

Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

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Visiting the library has countless benefits

Kids ask endless questions because they're curious. And that's a good thing! Thankfully, there's a place that always has answers: the library. Libraries also:



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- **Have trained staff.** They want to help families. Most libraries have special areas for kids.
- **Offer fun programs.** Look for read-alouds, displays of popular books and guest storytellers.
- **Support local schools.** For example, some books may be organized by reading level.
- **Respect diversity.** Each child is unique. Libraries work to meet the needs of all kinds of people.
- **Solve problems.** It's hard for some kids to find books they like. Talking with a librarian is a big help.

Source: "Kids and Libraries: What You Should Know," American Library Association, www.ala.org/ala/oif/challengesupport/dealing/copingchallenges.cfm.

When books don't appeal, try reading games

If your child doesn't want to read books in his free time, try some reading games. For example:

- **Word tag.** Choose a story with many familiar words. Say, "When I tap your shoulder, read the next word." Then read aloud. When you get to a word your child knows, "tag" him. Reading the story twice will help him learn even more.
- **Word match.** Collect 20 index cards and 10 words that can't be "sounded out" (such as *said*, *don't* and *you*). Write each word on two index cards. Shuffle the cards and give 10 to each player. Then play a game similar to "Go Fish."

Source: "Beginning to Read: Preschool through Grade 2," U.S. Department of Education, www.ed.gov/Family/RWN/Activ97/begin.html.

Set a good reading example



Research shows that parent involvement in education makes a difference. When you support your child's learning, you boost his chances of school success! Here's an easy step to take: Be a reading role model. When your child studies, for example, stay nearby. Read a newspaper, magazine or book. Show that reading is fun and worthwhile.

Listening to stories is always important



No matter how well your child reads, listening to stories is a good idea. It's helpful to choose books with some challenging words. Hearing them in a well-read story is a great way for your child to learn!

Practice reading for success in every school subject



Reading makes it easier to learn about any subject, including math. In fact, reading can bring math to life. For example, some kids prefer story problems like, "Adam had two cookies. Sally ate one. How many does Adam have left?" to "2-1=?"

"If I were a young person today, trying to gain a sense of myself in the world, I would do that again by reading, just as I did when I was young."

—Maya Angelou

Teach your child how textbooks work

When your child uses her first textbook, talk with her about how it's organized. It may include:

- **A table of contents.** This shows what each chapter is about.
- **An introduction.** It prepares kids for what they're about to read.
- **Headings.** Chapters are divided into major parts, usually by words in bold.
- **Images.** Pictures, graphs and tables show information in helpful ways.
- **Summaries.** After finishing a chapter, reading the summary is a good review.
- **Questions.** End-of-chapter quizzes test kids' understanding.
- **Emphasis.** Words in bold or italics are especially important. So are lists of items.
- **An index.** Kids need this to find specific topics in the book.
- **A glossary.** This makes it easy to see what key words mean.

Source: "Reading: How to Read a Textbook," LiteracyMatters, www.literacymatters.org/content/readandwrite/textbook.htm.

Set the stage for reading success

When it comes to reading, be your child's biggest fan. Instead of criticizing him when he faces challenges, provide support.

For example, some kids resist reading during sports season. They'd rather play outside! Don't let reading fall by the wayside. Create a tempting reading spot—stocked with sports-related magazines and books. Spend time talking about them. Encourage him to



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enjoy reading with friends. You may be surprised by how much reading your child does.

Source: "Raising a Reader," Parenting.com, www.parenting.com/gear-article/Gear/Books/Raising-a-Reader.



Q. My child is supposed to read every night. But we argue about it constantly. She doesn't even want me to read aloud. Any suggestions?

A. Consider using book/CD (or book/tape) combinations from the library. This allows your child to read along with the story, turning pages at the right times. Sit with her as she listens and discuss the book afterwards. Also, ask her teacher for other ways to motivate your daughter to read.

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



For lower elementary readers:

Second Grade Rules, *Amber Brown* by Paula Danziger (G.P. Putnam's Sons). Amber Brown wants to follow her teacher's new rule: Students must keep their desks clean. Can she do it? What will the "desk fairy" think of her work?

The Night Worker by Kate Banks (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). Alex visits his father's construction site one night. While he's there, he makes some exciting discoveries.

For upper elementary readers:

Seedfolks by Paul Fleischman (Harper Trophy). What happens when a girl plants lima beans in a vacant lot? Readers are amazed by the results.

Number the Stars by Lois Lowry (Bantam Doubleday Dell). In this award-winning book set in Denmark during World War II, 10-year-old Annemarie must save her best friend.

Standardized test-taking tip



Help your child prepare for standardized tests. If his teacher sends home practice tests, go over the types of questions with him. These may include multiple choice, true/false and matching.

The actual test questions will be different, but being familiar with how to answer the various styles of questions will aid your child.

Source: "Helping Children Master the Tricks and Avoid the Traps of Standardized Tests," ERIC Digest, www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed429987.html.

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