

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Vancouver Public Schools
Connecting Families and Schools

Creative activities can help boost your child's reading skills

Artistic activities develop children's imaginations and can keep reading interesting. To boost your child's creativity and reading skills, encourage her to:

- **Draw pictures** of characters and scenes from her favorite books.
- **Design a comic book** based on one of her favorite stories. Or, she can create a brand new adventure with the characters.
- **Design a bookmark.** She can decorate it, write a quote from a favorite book or write a slogan, like Read On!
- **Make up a song** about story characters. For example, what might the three little pigs sing when the wolf is looking for them?



"A great book should leave you with many experiences, and slightly exhausted at the end. You live several lives while reading."

—William Styron

Five-finger rule makes book choice easier

You want to set high expectations for your reader, but you don't want to frustrate him with books that are too difficult. Use the five-finger rule to find books that are just right for your child.

Here's how it works:

- **Have your child open a book** to any page and read it silently to himself.
- **Ask him to hold up a finger** each time he encounters a word he doesn't know.
- **Count how many fingers** he is holding up after he finishes reading the page.
- **Rate the book's difficulty.** If your child is holding up four fingers, the book might be too challenging. Five fingers means he should definitely choose another book for now.

Ask questions to support your child's reading progress

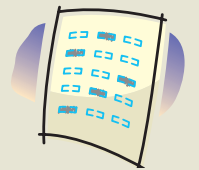
Working with your child's teacher is one of the best ways to support your child's reading efforts. Ask:

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



Practice reading directions

To succeed in school, your child needs to read and follow directions carefully. Help her practice during homework time. Listen as she reads the directions aloud. Ask her to put a check mark next to each step she completes. When she is finished, review her work with her.



Encourage your child to look up new information

Strengthen your child's reading and research skills by making him your official family fact checker. If you need to double-check a recipe, ask him to read it to you. If you want to know what the weather is going to be tomorrow, ask him to look it up online. Want to plan a fun family weekend? Ask your child to research events happening in your area.



Mealtime talk leads to school success

Mealtime never has to be boring. With a little imagination, it can be a time for the whole family to have fun together and learn. The language skills children learn during meals can help them improve their reading, listening and speaking skills.

During mealtime, have family members:

- **Give book reports.** Have everyone share plots, characters and opinions about what they are reading.
- **Take turns selecting a topic** to discuss. Make sure everyone gets a turn.
- **Place an interesting object** in the center of the table to spark discussion.
- **Turn old maps into place mats.** Refer to the maps when your family is talking about places in the news.
- **Play Did You Know?** Have each person write three facts, one on each of three index cards. Place the cards face down and take turns drawing and reading them. Discuss what you learn.



Find time for reading!

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



- **Bring books** with you to read while waiting in lines or at the doctor's office.
- **Listen to audiobooks** while running errands together.
- **Tuck your child into bed** at night and read her a short story.

For lower elementary readers:

- **See What a Seal Can Do** by Chris Butterworth (Candlewick). Seals may look lazy, but they're very talented animals! Learn all about seals and their lives underwater in this illustrated book.



- **Mars Needs Moms!** by Berkeley Breathed (Philomel). Milo doesn't see what's so great about moms. But when Martians kidnap the moms, will Milo discover why he needs his?

For upper elementary readers:

- **Five Children and It** by E. Nesbit (Puffin). In this classic, five children find a Sand-fairy that grants wishes! But making wishes isn't as easy as it seems.
- **Spork** by Kyo Maclear (Kids Can Press). Spork doesn't fit in with either the forks or the spoons in the utensil drawer. What *can* a spork be used for?

Show your child how to read textbooks

Reading assignments require concentration and attention to detail. To help your child get the most from reading a textbook, remind him to pay attention to:

- **Headings and subheadings.** They will help him identify the main points.
- **The questions** at the beginning and end of each chapter.
- **Words in bold or italic type.** These are usually important concepts or terms your child should learn.
- **Text** that is pulled out from the main text in sidebars.
- **Visuals**, such as infographics, charts and pictures. They help illustrate related information or concepts.



Q: How can I help my child remember the difference between synonyms and antonyms?

A: Remind your child that synonyms have the same, or similar, meanings (such as happy and cheerful). Point out that *synonym*, *same* and *similar* all start with the letter s. Antonyms, on the other hand, are words with opposite meanings (such as fast and slow). Point out that antonym starts with *ant-*, a prefix which means *against*.

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

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