks. Soon he realizes he has no friends to play with! How can the Mine-o-saur solve this problem?



- ***Mars Needs Moms!*** by Berkeley Breathed. Milo doesn't see what's so great about moms. But when Martians kidnap the moms, will Milo discover why he needs his?

For upper elementary readers:

- ***Poem Runs: Baseball Poems and Paintings*** by Douglas Florian. Get ready for baseball season with this collection of poems about various positions and pieces of equipment.
- ***Five Children and It*** by E. Nesbit. In this classic, five children find a Sand-fairy that grants wishes! But making wishes isn't as easy as it seems.

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