

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

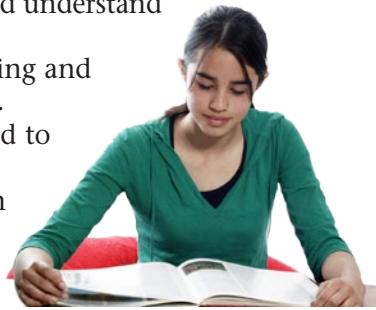
PHELPS COUNTY R-III

THEME: DON'T BUG ME, I'M READING!

Boost your child's reading comprehension with these five tips

The older your child gets, the more complex her school reading will become. She'll need strong reading comprehension skills to do her best in school. To help your child understand what she reads, encourage her to:

- 1. Read aloud.** This slows down reading and helps your child "process" words.
- 2. Read to relax.** Encourage your child to read enjoyable books for fun.
- 3. Reread.** Reading things more than once familiarizes your child with new concepts and vocabulary.
- 4. Supplement reading.** Look for interesting, non-intimidating materials related to what your child is learning in school.
- 5. Discuss reading.** Ask questions that encourage thinking, such as, "Would you recommend this book to a friend? Why or why not?"



Source: "Improve Reading Comprehension," Scholastic.com, niswc.com/improvecomprehension.

"There is more treasure in books than in all the pirate's loot on Treasure Island."

—Walt Disney

Have a consonant scavenger hunt

Consonant blends—the sounds that two consonants make when combined, such as *st* and *br*—can be tricky for young readers to grasp. To help your child practice these blends, send him on a scavenger hunt.

- 1. Write the following blends** on index cards. Each blend should go on its own card: *bl, br, cl, cr, dr, fl, gr, pl, sc, sl, sm, sn, sp, st, sw* and *tr*.
- 2. Hand your child a card** and have him practice saying the blend. Brainstorm a few words that begin with that sound—and then send him on his way to find as many things in your home as he can that start with that blend. (For example, if he has the *bl* card, he could find a *blanket*, a *block* and a *blender*.)
- 3. After a few minutes**, start again with a new letter blend!

Source: J. Gregory, "Consonant Blend Scavenger Hunt," education.com, niswc.com/consonantscavhunt.

Pay attention to textbook pictures

Pictures in textbooks can give students a clearer idea of what a chapter is about by adding to the information in the text.



Before your child reads a chapter in his textbook, have him look at the pictures and ask himself:

- **What does the picture show?**
- **What details** are there?
- **Why do you think** the authors and editors included this picture?

Source: B. Roe and others, *Secondary School Literacy Instruction: The Content Areas*, Houghton Mifflin.

Keep reading to increase vocabulary

Your child may not truly understand a new word after reading it for the first time. Help her find examples of that word in multiple contexts. The more your child reads a word, the better her chances are of really understanding it.



Source: S.A. Stahl, "Words Are Learned Incrementally Over Multiple Exposures," *American Educator*, niswc.com/incrementalvocabulary.

Book choice matters for your reader

If your child is having trouble with reading, he may enjoy books that feature:

- **Rhythm and rhyme.**
- **Repeating events**, words, sentences or refrains.
- **Predictable plots** that follow a natural time sequence.
- **Plots or actions** which relate to his life.



Source: J.F. Hauser, *Growing Up Reading*, Williamson Publishing Co.

Play dictionary games to build language skills

To build your child's vocabulary, have some fun with the dictionary. Use a dictionary that is appropriate for your child's age.

Before starting, make sure your child understands how a dictionary works. Show how the entry word is in bold letters. It's followed by one or more definitions and perhaps a sentence that includes the word. Take turns leading these games:



- **Definition First.** Read just the definition of a word. Have the other player or players try to guess the word. If no one can guess after several turns, then tell the word.
- **Which Is It?** Find an unusual word in the dictionary. Say the word. Then read its definition and the definition of another word. Ask the players to guess which is the correct definition.

Source: P. Kaye, *Games with Books: 28 of the Best Children's Books and How To Use Them To Help Your Child Learn—From Preschool to Third Grade*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Five strategies to support struggling readers

If your child is having trouble with reading, it can impact all of his classes. Your child's confidence is a key element in his reading success.

To help your child keep a positive outlook:

1. **Plan small steps** to overcome struggles. Make targets realistic. Match goals to his age and ability so he can experience success.
2. **Create a reading routine** that your child will enjoy.
3. **Keep up-to-date** with what's happening at school. Don't let problems escalate.
4. **Ask your child's teacher** for suggestions of how to help him with reading at home.



5. **Don't compare your child** to others. Recognize his strengths.

Source: R. Israeloff, *What To Do ... About Your Child's Moods and Emotions*, Reader's Digest Books.



Q: My child doesn't *dislike* reading. She simply prefers to watch television instead. What can I do?

A: Sometimes parents unwittingly encourage watching TV over reading. Where is the most comfortable place in your house? It may be the room where the TV is. Encourage your child to read by giving her a few essentials: interesting things to read, good lighting and a quiet, comfortable place to read.

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

To improve reading, encourage writing

Reading and writing go hand in hand. When your child writes regularly, he'll be building his reading skills, too. To help him develop the writing habit:



- **Encourage him to keep** a journal.
- **Display what he writes.** Put it on the refrigerator.
- **Give him a box** of writing supplies with pens and special paper in his favorite colors.

For lower elementary readers:

- **President Taft Is Stuck in the Bath** by Mac Barnett (Candlewick). Legend has it that the 27th president, William Howard Taft, was once stuck in a White House bathtub! Did that actually happen?

- **Henry's Heart** by Charise Mericle Harper (Henry Holt and Co.). Learn how a heart works, including its important role as a muscle and what makes it beat extra quickly.



For upper elementary readers:

- **Confetti Girl** by Diana López (Little, Brown and Company). Join Lina as she goes through her school year—playing volleyball with her best friend, running a booth at the school carnival and adding to her unique collection of socks.
- **Dear Mrs. LaRue: Letters from Obedience School** by Mark Teague (Scholastic). When Mrs. LaRue sends her dog Ike to obedience school, he is not happy. He writes her letters to convince her to let him come home.

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Publisher: Phillip Wherry.
Editor: Stacey Marin.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474
1-800-756-5525, ISSN: 1533-3302
www.parent-institute.com