

BUILDING READERS®

Vancouver Public Schools
Connecting Families and Schools

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Have detailed conversations with your child to deepen reading comprehension

To help your child get the most out of books, talk about them *before, during* and *after* she reads:

- **Before reading**, look at the title and jacket description. Where does the story take place? Is there a conflict in it? What does your child think will happen in the story? Why?
- **While reading**, discuss the characters and plot. What are the main characters like? Does your child agree with their decisions? What does she think might happen next?
- **After finishing**, make conclusions. Did the story end the way your child expected? What alternate endings can she imagine? What does she think was the author's point in writing the story?



Source: "Appropriate Reading Discussions for Children," Math and Reading Help, niswc.com/reading_comprehension_questions.

"Reading is an act of civilization; it's one of the greatest acts of civilization because it takes the free raw material of the mind and builds castles of possibilities."

—Ben Okri

Reading is critical to success on tests

No matter what tests your child takes in school, reading skills will help him do his best. To help your child prepare for tests, suggest that he:

- **Read instructions carefully.** Your child should look for and underline key words. If the directions say, "Circle words with the same meaning," your child should underline *same*.
- **Answer easier questions first.** He should read each question and consider what he knows. Then he should cross out incorrect answers. If he doesn't know the answer, he should mark the problem and come back to it later.
- **Go back and answer the remaining questions.** Remind your child to reread the questions carefully before answering.

Source: "3 Test Taking Strategies for Elementary Students," Core Literacy, niswc.com/three_test_strategies.

Math involves reading, too

Math and reading may not seem alike, but they have plenty in common. Explain to your child that math and reading both use languages. To focus on both at once, read books about math, such as *The Smushy Bus* by Leslie Helakoski. Talk about the mathematical concepts in the book with your child. Connect what you read to real life.



Source: A.K. Balas, "The Mathematics and Reading Connection," ericdigests.org, niswc.com/math_and_reading.

Get organized with word webs

Word webs can help your child see how words and ideas are connected. Have your child put a concept, such as *space*, in the center, then he can draw lines to link to related words, like *galaxies* and *exploration*. Then your child can link those words to others to create a visual diagram of their relationships.



The library is full of answers to your child's questions

"Where do elephants live?" your child asks. Instead of answering right away, suggest a trip to the library. Look up *elephants* in the library catalog. Talk with the librarian. Find books together. Suggest that your child take notes on what she learns. "Let's write down some information about elephants. Then we'll tell Grandma all about them when we get home!"

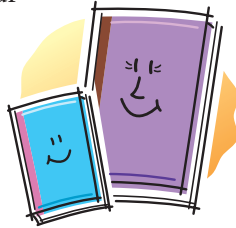


Help your child relax about reading

Learning to read—and maintaining reading skills—can be a challenge, so it's important to remind your child that reading is fun. Start by encouraging reading for pleasure at home. Look for books and magazines that:

- **Explore your child's interests.**
- **Satisfy her curiosity.**
- **Use skills she has mastered.**

To help her feel relaxed while she reads instead of feeling like she's "working," set up a special, cozy reading place. Show her that you love reading, too. Schedule a family reading time, such as half an hour before bedtime. If your child complains about her reading, look for different reading materials together. Ask a librarian or her teacher for help.



Source: B.B. Swanson, "How Can I Improve My Child's Reading?" KidSource OnLine, niswc.com/relax_reading_strategies.

Learn more about authors to promote reading

When your child reads a book, ask him who wrote it. What information is provided about the author? Learning about the author can increase your child's interest in the book. Help your child:

- **Research the author.** Have him learn about the writer's life. How does it relate to the book, if at all?
- **Write to the author.** Your child can choose to write a letter or send an email. Keep in mind that not all authors always respond.
- **Imitate the author's style.** Have your child write a story in the author's style—humor, short sentences or a certain point of view, for example.



Source: "10 Reasons to Do an Author Study," Reading Rockets, niswc.com/author_study.



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

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

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

Encourage your child to exchange reading suggestions

As children get older, their classmates become great sources of reading recommendations. Your child can ask his friends, "What's your favorite book?" or "Have you read any cool books lately?" He can also recommend books to others. When kids read the same books, they can discuss them, which builds reading comprehension skills.



For lower elementary readers:

- **Goldie and the Three Hares** by Margie Palatini (Katherine Tegen Books). After being chased by the Three Bears, Goldilocks shows up in the Three Hares' house!

- **The Bear Ate Your Sandwich** by Julia Sarcone-Roach (Knopf Books for Young Readers). When a bear finds a truck filled with berries, he eats them all—and falls asleep. See what surprise is in store after the bear wakes up!



For upper elementary readers:

- **Ratfink** by Marcia Thornton Jones (Dutton Children's Books). As Logan begins fifth grade, he's determined to have a different kind of year. But with so much changing in his life, that may be hard to achieve.
- **Almost Super** by Marion Jensen (Harper). 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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