

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Springfield School District

Teach your child the importance of evaluating information

Your child is learning that analyzing information means examining and evaluating it instead of just accepting it. This is a key critical thinking skill, especially when reading. To reinforce your child's ability to analyze:

- **Look at a news headline** together, then read the story. Did the headline do an effective job of telling the reader what the story was about?
- **Talk about *fact*** (established truth) and *opinion* (a person's belief). Ask your child to tell you whether a statement is fact or opinion, and why.
- **Ask your child** "What do you think?" at least once a day. Encourage him to share his thinking and explain why he thinks as he does.



*"Fill your house with stacks of books,
in all the crannies and all the nooks."*

—Dr. Seuss

Reading + math = a recipe for success

What simple daily activity allows your child to practice reading and math skills at the same time? Cooking! And it's something you can do together.

When you prepare a dish:

- **Take turns reading the recipe.** Ask your child to read the list of ingredients aloud, while you collect them.
- **Let your child measure.** Teach your child how to read and use measuring cups and spoons.
- **Use math terms.** Say things like, "We need to *add* sugar," "Let's *divide* that into *quarters*" or "That's *half* of what we need."
- **Make more—or less.** Take a recipe and double—or halve—it. Do the math together. How many people will it serve?

Boost your child's vocabulary by making words meaningful

To help your child learn new words, show him how to make words memorable. Encourage your child to:

- **Draw pictures** that represent new or difficult words.
- **Use mnemonic devices** to remember definitions or spelling of words.
- **Add excitement.** Make up a song about the word that will help him remember it.



Explore reading materials on a variety of topics

Encourage your child to look at many kinds of books on many different subjects. She doesn't have to finish a book if she doesn't like it, but reading a broad range of books will help her discover new things and new interests.



Ask questions about what your child is reading

To show your support and interest in reading, ask your child questions about the things he reads:

- **What is the setting?**
- **Who's the main character?**
- **How did you pick that book?**
- **Does the book remind you** of anything you've read before?



Pay attention to your child's answers. Does he seem to be enjoying the book? Does it sound like he understands it? Find ways to help if needed.

Build your child's reading confidence at home

Does your child read too quickly? Guess at words? Avoid sounding them out? If so, he may have reading anxiety. This makes school subjects and tests more difficult.

To reduce stress over reading:

- **Read to your child every day.** It helps develop his love of reading.
- **Don't force your child** to read books to you. Instead, have him read short texts, like signs and headlines.
- **Let your child stay up** an extra half-hour on weekends to read for fun.
- **Make audio recordings** of materials your child finds especially challenging so he can read along.
- **Act out plays to build confidence** with words.
- **Be patient and encouraging.** Talk privately with his teacher and ask about ways you can help.



Descriptive words make writing interesting

People, places and things come alive when writers use descriptive words. Here's a fun way to give your child practice writing interesting sentences:

1. **Write several short sentences** on a piece of paper. For example: "The dog ran to get the ball." "The cat sat by the window."
2. **Ask your child to enhance** each sentence by adding adjectives and adverbs. Encourage her to use a thesaurus to replace some words, too.
3. **Have your child read** her new sentences out loud. For example: "The *huge yellow* dog ran *quickly* to *fetch* the *red* ball." "The *lazy striped* cat *lounged* by the *large sunny* window."



Q: My first-grader's teacher says I should not worry about misspelled words in writing homework. Won't that affect my child's ability to write—and read—well later on?

A: When children first begin to write, they use *invented spelling*. They write words the way they sound.

When they don't have to worry about spelling, kids are more likely to write freely and think writing is fun. As children get older, learning to spell correctly is important. In the meantime, continue to practice reading correctly spelled words with your child.

Sound effects increase attention

Here's an engaging way to help your child think about stories you read aloud: Make an audiobook, and have her add sound effects. While you record the story, your child can create thunder or wail like a siren.



Listening carefully will help her add the right noises—and later, she'll have fun hearing the results.

For lower elementary readers:

- ***In the Trees, Honey Bees!*** by Lori Mortensen. Learn some interesting facts about the daily life of a honey bee in this beautifully illustrated, informative book.
- ***I Stink!*** by Kate and Jim McMullan. In this audiobook, listen to the sounds of jazz and the city as a garbage truck eats trash while people sleep.



For upper elementary readers:

- ***Joe and Sparky Go to School*** by Jamie Michalak. When a yellow school bus arrives at the zoo, Joe Giraffe and Sparky Turtle hop on—and their adventure-filled field trip to school begins.
- ***Tales for Very Picky Eaters*** by Josh Schneider. Is your child a picky eater? Then he'll love this collection of stories with titles such as "The Tale of the Slimy Eggs."

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