

# BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Springfield School District

## Boost school skills while having some reading and writing fun!

There are many entertaining reading and writing activities that help children strengthen valuable skills. Encourage your child to:

- **Look at a globe** or world map and pick a country. Have your child research and share five interesting facts about it.
- **Look up events that happened** on the day your child was born. Your child can write about them in a journal or use the news headlines to make a poster.
- **Invent a new board game.** Have your child design the board and game pieces, and write down the rules.
- **Conduct a nature study.** How many animals, birds and insects can your child find in your backyard or a local park? Encourage your child to take or draw pictures of them and research the critters online.



### Ask four questions about online sources

When doing a research project, teach your child how to find reputable and reliable information online. To evaluate internet sources, help your child consider these four questions:

1. **Is this source reputable?** Help your child do some research on the website or social media outlet that has posted the information.
2. **Is this source biased?** Information that comes from a company might be designed to sell their product. Information from an organization might reflect a particular agenda.
3. **Is the information accurate?** Do other reliable sites include the same information?
4. **Is the information up-to-date?** Science studies, for example, may become outdated when newer research is completed.

## Use coupons to turn shopping into a reading experience

Do you use coupons while grocery shopping? If so, let your child help you—and build reading skills at the same time.

Before going to the store, ask your child to write a shopping list based on the coupons you plan to use. At the store, have your child read the list to you, find the coupons you need, and match them to the correct products.



### Read about spring cleaning

Will your family be doing some household cleaning chores this spring? Ask your child to read the safety labels on cleaning products before beginning and explain the label directions to you.

Reading safety labels is a practical example of how reading is essential in daily life.



### Play the license plate letter game!

Use the license plates you see while on the go to inspire a letter-based game. Have your child call out the letters on a license plate. Take turns thinking of silly phrases that use words beginning with those letters.

For example, if the letters on the plate are YPZ, you might say, “young painted zebras” or “yellow potted zinnias.” The person who thinks up the wackiest phrase wins!



## Reading aloud offers many benefits

Even though your child is beginning to read independently, it's essential to continue reading aloud together. Reading aloud not only gives you quality time with your child, it also introduces new ideas, concepts and vocabulary.

Each time you read aloud together, you are developing your child's:

- **Reading comprehension skills.** Talk about what you read. What is the main idea? What led up to the story's climax?
- **Vocabulary.** Look up new words together and try to use them in a sentence.
- **Listening and speaking skills.** After reading a passage, ask your child to summarize it.
- **Analytic skills.** Ask questions such as, "Why do you think this happened in the story? Why is this character your favorite? Why do you think the author chose this ending? What would you have done differently if you were the author?"



## Share five steps to writing success

Understanding the writing process not only improves students' writing skills—it strengthens reading skills, too. Encourage your child to:

1. **Prewrite.** Brainstorm and bounce ideas off someone. Then take those ideas and create an outline.
2. **Draft.** Write a first copy—*without* worrying about mistakes!
3. **Revise.** Read through the paper at least once. Does everything make sense? Are there better ways to say things?
4. **Edit.** Check grammar, punctuation and spelling.
5. **Review.** Read the paper aloud to catch mistakes.



## Exposure to correct grammar improves language skills

Learning grammar rules can be tough—but reading a variety of books makes it easier. When children read well-written text, they see how language should be used—which makes it easier to recognize mistakes in other materials, including their own writing.



## For lower elementary readers:

- ***Mine-o-saur*** by Sudipta Bardhan-Quallen. The Mine-o-saur refuses to share toys and snacks—and soon he realizes he has no friends to play with! How will the Mine-o-saur solve this problem?

- ***My Teacher is a Monster (No, I Am Not)*** by Peter Brown. Bobby thinks that his teacher is a monster. But when he sees her in the park, his views begin to change.



## For upper elementary readers:

- ***Poem Runs: Baseball Poems and Paintings*** by Douglas Florian. Get ready for baseball season with this collection of poems about various positions and pieces of equipment.
- ***Yellowstone Moran: Painting the American West*** by Lita Judge. Tom Moran was a talented artist who became a great explorer in a land called the Yellowstone.



**Q:** How can I help my elementary schooler remember the difference between **synonyms** and **antonyms**?

**A:** Remind your child that *synonyms* have the same, or similar, meanings (such as *happy* and *cheerful*). Point out that the words *synonym*, *same* and *similar* all start with the letter *s*. *Antonyms*, on the other hand, are words with opposite meanings (such as *fast* and *slow*).

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