

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Add some excitement and creativity to your elementary schooler's reading time

Combining reading with artistic expression can boost the impact of both activities. By adding a creative outlet to your elementary schooler's reading routine, you can foster imagination, critical thinking and a deeper understanding of stories.

Encourage your child to:

- **Draw pictures** of characters from favorite books.
- **Draw a map** of where the plot takes place. Ask your child to include as much detail as possible.
- **Design a comic book** based on a favorite book. Your child can draw a comic that lays out the major events in order, or write a completely new tale. What other adventures might the characters have?
- **Make up a song** about book characters. For example, what would the three little pigs sing while building their different types of houses?



Help your child learn about authors

The next time your child is reading a book, ask who wrote it. What information does the book provide about the author? Reinforcing that books are written by real, regular people can make your child more interested in writing.

Help your child:

- **Research details** about the author's life. How do they relate to the book, if at all?
- **Write a letter.** Check to see if the author has a website, or have your child send letters to the publisher. Keep in mind that not all authors always respond.
- **Try to write a story** in the author's style—by imitating humor, short sentences or a certain point of view, for example.

Make a big difference in just 15 minutes each day

Plan to get in at least 15 minutes of family reading time each day. You can:

- **Bring reading material** with you everywhere you go. Pull out a book whenever you and your child have to wait somewhere.
- **Tuck your child into bed** with a story or book chapter.
- **Read a story aloud** during breakfast, lunch or dinner.
- **Listen to audiobooks** while exercising or doing chores together.



Ask friends about books

As kids get older, their classmates become great sources of reading recommendations.

Encourage your child to ask friends, "Have you read any cool books lately?"



Discussing books with peers can spark conversations, boost comprehension and foster a love of reading.

Support reading progress

Talking with your child's teacher is one of the best ways to find out how to support your child's reading efforts. Ask:

- **How are my child's** reading skills developing?
- **Does my child** seem to enjoy reading in class?
- **Is my child** showing any signs of reading difficulties?
- **How can I help** my child strengthen reading skills at home?



Demonstrate the power of adjectives with a fun guessing game

Play this stuffed animal mystery game to boost your child's language and description skills. It teaches children to use vivid language to paint a picture with words. Here's how to play:



1. **Gather a few** stuffed animals and put them in a pillowcase.
2. **Have your child choose** one animal from the pillowcase and describe it to you—without showing it to you.
3. **Encourage your child** to use descriptive words, such as *furry*, *strong*, *tiny* and *smooth*. Remind your child that words that describe things are called *adjectives*.
4. **Guess which stuffed animal** your child has selected.
5. **Switch roles** and describe an animal to your child.

Mealtime talks leads to school success

Involving your child in interesting mealtime discussions can help improve reading, listening and speaking skills. During mealtime, have family members:

- **Give book reports.** Share plots, characters and opinions about what you're each reading.
- **Take turns selecting a topic** to discuss. Or, place an interesting object in the center of the table to spark discussion.
- **Turn maps into place mats.** Refer to the maps when you are talking about places in the news.
- **Play Did You Know?** Have each family member write three facts on index cards. Mix them up and take turns drawing cards and reading the facts.



Q: The teacher says my child needs to become a more **fluent reader**. How can I help with this?

A: A *fluent* reader progresses through material smoothly, with confidence and ease. Fluency makes it easier for your child to understand material. To increase fluency, make sure your child reads often (even if it's the same material repeatedly). When you read aloud to your child, model fluency by reading smoothly, with clarity and expression.

Rely on your child to look up needed information

Make your child the official family fact-checker. If you need to double-check a recipe, ask your child to read it to you. If you're curious about the capital of Bulgaria, show your child how to look it up.

Your child will strengthen research skills and confidence at the same time!

For lower elementary readers:

- ***See What a Seal Can Do*** by Chris Butterworth. Seals may look lazy lolling on a beach, but they're very active animals. Learn about seals and their lives underwater in this beautifully illustrated book.
- ***Goldie and the Three Hares*** by Margie Palatini. After being chased by the Three Bears, Goldilocks lands in the Hares' house for a new adventure.



For upper elementary readers:

- ***Spork*** by Kyo Maclear. Spork does not fit in with either the forks or the spoons in the utensil drawer. What *can* a spork be used for?
- ***Almost Super*** by Marion Jensen. All members of the Bailey family get a superpower when they are 12—and they are prepared to use their powers to save their world!

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