

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Vancouver Public Schools
Connecting Families and Schools

Take advantage of opportunities to read during weekend activities

It's a Saturday afternoon, and you wish your child were reading. Instead of asking her to pick up a book, incorporate reading into some of your family's weekend activities. For example, you could:

- **Explore local history.** Ask your child to go online and research a historical site in your area. Visit it together and let your child share what she learned.
- **Cook together.** Talk about foods you love. What would be fun to whip up? Let your child pick a recipe from a cookbook to read and follow.
- **Watch or play sports** together. Then, visit the library to find books about famous athletes, statistics and playing tips.
- **Bring a nature guide** on a walk. How many flowers, animals, bugs or trees can you and your child identify?
- **Start a craft project** that requires following instructions. Let your child read the directions and take charge of the craft.



Build your child's reading confidence

When young children learn to read, they tend to get excited and want to practice. When your child starts reading, he will probably ask you to listen to him. How you do this can affect your child's motivation to read and his progress. Follow these guidelines:

- **Get the right books** for your early reader—books with pictures, a few sentences on each page, repetitive words/phrases and predictable stories.
- **Be a good listener.** Don't interrupt your child to correct him, or turn it into a reading "lesson." For now, the key is to have fun, laugh and enjoy the story.
- **Give lots of praise** and encouragement. Say, "Wow! Listen to you read."

Performances enliven poetry

April is National Poetry Month! So it's the perfect opportunity to celebrate poetry. Visit the library with your child and check out several books of poetry—some silly and some serious. Then, challenge each family member to memorize and recite a poem. Encourage them to be creative. They could set a poem to music, act it out or recite it with emotion.



Practice using directional words

With your child, draw a simple map of your neighborhood or community. Include places important to her, such as the school, the library, stores, and friends' homes.

Next, give your child directions to one of those places on the map. Use directional words, such as *left*, *right*, *first*, *second*, *east*, *west*. Then, have her give you directions.



Ask questions to find reading topics

Looking for an easy way to build your child's reading skills? Ask open-ended questions about things that interest him. Encourage your child to give details and not just answer with *yes* or *no*.

For example, ask your child, "What was the most interesting thing you learned in science today?" Listen carefully to his answers, then look for books, news articles or websites that he can read to learn more about the topic.



Talk about different types of nouns

Nouns are an essential part of the grammar of a sentence. They are words that name people, places, things or ideas. Remind your child that *common nouns* name them in general (such as *boy*), and *proper nouns* give them specific names and are capitalized (such as *Patrick*).



To practice:

- **List several nouns** and have your child say whether they're common or proper nouns. For example, you might name *dog* (common), *hat* (common), *Mississippi* (proper), *plant* (common) and *Roald Dahl* (proper).
- **Look at a magazine** with your child. Challenge her to find several examples of common nouns and proper nouns.
- **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.

Use textbooks to educate and entertain

Does your child think textbooks are dull? Do you? This activity might change your opinion. Ask your child to get out one of the books he uses in his class. Next:

- **Flip through the book** and stop at a random page. See what you find. Look at pictures and headings. What do they make you and your child think about?
- **Read with your child** to satisfy his curiosity. He can read aloud or you can take turns reading. If he gets bored, switch to a different page or topic.
- **Ask each other questions** about what you've read. Show enthusiasm about what you're both learning. This will help your child grasp concepts and want to learn more.



Q: My daughter is in the third grade. She is a strong reader and has always loved to read, but lately she has begun to complain about books being “boring.” I would hate for her to lose interest in reading. What can I do to help?

A: Your daughter may be bored because the books she is choosing are too easy. Many third graders can handle increasingly complex story lines. Look for books on topics that interest her and that include some challenging words.

Graphics boost comprehension

To help your child understand what he reads, take breaks to talk about what contributes to the information in the text. Notice how the pictures enhance the meaning of what he reads. For example, ask, “Why do you think that boy looks sad?” “Why did the author include this chart?”



For lower elementary readers:

- ***A Mango in the Hand: A Story Told through Proverbs*** by Antonio Sacre. As Francisco prepares for a special feast, his family members teach him lessons through traditional proverbs.
- ***I (Don't) Like Snakes*** by Nicola Davies. A little girl dislikes her family's pet snakes. That is, until she learns some cool facts about the slithery creatures.



For upper elementary readers:

- ***The Junkyard Wonders*** by Patricia Polacco. Trisha doesn't want to be in a “special” class. But in this inspiring story, her teacher finds ways to make it wonderful.
- ***The Unforgettable Season: The Story of Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams and the Record-Setting Summer of '41*** by Phil Bildner. In 1941, two baseball players achieved amazing feats that no player has matched since.

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