

# BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Vancouver Public Schools  
Connecting Families and Schools

## Interesting discussions build your child's reading comprehension

To help your child get the most out of books, talk about them before, during and after he reads. Discuss a book's:

- **Title and summary.** Have your child look at the summary on the back cover. What can your child tell just from the title and summary? What does he think will happen? Where does the story take place?
- **Characters and plot.** What are the main characters like? Does your child agree with their decisions? What might happen next? Do the characters or plot remind him of anything in his life?
- **Conclusion.** Did the story end the way your child expected? What other endings can he imagine? What did he get out of the story? Would he recommend the book to a friend?



## Have fun with synonyms and antonyms

Here's a way to work on *synonyms* (words with the same meaning) and *antonyms* (words with opposite meanings) with your child while spending quality time together. You and your child should each take a piece of paper divided into three columns. Then:

1. **In the first column,** describe yourselves in positive terms. For example, "I am ... *kind, generous.*"
2. **In the second column,** write a synonym for each word. "I am ... *nice, giving.*"
3. **In the third column,** write antonyms for each word in the first column. "I am not ... *mean, stingy.*"
4. **Exchange pages.** Read about each other. Then play the game again—this time describing the other person.

## Search for letters and words on magazine pages

Grab an old magazine and try this activity with your child:



1. **Write a few letters** of the alphabet at the top of some magazine pages.
2. **Ask your child** to circle the words that begin with the letters you wrote.
3. **Count to see which letter** started the most words. Read the circled words together and discuss their meanings.
4. **Have your child create** sentences with some of the words. Ask her to read the words back to you and review their meanings.

## Hints for choosing new books

If you're looking for a book your child will love, start thinking about his favorite things. Favorite author? Maybe he or she has written something new. Favorite hobby? Look for a how-to book.



## Learning sight words makes reading easier

*Sight words* are words your child should be able to recognize on sight. Some sight words are used frequently. Others are difficult to sound out. It is helpful to memorize these words.

To speed up your child's reading, ask her teacher for a list of sight words, and then make flash cards together. Have your child write the words on the cards, and go through them together often.



## Rereading and revising are critical steps in the writing process

Your child has written the last sentence of an essay. “I’m finished!” he proclaims. Not so fast. Part of the writing process involves reading and editing. To help with these important steps:



- **Offer to read or listen to the report.** Compliment the things your child did well—and then offer constructive criticism, if necessary.
- **Encourage a new perspective.** Challenge your child to look at his paper as if he were the teacher. What would he suggest be added, removed or changed? What would he leave just as it is?
- **Supervise revisions.** Encourage your child to improve the report. Watch—and celebrate—as it goes from rough draft to final version!

## Spice up your regular reading routine

Reading with your child every day is one of the most important things you can do to help her learn. But you don’t have to always do it the same way! To mix things up:

- **Find new reading spots.** You and your child could build a reading fort. Or, simply read on the stairs.
- **Read as a team.** Have your child follow words with her finger while you read aloud. Or, take turns reading paragraphs.
- **Plan a performance.** Choose a favorite passage and help your child master reading it aloud for an audience.
- **Celebrate success.** When you reach a goal, such as 100 reading minutes in a week, do something special.



**Q:** I want to encourage my child to read challenging material, but I don’t want him to get frustrated or discouraged. How can I tell if a book is too difficult for him?

**A:** Ask your child’s teacher about his reading level. This will help when choosing books to read. You can also try the “five-finger rule” to assess a book’s

difficulty. Have your child read a full page. Hold up one finger each time he struggles with a word. If all five fingers are up by the end of the page, the book may be too challenging. Just save that book for later.

## Be a fluency role model

When you read aloud to your child smoothly (with emotion and enthusiasm) you show that fluent reading is similar to talking. It flows with ease. After you’ve modeled fluent reading, have your child practice by reading to you.



## For lower elementary readers:

- ***Dinosaurs!*** by Gail Gibbons (Holiday House). In this colorful, informative book, young paleontologists will learn all about different kinds of dinosaurs.



- ***Finding Wild*** by Megan Wagner Lloyd (Alfred A. Knopf). Wild can be found in all kinds of places, from deep in a forest to the side of a mountain.

## For upper elementary readers:

- ***Heroes and She-ros: Poems of Amazing and Everyday Heroes*** by J. Patrick Lewis (Dial). From Helen Keller to Roberto Clemente, this book of poetry describes how people have made the world a better place.
- ***Racing the Moon*** by Alan Armstrong (Random House). Alexis is building a rocket to go into space. Then she meets Captain Ebbs, a space travel expert, and the space pioneers set out on adventures.

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