

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

March 2017

Homer-Center Elementary School
Mrs. Lisa Weaver, Reading Specialist

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ *Drum Dream Girl* (Margarita Engle)

A little girl dreams of playing the drums, but on her island, only boys are drummers. She plays in her imagination and practices on furniture. Finally her dad gets her drumming lessons. Based on the life of Millo Castro Zaldarriaga, who broke Cuba's male-only drumming barrier.

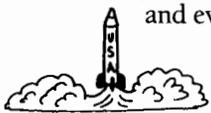


■ *Born to Read* (Judy Sierra)

The moment baby Sam opens his eyes, he knows how to read his name. From that point on, he never stops reading. As Sam grows up, reading helps him win a bike race and even saves his town from a baby giant named Grundaloon. A fun book about the love of reading.

■ *The Best Book of Spaceships* (Ian Graham)

Space is the place in this nonfiction book! Your aspiring astronaut will learn about planets, rocket power, and even what it's like to work in space. Each page contains detailed photographs, so your child can see spacesuits and space stations. Includes a glossary of space words.



■ *Little Blue Truck* (Alice Shertle)

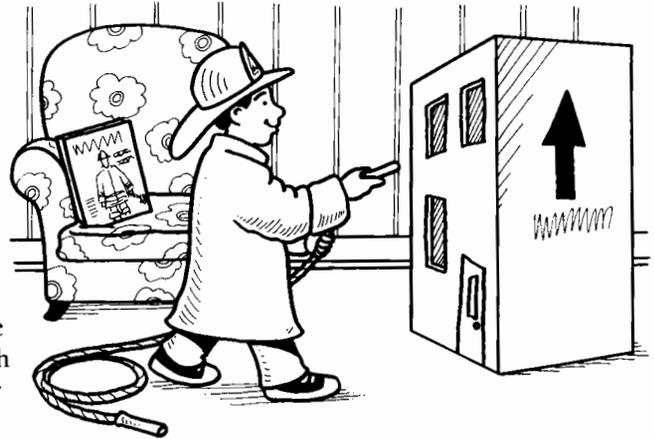
"Beep!" says the little blue truck as he greets all the farm animals. The animals respond with their own sounds like "Baa" and "Oink." When an unfriendly dump truck gets stuck in the mud, it's up to the blue truck and his animal friends to help. (Also available in Spanish.)



Book-inspired play

After reading a book on firefighters, Jonathan puts on his red hat and pretends to spray water from a jump rope. Lucy reads a story about trains, then lines up a row of kitchen chairs and climbs aboard.

Children's play is often inspired by books. Combine playtime and story time with these ideas that stretch your youngster's thinking.



Dress-up time

Veterinarian, chef, banker... it's fun for kids to try out grown-up roles. When you read to your child, point out jobs people do. Afterward, help him gather costumes and props (apron, cooking utensils). As he plays, encourage him to use vocabulary from the story. ("I'm kneading the dough like Baker Joe did.")

Building blocks

Place books near your youngster's blocks, and he can create buildings from the stories' settings like an igloo or airport. Ask him about his building's design.

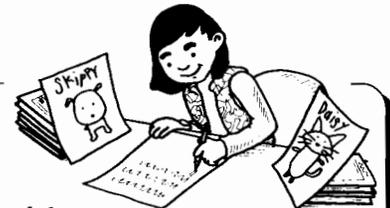
("Why is there a tunnel in front of your igloo's door?") If he's not sure, he could look in the book (the tunnel blocks wind and cold when the door is open).

Treasure bin

Fill a plastic container with sand or dry rice or beans. Suggest that your child put in items related to a story he enjoyed and act it out. Maybe he'll get seashells and a mini beach bucket for a book about the ocean. Or he might bury coins when he reads a nonfiction book about money—he can dig them up, estimate the amount, then count to check. ♥

Collect lessons from authors

Professional authors make great "mentors" for little ones who are just starting to write. Here are writing techniques your child can discover:



● Help your youngster read a book with a pattern and then write a repeating story. For example, on each page of *It Looked Like Spilt Milk*, Charles G. Shaw writes: "Sometimes it looked like (_____), but it wasn't (_____). It was (_____)!" Have your child make up the pattern she will build her tale around.

● Let your youngster read multiple stories by the same author and try the plot structure in a story of her own. In both *Stellaluna* and *Verdi*, Janell Cannon tells of a little animal who overcomes a problem and makes new friends. What problem will the characters face in your child's story, and how will they solve it? ♥

Read the signs

Your town is full of signs for your child to read. Help her practice using strategies to sound out words by looking for these three things.

1. Letter combinations. Your youngster is probably learning to recognize letter combinations like *th*, *str*, *ph*, and *qu*. Pick one to look for while you stroll—maybe you'll spot a "No hand-held phones" or "Quarry entrance ahead" sign. If she struggles, remind her of the sounds the combinations make ("Ph sounds like f").



2. Words within words. Bigger words are easier for your child to read if she finds smaller words inside them. Call out compound words you see, like *railroad* or *westbound*. Can your youngster read the words that make it up (*rail* and *road*, *west* and *bound*)?

3. Beginnings and endings. Knowing prefixes (*re-*, *un-*, *dis-*) and suffixes (*-ed*, *-er*, *-ing*) helps your child read words. Luckily, road signs contain a lot of these ("Dismount bicycle on bridge," "Pedestrian crossing"). How many will you and your youngster spot and read during your walk?♥



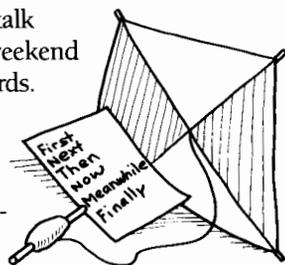
First, next, and last

Some words act like glue—they make sentences in a paragraph or story "stick" together. Let your youngster learn to use these types of words so his writing flows logically.

Down the left side of a sheet of paper, help him list words that show when events took place. He might think of *first*, *next*, and *last*. You could suggest others like *then*, *now*, *later*, *meanwhile*, and *finally*.

Together, talk about your weekend using the words. Take turns picking a word and starting a sentence with it. Maybe you'll say, "First, you ran across the field with your kite." Your child may add, "Then, it rose into the air." Continue until someone chooses *finally* to end the paragraph. ("Finally, the kite dove to the ground.")

Idea: Have your youngster keep the list so he can use it when he writes.♥



Q&A

Understanding written directions

Q When my second-grader takes a test or does a worksheet, he sometimes gets answers wrong because he didn't read the directions correctly. How can I help him?

A Suggest that your child read directions with a pencil in his hand. He could number the steps and underline important words or copy them onto scratch paper. Reading *actively* like this will help him pay attention to the instructions and understand them.

Practice at home when you play a board game or do a project. Help your son read the directions aloud and then go back and mark important parts with sticky notes (examples: "Play continues clockwise," "Win by exact count only"). You can also ask him to explain the instructions to you in his own words to be sure he's ready to follow them.

Note: If he tries these strategies and still doesn't understand a set of directions, encourage him to ask his teacher for help.♥



Guess the book by its cover

Book covers get a makeover with this activity, which strengthens your youngster's reading comprehension and creativity.

First, let each person secretly choose and read a picture book from the library or your family's bookcase. Then, wrap your book in brown paper, and decorate the new cover with a different title and illustration. The catch? You can't use any words or images from the original!

Your child will need to think carefully about the story to come up with a title and picture. For example, she might rename *Goodnight Moon*

(Margaret Wise Brown) *Bedtime for Everything*.

Now, take turns reading your books aloud. Begin by presenting the cover and reading the title. Can anyone guess the real book before you open and read it?♥



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote their children's reading, writing, and language skills.

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www.rfeonline.com
ISSN 1540-5648

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Working Together for Learning Success

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Book Picks

■ Sebastian Darke: Prince of Fools (Philip Caveney)

In this humorous fantasy story, half-elf Sebastian Darke might not be funny, but his adventures are. When he begins his quest to become a court jester, he meets a tiny warrior, rescues a princess, and winds up as an enemy of the king.

■ Appleblossom the Possum (Holly Goldberg Sloan)

Appleblossom's mama warned her about dangers like cars, dogs, and humans. But when the little possum falls down a chimney, she discovers that not all humans are monsters. As her brothers try to rescue her, Appleblossom must decide whether she'll go with her family or stay with her new friend.



■ Amazon Rainforest (William B. Rice)

Take an expedition through the world's largest jungle—the Amazon. Full-color photographs help readers explore the region from the forest floor to the canopy of trees overhead and learn about the plants, animals, and people living there. (Also available in Spanish.)



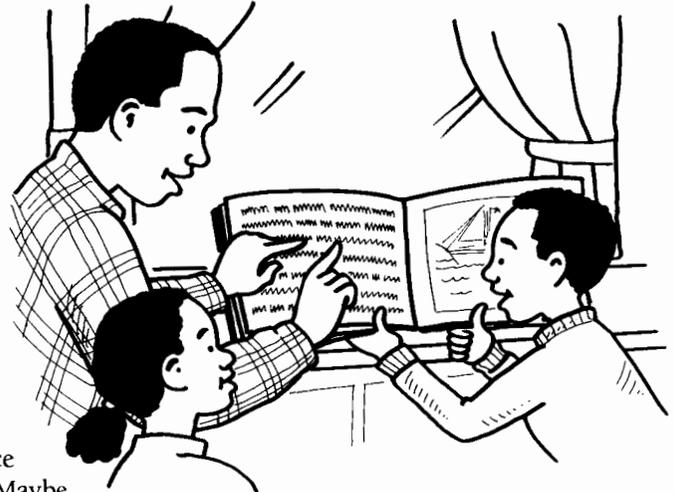
■ Big Top Burning: The True Story of an Arsonist, a Missing Girl, and The Greatest Show On Earth (Laura A. Woollett)

In 1944, a Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus tent burned to the ground in 10 minutes. One girl vanished, and 167 people died. What happened to the missing girl? Young sleuths are invited to examine witness reports, photos, and other evidence about this real-life mystery.



Using context clues

Your child might not understand a challenging word when he sees it all by itself. But when it's in a book, surrounded by other words, sentences, and paragraphs, he can use the *context* to figure it out. Suggest these strategies.



Look for definitions

A new word might be defined right in the sentence your youngster is reading. Maybe he stumbles on *peasants* ("The king taxed the *peasants*..."). Encourage him to finish the sentence and perhaps it'll lead him to the word's meaning ("but the *poor farmers* couldn't pay the king").

deadly kind, he might figure out that *venomous* means *poisonous*.

Fill in the blank

Have your child read a sentence without the unfamiliar word (say, *venomous*). He could read, "The bites of _____ snakes can be deadly" and think, "What would make sense in that spot?" If he knows that poisonous snakebites are the

Come back to it

Information in the rest of a chapter or book can explain an unknown word. Say your youngster reads "The company sells *generic* products." He could jot down *generic*, then be on the lookout for more information as he keeps reading. The next section may provide the explanation, for example saying that "generics are similar to brand-name products but less expensive." ■

Organized essays

Your youngster's essays will be better if she begins with a strong statement and supports that statement with evidence. This method could help her plan.

1. Suggest that your child write a draft opening sentence for her essay and use it to make up questions that her research should answer. *Example*: "Recycling reduces pollution, preserves natural resources, and saves energy."
2. Have her turn each part of the statement into a question and write it at the top of a separate note card: "How does recycling reduce pollution?"
3. As your youngster researches, she can add each answer to the correct card. ("Recycling helps reduce manufacturing waste and trash going into landfills.") Then, when she writes her essay, the information on each card might go into a separate paragraph. ■



Write the unexpected

"I thought the ring was lost, but that's not what happened!"

Surprises woven into your child's creative writing pieces will keep her readers guessing and wanting more. Share these ideas for her to try.

✓ Create a **plot twist** to take the story in an unpredictable direction. For instance, if your young author's story includes a missing ring, she could brainstorm reasons why the ring is gone. Perhaps it's lost, hidden, or stolen by time travelers. Her goal is to lead readers in one direction and then yank them off course before eventually giving them the real answer. Being surprised keeps the reading—and the writing—fun.



✓ Equally entertaining is to end a chapter or scene with a **cliffhanger**—a break in the story that makes people eager to know what happens next. Your child can write "teasers" to leave her audience hanging at the end of a section or

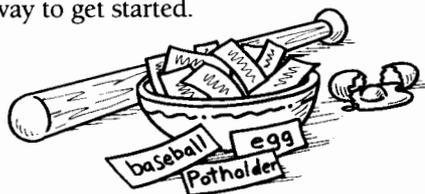
chapter. Maybe her main character is in a tight spot or makes an important discovery. Your youngster might end the chapter with her character gasping as she opens the door and enters the spooky mansion! 📖



Fun with Words

Tell a tale

Family storytelling encourages your youngster to practice speaking and listening—plus it's fun to be creative together. Here's one way to get started.



Each person writes the names of five objects on separate slips of paper (examples: *baseball*, *potholder*, *egg*). Mix up the slips in a bowl.

Your child picks one slip, reads it, and starts telling a story that includes the object named. ("It was a beautiful day for a *baseball* game.") Now keep the story going. You take a slip and add your object: "Sam forgot his glove and had to use a *potholder* instead." The next storyteller draws a slip and continues, "Things were going well until the pitcher exchanged the ball for an *egg*."

Take turns telling the tale until all the slips are gone. The person who picks the last slip wraps up the story. 📖

Parent 2 Parent

We're a reading family!

My son Raul loved reading when he was younger, but lately, he didn't seem as interested. Then one day, he saw me adding the title of a book to a list. He asked what I was doing, and I explained that I like keeping a record of all the books I've read.

A few days later I was surprised when Raul showed me a list he had started. His goal, he said, was to write the title of every book he could remember reading. He even had a star system for ranking them. I told him that was a great idea and said I'd start doing the same.

Raul's list is reminding him of some of the good books he's read. And we like how looking at each other's lists gives us a glimpse into what kinds of readers we are. For example, I read mostly realistic fiction while Raul prefers nonfiction and graphic novels. Now he's excited to start a new book so he can add it to his list. 📖



Q&A

Standardized test success

Q My daughter will take a standardized test soon that includes a reading portion. What strategies will help her do well?

A Here's a clever approach: Suggest that your child remember the "three Ls."

Leap ahead. Reading with a purpose makes finding answers easier. When your youngster has to read passages and answer questions about them, she could skip to the questions and read them first. With the

questions in mind, she'll be able to find the answers more easily as she reads.

Linger longer. Reading too fast may lead to missed information. Remind your child to read at a pace that allows her to understand the material. If she gets confused, taking a deep breath and slowing down will help her refocus.

Look back. Before marking her answers, your youngster might reread selections rather than answering from memory. That way, her answers are more likely to be accurate. 📖



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ISSN 1540-5583