

# BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Vancouver Public Schools  
Connecting Families and Schools

## Independent reading has a positive effect on your child's school success

When your child chooses to read material that is not part of a school assignment, he is engaging in *independent reading*, a term used by educators. And research shows that there is a strong connection between independent reading and academic success.

To encourage this type of reading at home:

- **Set an example.** When your child sees you reading, he may decide to join you.
- **Establish a family reading time.** Carve out some time each week when family members gather together to read.
- **Ask for your child's opinions** about what he reads. Show him that you're interested in learning more about the books he likes.



**Source:** V. Thompson, "The Importance of Independent Reading in Elementary Schools," Classroom, [niswc.com/br\\_independentreading](http://niswc.com/br_independentreading).

### Talk about different types of nouns

In school, your child will learn that a *noun* is a person, place, thing or idea. There are two types of nouns:

1. **Common.** These nouns name general items (*brother, kitchen*).
2. **Proper.** These nouns name specific items and are capitalized (*Patrick, Idaho*).

To practice these concepts at home:

- **List various nouns** and have your child say whether they're common or proper nouns. For example, *dog* (common), *hat* (common), *Mississippi* (proper) and *Dr. Seuss* (proper).
- **Look at a book or magazine** with your child. Challenge her to find several examples of people, places, things, ideas and proper nouns.
- **Make it a game.** Read a story aloud and have your child listen for nouns. She can raise her hand when she hears a common noun, and stand when she hears a proper noun.

### Have fun with poetry this month

April is National Poetry Month, so look for collections of funny poetry to read with your child. Try Shel Silverstein's *Where the Sidewalk Ends* or Bruce Lansky's *A Bad Case of the Giggles*.

Don't just read the poems together—act them out! Use a booming voice, a whisper or a squeaky voice—whatever you think is appropriate. Or change the words to make an even sillier poem.



### Reading mission: Find mistakes!

Mistakes aren't fun—unless you're catching them! Challenge your child to find mistakes when she reads. She might see them in your local newspaper, on signs, or in notes you write. You might even make a mistake on purpose to see if your child can find it!



### Build your child's vocabulary with crossword puzzles

Children with large vocabularies have an easier time reading. To boost your child's word smarts, introduce him to crossword puzzles.

Follow these steps:

1. **Look online** to find age-appropriate puzzles.
2. **Solve the first few** together until your child gets the hang of it.
3. **Suggest your child** take a break if he becomes frustrated. Word games should be fun, not work.



## Turn sight-word practice into a game

“Do you want to practice reading sight words?” you ask your child. “No thanks,” he says. Instead, try asking, “Want to play a game?” Then play this version of Memory:

- 1. Write 40 sight words** (basic words that kids use often and recognize on sight, such as *does*, *about* and *the*) on index cards. Put each word on two cards. You'll have a total of 80 cards.
- 2. Let your child arrange the cards facedown** on the floor or a table. No one should be able to see the words.
- 3. Take turns flipping over two cards at a time.** Read each word aloud. If one of you finds a match, keep the cards and take another turn. Otherwise turn them back over.
- 4. When all the cards have been matched,** see who has the most. Make new cards when your child has learned the words!



## Questions stimulate critical thinking

It's important for children to think critically when they read because it boosts understanding. So the next time your child picks up a book, ask questions such as:

- **What do you think** the cover says about the book? What do you think it might be about?
- **Does the story** make sense to you? Does it remind you of anything you've ever read or experienced?
- **Do you like** how the author wrote the book? Why or why not? What would you change?
- **What was the book about?** Would you recommend it to other kids?



## Break up compound words

Isolating parts of words helps your child develop her knowledge of language. Make a list of *compound words* (words that have two parts) like *sunshine*, *moonbeam* and *baseball*. Pick one of the words and then say, “The big word is *baseball*. If I say *base*, what is missing?”



## For lower elementary readers:

- *The Day the Crayons Quit* by Drew Daywalt. When Duncan opens his crayon box, he finds a note from his crayons. Each crayon is upset about something, and they've all gone on strike!
- *AlphaOops! The Day Z Went First* by Alethea Kontis. Z is tired of always being last—but rearranging the alphabet isn't quite as easy as A-B-C.



## For upper elementary readers:

- *Nouns and Verbs Have a Field Day* by Robin Pulver. It's Field Day in Mr. Wright's class—and the nouns and verbs that the students have been studying join in!
- *Are You "Normal"?* by Mark Shulman. What goes best with peanut butter? Chocolate? Jelly? Something else? This irresistible book has answers from kids across the country.



**Q:** I want my child to do well in reading. How can I set high expectations without nagging?

**A:** It's important to keep a positive attitude about reading—and to encourage reading without making it seem like a chore. The worst thing you can do is pressure your child by saying things like, “You *have* to read well or you'll *fail*.” Instead, say, “Reading can help us learn about almost anything! Let's think of something really cool to read about this week.”

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