

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Vancouver Public Schools
Connecting Families and Schools

Journals can improve comprehension

To boost reading comprehension, encourage your child to take notes in a journal as he reads. Writing down characters' names, places, situations and problems will help him remember these details and follow the material better.

When he finishes reading a section, encourage him to write down additional notes about his observations:

- **What did he think** of what he read?
- **What details are important?** Why does he think so?
- **What questions** does he have?
- **Can he relate** to the characters in the story? If so, how?
- **Does the story** remind him of something else he has read?
- **What was the funniest,** saddest, strangest or most exciting thing that happened in the story?



"The books that help you most are those which make you think the most."

—Pablo Neruda

Stand up to the 'fourth-grade slump'

Interest in reading often drops as students move from early elementary school to the upper grades. Some experts say fourth grade tends to be when this starts.

To maintain your child's interest, make sure home reading time is frequent and fun. Keep irresistible materials around the house, such as:

- **Novels** related to your child's interests.
- **Kid-friendly news articles** and comics.
- **Biographies** of role models.
- **Magazines** about your child's favorite topics.
- **High-quality graphic** (comic) novels.
- **Cookbooks** and other how-to books.
- **Books** and articles *you'll* enjoy—so you can set a good example!

Make reading a late-night treat

It's important for your child to spend time reading for pleasure every day at home. But some kids resist this activity.

Try letting your child stay up at least 10 minutes later at night to read. Make this treat even more exciting by reading together or giving her a flashlight to use. You may be surprised to hear, "Please, Mom! Just five more minutes!"



Enjoy ranking book titles

Next time you're at a bookstore or library, suggest that your child take a closer look at book titles. Which five or 10 titles does he like best? Why?

What's his top pick? Suggest that he try the book and see if it lives up to its name!



Ask 'what if?' questions

Reading and writing go hand in hand. The more your child writes, the better her vocabulary and reading skills will be. Ask a few "what if?" questions to spark her creative imagination. Then, challenge her to write short stories explaining her answers.

To start, ask questions like:

- **What if oranges** were purple?
- **What if dogs** could talk?
- **What if everyone** had the same name?



Help your child develop research skills for now and the future

A solid understanding of how to conduct research will come in handy for your child's entire academic career. When he needs to research something for a school assignment, share these strategies:



- **Define the task.** Help your child figure out exactly what he needs to research. By narrowing down key words to search for, your child's research will be more focused.
- **Use reliable sources.** Together, determine if a source is appropriate and factual. Recently published reference books and websites that end in *.gov* or *.edu* are generally reliable sources.
- **Take notes.** Whether your child writes key facts on index cards or on a piece of paper, keeping track of information—and its source—will help him stay organized.

Launch your family toward reading!

Have a question about how to help your child with reading? Visit Reading Rockets online, which is funded by the U.S. Department of Education. The site aims to "launch young readers," and it motivates parents, too! Find it at www.readingrockets.org.



For lower elementary readers:

- ***Stealing Home: Jackie Robinson: Against the Odds*** by Robert Burleigh (Paula Wiseman). Burleigh uses poetry and narratives to tell the story of Jackie Robinson, the first African American to play major league baseball.
- ***A House for Hermit Crab*** by Eric Carle (Aladdin). Hermit Crab outgrows his shell and finds a new home. Kids will relate to the discomfort and value of change.



For upper elementary readers:

- ***The Have a Good Day Cafe*** by Frances Park and Ginger Park (Lee & Low). Every day, Mike's family sells food from their food cart. But when business starts to slow, Mike and his grandma come up with a plan.
- ***Bread and Roses, Too*** by Katherine Paterson (Clarion). During a mill-worker strike in 1912, a young girl must live with another family.

Flowers can help your child explore genres

Spring is here and flowers are in bloom—in gardens, in planters and even in books. Take this opportunity to learn more about flowers *and* about different genres (categories) of literature.

With your child, read a:

- **Fiction book** about a flower. Talk about how you know it is fiction. For example, do the flowers speak?
- **Nonfiction book** about a flower. Discuss what makes this book nonfiction. Are there photos or realistic illustrations? Did you learn facts?
- **Poem** about a flower. How do you know that this is poetry? Do the words follow a pattern or rhyme?



Q: My child is not very sure of himself when he reads aloud. What can I do to help build his confidence?

A: Encourage your child to practice! Read to and with your child every day. Show him how to pronounce words he is unsure of. Help him understand what he reads by encouraging him to ask plenty of questions.

Keep talking with your child every day to strengthen his language and vocabulary skills.

Do you have a question about reading? Email readingadvisor@parent-institute.com.

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