

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Vancouver Public Schools
Connecting Families and Schools

Reading for pleasure can improve your child's literacy skills

When your child reads often for pleasure, she boosts her reading comprehension, vocabulary growth, spelling skills, grammar and background knowledge.

To encourage reading:

- **Suggest books you enjoyed** when you were young. Search online for some of your favorite authors or books with your child.
- **Help your child find friends** who like to read. Encourage them to discuss books they enjoy. They could even start a book club.
- **Keep a supply of books** and magazines on subjects that interest your child available all around your home.
- **Connect books and food.** Many adults enjoy reading at cafés. Create your own café at home. Bake a yummy dessert, put out an array of reading materials, sit down with your child and spend some time reading.



Work with your child's teacher to set reading goals

When it comes to your child's reading abilities, it can be difficult to set goals. You may not be exactly sure what or how much your child should be reading. His teacher can help. Ask about:

- **Reading level.** Is your child meeting expectations for his grade? What kinds of reading materials are best for him? How can you tell if a book is the right level? How can you help him strengthen his reading skills?
- **Reading habits.** Many teachers expect students to read for a certain number of minutes each day. By working as a team (perhaps by having your child keep a reading calendar), you and your child's teacher can instill the reading habits that lead to academic success.

Have fall fun with a word game

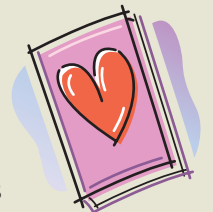
Play an autumn-themed version of a classic word game. To start, have your child think of a fall word—but not say it out loud! Then he should:



1. **Draw an outline of a pumpkin.** Under it, have him write a blank for each letter of his mystery word.
2. **Ask other players** to take turns guessing letters in the word. Your child should write the correct letters in their spaces. For each incorrect guess, add an eye, nose or mouth to the pumpkin until it's a jack-o'-lantern!

Mix up your reading routine

Change your daily reading routine every once in a while to keep it interesting for your child. One day, you might read to her. The next day, have her read to you. Ask other family members to take turns reading with you, too.



Have conversations about reading

Even if your elementary schooler reads independently, he can still benefit from talking to you about what he reads. To start conversations with your child about reading:

- **Ask questions** about what he is reading and what he thinks about it.
- **Consider reading** the same material as he does so you can have more in depth discussions about plot, characters, etc.



Enhance reading skills *and* math success

Show your child how to use her reading skills to help with her math homework. When your child has word problems for math class, she needs to be able to deconstruct the text in order to understand what she's being asked to do. This involves:

1. **Reading and understanding the text.**
2. **Identifying what needs to be answered.**
3. **Creating and solving the equation.**



Together, review key terms in math problems that will give your child hints when she's reading. What do *increased*, *fewer than* or *difference* mean in math problems? Encourage your child to read a word problem carefully several times and look for key words.

Then help her read the question again to identify what she is supposed to solve for and how to create the equation.

A personal dictionary boosts vocabulary

Your child is constantly seeing and hearing new words every day. How will he ever be able to remember them all? Help him make his own special dictionary for all the new words he learns.

Encourage your child to write new words or words he's not sure about in a small notebook. Writing just the word is OK. Later, your child can look up the new word and add the definition. He can also draw pictures to illustrate the definition.

Encourage your child to review his dictionary regularly and his vocabulary is sure to grow!



Q: I gave my child a journal, but she doesn't want to use it. How can I encourage her to write in it?

A: Journals are great for building reading and writing skills, but some kids don't want to write about their daily activities and feelings. They may respond, however, to prompts. Suggest that your child start

entries with interesting sentences, such as:

- **If I could design a school**, I would ...
- **If I could have one superpower** it would be ...
- **If I wrote a book**, it would be about ...

Explore many types of books

Learning about *genres* can make reading more interesting to your child. Together, search a library website to find at least one:

- **Mystery.**
- **Autobiography.**
- **Book of poetry.**
- **Historical novel.**
- **Science fiction tale.**
- **Reference book.**



For lower elementary readers:

- ***Itsy Mitsy Runs Away*** by Elanna Allen (Atheneum Books for Young Readers). Itsy Mitsy despises bedtime, so she decides to run away. But first, she must pack!



- ***Awesome Autumn*** by Bruce Goldstone (Henry Holt and Company). From the leaves turning color to days getting shorter, autumn is full of action!

For upper elementary readers:

- ***Johnny Appleseed: The Legend and the Truth*** by Jane Yolen (HarperCollins). Go beyond the legend of Johnny Appleseed and learn the true story of John Chapman.
- ***Grandmothers' Stories: Wise Woman Tales from Many Cultures*** retold by Burleigh Mutén (Barefoot Books). Enjoy a collection of folktales from all over the world, including Senegal, Germany and Japan.

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