

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Vancouver Public Schools
Connecting Families and Schools

Journaling can reinforce your child's reading and writing skills

Keeping a journal is an effective way to build reading and writing skills. But kids aren't always enthusiastic about journaling. Try giving your child a notebook, a pen and some irresistible entry starters. Here are some ideas to try:

- **Rewrite a favorite story.** Encourage your child to write something new about a character she loves.
- **Write a silly poem.** Challenge your child to craft a poem that uses fun combinations of words.
- **Pass notes** with your child. Write a silly question in her notebook for her to answer. Then she can write back and ask you something.
- **Write for TV.** Suggest that your child imagine a new episode of a favorite TV show. Read—and compliment—the story she writes!



"It is well to read everything of something, and something of everything."

—Lord Henry P. Brougham

Teach your child to tackle tough words

Sometimes words are hard to figure out, and that's why schools teach "word attack" skills. When your child approaches a challenging word, encourage him to:

- **Sound out the word**, making and blending letter sounds. Which sounds make the most sense?
- **Think of similar words.** What words look like the mystery word? For example, *freight* looks and sounds like *eight*.
- **Look carefully at pictures.** What people, things and actions are shown? Do they provide any clues?
- **Read more.** Reread the sentence—and the ones before and after it. Think about what words might fit. Give them a try!

Get some read-aloud assistance from famous actors!

Need a break from doing dramatic read-alouds for your child? Visit Storyline Online!

There, you'll find video recordings of popular stories read by members of the Screen Actors Guild. Check it out at www.storylineonline.net. Or, download the app on your tablet or smartphone.



Let reading inspire activities

Your child has to read a biography for school, and she's not excited about it. So plan some fun activities related to the book.

If she reads about Benjamin Franklin, for instance, she might learn that Franklin supported fire departments. As a family, you could visit a fire department in honor of Franklin's work.



Patience pays off when reading textbooks

Some children rush through reading assignments just to be finished quickly.

But when they do that, they miss out on learning. When reading a textbook, your child should:

- **Skim the text**, noticing main ideas.
- **Turn headings into questions**, and then answer them by reading the text.
- **Restate main ideas** after each section.
- **Pause and review** what he learned.



Suggest comic books for reluctant readers

Does your reader hesitate to pick up traditional chapter books but eagerly reads comic books? That's OK! Experts say that comic books are just another type of reading material. They provide many of the same benefits and opportunities to boost reading skills. In fact, picture books and graphic novels have adopted elements of comics, including motion lines and speech bubbles.



By reading comic books that you approve of, your child can learn how words and pictures come together to tell a story. She will also see the progression of a story from beginning to middle to end. So when your child says that she just doesn't want to read, suggest a comic book featuring some of her favorite characters—she may just change her mind!

Source: J. Vecchiarelli, "5 Ways Comic Books Can Improve Literacy Skills," ProLiteracy, nswc.com/br-es_comicbooks.

Integrate TV time and reading time

With a little planning, television can become an effective tool for learning. You can even use it to encourage your child to read. To use TV programs to promote reading:

- **Have your child read** reviews and descriptions of TV shows and movies. Decide together if you'll watch them.
- **Encourage your child** to look up new words that he hears on TV.
- **Watch the news** with your child (making sure that it's age-appropriate). Then, look in the paper or online to learn more about current events.
- **Look for books** and articles that relate to a TV show that interests your child.



Q: Is it normal for children to reverse letters? I'm worried that my daughter has dyslexia.

A: It's common for early readers to confuse similar-looking letters, such as *b* and *d*. As reading skills improve, however, this shouldn't happen often.

It's wonderful that you pay attention to your child's skills! But if you are worried about her reading, be sure to discuss your concerns with her teacher.

Try mnemonic devices

To help your child remember long lists of information, teach him how to use *mnemonic* devices.

A mnemonic device is a memory aid. If your child is learning the names of the Great Lakes, he can use the acronym HOMES to remember Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie and Superior!



For lower elementary readers:

- ***Because Amelia Smiled*** by David Ezra Stein. Because she saw Amelia smile, Mrs. Higgins smiled and baked some cookies. See what else happens in this chain of events started by a smile.



- ***Ish*** by Peter H. Reynolds. Ramon loves to draw, but he's discouraged when his brother says his drawing of a vase doesn't look realistic. That is, until his sister says that it looks vase-ish!

For upper elementary readers:

- ***Nuts*** by Kacy Cook. When Nell and her brothers find two baby squirrels in their yard, they figure out a way to take care of the animals.
- ***Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out*** by the National Children's Book and Literacy Alliance. This is a beautiful collection of essays, personal accounts, historical fiction and poetry.

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Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.

Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Rebecca Hasty Miyares.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525, ISSN: 1533-3302

www.parent-institute.com