

Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Jere Whitson Elementary School
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Teachers and parents need each other's support

It's important to talk with your child's teacher about his reading progress. And communicating with his teacher is a two-way process. For example:

- **You need to know** what's happening at school. What methods are used to teach reading? Is your child progressing well? What are his biggest challenges? Are there opportunities for parents to help at school, such as by reading to the class? How can you help your child at home?
- **Your child's teacher needs to understand** how things are going at home. What reading activities does your family do? Does your child seem to be making progress? Do other language activities support reading? Also update the teacher about family issues that affect your child, such as a move or divorce.



Getty Images/Digital Vision

Source: Marge Simic, "Eric Digest: Parent Involvement in Elementary Language Arts," Indiana University, www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/digests/d60.html.

Make family reading more fun

It's wonderful when families read together. Try to make this a daily habit. To add some excitement:

- **Read the same book.** Check out several copies at the library. Or take turns reading aloud.
- **Read about the same topic.** Find different books on the same general subject. Some can be fiction, while others are nonfiction.
- **Include long-distance relatives.** Fill them in on reading plans so they can participate.
- **Host book chats.** Talk about what you read. Use the phone, computer or audio/video recordings to include far-away relatives.
- **Keep a journal.** Write about all of your family's reading successes. Take pride in what you've accomplished and enjoyed!

Source: "The Great American Family Read-In," National Education Association, www.nea.org/readacross/readin.html.

Minimize absences to maximize children's learning



Sometimes kids have to miss school. But being tardy or absent means missing—important group lessons—including reading activities. Avoid unnecessary absences for your child's sake, and for other kids' sakes, too. When kids miss school, the teacher must help them catch up. That can affect the rest of the class.

Start a kids' book club



Would you like to start a book club for kids, but you're not sure how? PBS KIDS has answers! Check out book ideas, discussion questions and more at http://pbskids.org/lions/parents/teachers/activities/read_aloud.html.

Keep an eye on TV viewing



When your child asks to watch TV, ask yourself questions such as:

- **"Is homework done?"** In many families, responsibilities come first.
- **"How much has my child watched?"** Set a limit, such as 10 hours per week or less.
- **"What are alternatives?"** Reading and exercise are great options.
- **"What's on?"** The show must be high quality, and it's best to watch together.

"When I got my library card, that is when my life began."

—Rita Mae Brown

Games make dictionaries fun

It's hard to believe—but true: Dictionaries are fun! To prove it, play games such as:

- **Find a name.** Have your child list words that begin with the letters in her name.
- **Race to words.** How long does it take your child to find a word? Can she beat her best time?
- **Search for synonyms.** For example, *run* and *dash* are synonyms (alike). But how are their meanings a little different, too?
- **Define it yourself.** Choose a real, silly word, such as “quinzee.” Have players make up definitions. One person reads all of them—plus the real meaning—aloud. See who guesses the right one.

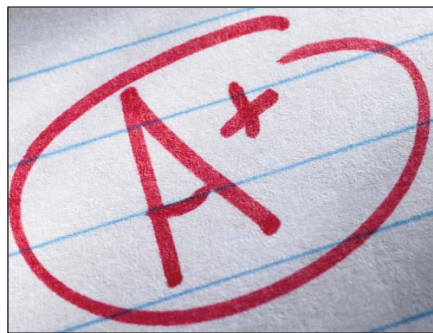
Source: Linda K. Rath, Ed.D., and Louise Kennedy, *The Between the Lions Book for Parents*, ISBN:0-06-051027-7 (HarperResource, 1-800-242-7737, www.harpercollins.com).

Is your home a learning environment?

Take a moment to think about how you help your child read:

- **Is the environment** in your home a positive one for reading? This includes having quiet time, a reading area and interesting materials to read.
- **Have you established** a consistent routine for family reading times?
- **Does your child see** you reading?
- **Do you discuss** what your child reads?
- **Do you read** together?

If you answered *yes* to all of these questions, give yourself



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an A+! Your child's new school year will be off to a great start with this reading practice.

But if you know you can improve, take steps now! And remember, the best way for you to lead is to set a great example.



Q: My child is learning to read, but it's hard for her. She doesn't want to pick up books at home. How can I help?

A: Make books around the house as appealing as possible. Choose stories that include mostly familiar words. Look for subjects she loves—or new topics she might embrace. Also consider books with short items to read, such as jokes and rhymes. Picture books are great, too! Ask the teacher for more suggestions.

Do you have a question about reading? Email readingadvisor@parent-institute.com.



For lower elementary readers:

David Goes to School by David Shannon (Scholastic, Inc.). David is being disobedient at school! Funny illustrations show kids what not to do. In the end, David is forgiven.

Afternoon on the Amazon by Mary Pope Osborne (Random House). Jack and Annie are off to the rain forest, where they face exciting (and powerful) insects and animals.

For upper elementary readers:

Eggs by Jerry Spinelli (Little, Brown and Company). Two young children face serious life challenges together, including the loss of a parent.

No Talking by Andrew Clements (Simon & Schuster). What if a fifth-grade class was so loud that they were nicknamed the “Unhushables?” Find out when the kids try to change their ways.

Can kids read too much?



Most parents want their children to read more, but others have to set limits on reading. A child might read long past bedtime, for example. Or he might read during other important activities. If this describes your child, make sensible rules. (“No reading after lights out.”) And if his reading seems like an unhealthy escape from real life, talk with a professional.

Source: Jan Faull, “Is It Possible for My Child to Read Too Much?” Parents.com, www.parents.com/big-kids/learning/intellectual-growth/is-it-possible-for-my-child-to-read-too-much/.

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