

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Explore the world of poetry with your child

Poetry offers a rich and imaginative world for children to explore. With countless forms and styles to discover, there's something for every young reader.

This month, embark on a poetic journey with your child. Explore a variety of poetic elements, such as the rhythm of words, repetition or the location of line breaks. Then, experiment with reading and writing different types of poems, including:

- **Haiku poems.** This Japanese form of poetry features three-line poems with a specific number of syllables on each line (5,7,5).
- **Song lyrics.** Have your child write down the lyrics to a favorite song. Compare the structure of the lyrics to that of some of the poems you've read.
- **Acrostic poems.** The first letters of each line of the poem should spell out a word, such as your child's name. Recommend writing an acrostic poem about your child's best qualities!



Descriptive words make your child's writing more interesting

People, places and things come alive when writers use descriptive words. To help your child practice:

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

Share memory strategies with your child to boost comprehension

To strengthen your child's reading recall and comprehension, demonstrate how to make words memorable.

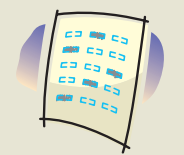
Encourage your child to:

- **Draw pictures** that represent new or difficult words.
- **Create words** using the first letters of each word in a list of items to remember.
- **Make a connection.** Relate new words to your child's own experiences or interests.



Summarize directions to prevent mistakes

Most assignments require students to read directions. Ask your child to look over instructions and summarize them out loud. Restating directions helps your child verify understanding—and avoid having to redo assignments.



Let reading inspire family activities

Use what your child is reading for school to inspire family fun! Plan an adventure related to the book.

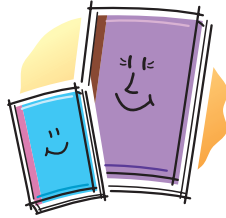
When reading about Benjamin Franklin, for example, your child might learn that Franklin started the first all-volunteer fire department in the United States. As a family, you could visit a fire department in honor of Franklin's work.



Make the most of your library visits

Encourage your child to take full advantage of all that the library has to offer. During your next trip to the library:

- **Have a scavenger hunt.** Write down a list of facts that your child should look up, such as Thomas Edison's birthday, the tallest mountain in the world and the capital of Thailand. Help your child learn to navigate the reference section of the library.
- **Check out the news.** After reading news articles, use an atlas or map to identify the locations of the events mentioned.
- **Explore different resources.** Does your library have a genealogy room? What about a special section with information on your town's history? Check out these parts of the library together.



Cook up some reading and math success

Cooking is a necessary—and fun—activity that involves both reading and math. And it's something you and your child can do together every day. When you prepare a dish:

- **Take turns reading** the recipe. Ask your child to read the list of ingredients aloud, for example, while you collect them.
- **Let your child measure.** Set out measuring cups and spoons and teach your child how to use them.
- **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 an uncomplicated recipe and double—or halve—it. Do the math together. How many people will it serve?



Q: My first-grader's teacher says I should not worry about misspelled words in schoolwork. 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.

Use sound effects when reading

To help your child think about stories you read aloud, make an audiobook together. Have your child add sound effects while you read, such as a thunderclap or a siren's wail.

Listening carefully will help your child add the right noises—and later, you'll both enjoy listening to the results!

For lower elementary readers:

- ***The Pros and Cons of Being a Frog*** by Sue deGennaro. A pair of friends are deciding on costumes to wear. After trying out life as a cat, one boy decides to dress up as a frog.
- ***Big Mean Mike*** by Michelle Knudsen. Mike is the biggest, meanest dog on the streets. So what will everyone think when they start seeing cute, fuzzy bunnies pop up in Mike's car?



For upper elementary readers:

- ***Love to Langston*** by Tony Medina. In a tribute to Langston Hughes, the famed Harlem Renaissance poet, Medina offers new poems based on Hughes' life.
- ***Black and White*** by David Macaulay. Four different stories are interwoven in this story—or are they? Challenge your child to make sense of this crazy book.

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