

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

September 2017

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

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites



■ *Big Dog and Little Dog Going for a Walk* (Dav Pilkey)

A pair of dog friends loves to take walks—especially if it involves splashing and rolling in mud! Your youngster will laugh as he tags along on this messy journey. (Bilingual version also available, with each page in both English and Spanish.)



■ *A Rock Is Lively* (Dianna Hutts Aston)

They come in all shapes and sizes, melt if they get hot enough, and sometimes arrive from outer space. What are they? Rocks!

Using poetic language, this nonfiction picture book introduces your child to colorful varieties.



■ *May I Have a Word?* (Caron Levis)

Once upon a refrigerator, the alphabet magnets set out to tell a story. But when C and K begin fighting about who stole whose sound and who is hogging all the good words, it looks like there will be no “happily ever after.” F is for funny in this tale about the importance of teamwork.

■ *Clothesline Clues to Jobs People Do* (Kathryn Heling and Deborah Hembrook)

Your child can use clothes on a clothesline and rhyming clues to match people with their careers, then turn each page to see a worker in action. This simple story brings all the characters together for a party at the end.



Reading at school, reading at home

“How do I help my child learn to read?” That’s a common question for many parents. Ask your youngster about the kinds of reading she does in school, and use what you discover to support her at home. Try these ideas.



In a group

Let your child play “reading group” with her stuffed animals or dolls. Suggest that she give each “student” a book and “teach” reading strategies she’s working on like breaking big words into smaller chunks or using pictures to figure out hard words.

an at-home reading log, have her fill it out, and sign it if required.

On my own

Your child likely has time in school each day to read all by herself. Her teacher may call it “DEAR” (“Drop everything and read”) or SSR (“Self-selected reading”). Try holding a daily “DEAR” time at home for at least 20 minutes. Each person picks any reading material (book, magazine, newspaper) and reads anywhere—on a couch, on the porch, or stretched out on the floor.♥

With you

When your youngster brings home books from school, set aside time to snuggle up and listen to her read. You’ll get an idea of the reading level that’s right for her and see what topics she enjoys and is learning about. Note: If she has

A writing nook

A cozy space can inspire your youngster to enjoy writing regularly. Consider these suggestions:

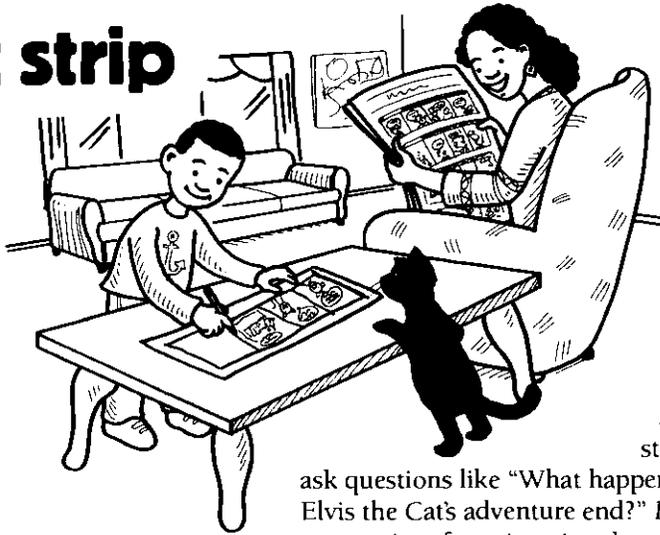
- Help your child find a quiet spot. He might use a chair tucked in a corner of the living room or a lap desk on his bed.
- Let your youngster pick out cool writing supplies at a dollar store like colored pencils, fancy paper, or gel pens. Then, he could arrange them in a box or basket to keep in his nook.
- Look for everyday ways to encourage writing. You might say, “Grandpa’s birthday is next week. Why don’t you make him a card?” Or invite your child to add a few items to your grocery list. Suggest that he write stories, poems, and plays, too!♥



Create a comic strip

With lots of pictures and just a few words, comic strips are easy and fun for beginning writers to make. Here's how.

Change a favorite. Suggest that your youngster write new words for a comic strip he likes. Help him cut one from the newspaper and glue it on a sheet of paper. Cover the words with masking tape. He can add his own words in the bubbles or on the paper around the strip. What will each character say or think in his version?



Start from scratch. Have your child divide a piece of paper into frames. Then, he could invent a character or use one from real life—maybe his comic will be about the funny adventures of his cat. Encourage him to draw a picture in each frame and add speech bubbles to tell the story. To help him along,

ask questions like “What happens first?” and “How does Elvis the Cat’s adventure end?” *Idea:* He might like to create a series of comic strips about his character.♥

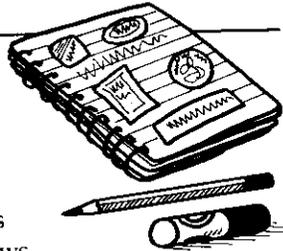


Fun with Words Words all around

Even before youngsters learn to read, they get excited when they recognize words on road signs, stores, and food packages. Encourage your child to collect words to make a book she can read all by herself. She'll begin to connect the letters she sees with the sounds they make.

Find words

Give your youngster a notebook. When she spots a word she knows, she could write it or cut it out and glue it on a page. For instance, she might clip “Eggs” from an empty carton or the name of a favorite restaurant from a take-out bag.



Read your book

After your child has filled a few pages, let her read her book to you. She'll build confidence in her reading ability because she'll know every word!♥

Q&A Tell me a story

Q My daughter often asks me to tell her stories at bedtime, but it's not always easy to make them up on the spot. Any suggestions?

A Hearing stories develops your daughter's listening and language skills. You may find it easier to tell stories you're familiar with.

Children love stories about people they know—especially themselves and other family members. Flip through photos at bedtime, and have your youngster pick one that she likes. Her newborn picture could lead to a tale about the day she was born. Or a childhood snapshot of you may inspire a story about the games you played or what you learned at school when you were her age.

Another idea is to retell fairy tales or other children's stories that you know. If you're feeling creative, try changing the story as you go. For example, turn *The Three Little Pigs* into *The Three Little Bananas*.♥



Parent to Parent “I love you” notes

My son Danny has always loved it when I tuck an “I love you” note into his backpack. When he was learning to read, I asked his teacher for a list of words he was working on. Then, I used those words in the notes.

Sometimes I'd write simple messages like “You are number one!” Other times, I wrote a question, such as “What game should we

play after school?” The notes made Danny feel special and gave him extra reading practice.

Now secret notes are a tradition at our house. Danny's little sister Jamie is starting to read this year, and he writes notes to put in her backpack. And when I opened my suitcase on a business trip recently, I had a big smile when I discovered a note from Danny to me!♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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Reading Connection

INTERMEDIATE EDITION

Working Together for Learning Success

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Book Picks

■ *The Templeton Twins Have an Idea* (Ellis Weiner)

It's double trouble in this mystery about the disappearance of twins John and Abigail Templeton. Their dad is an inventor and the kid-nappers are college-age twins who want to cash in on his invention. The first book in the Templeton Twins series. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ *Eight Dolphins of Katrina: A True Tale of Survival* (Janet Wyman Coleman)

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina swept eight dolphins from their Mississippi aquarium home into the Gulf of Mexico. Your child can read about the dangers the dolphins faced and how their trainers never gave up on rescuing them.

■ *Next Best Junior Chef: Lights, Camera, Cook!* (Charise Mericle Harper)

A multicultural cast of tweens competes for top chef honors on a reality TV show. This fictional tale captures the contestants' nervousness and excitement as they navigate cooking challenges. The first story in the Next Best Junior Chef series.

■ *Sonia Sotomayor* (Barbara Kramer)

Sonia Sotomayor is America's first Hispanic Supreme Court justice—and only the third woman to serve on the nation's highest court. This easy-to-read biography describes Sotomayor's rise from a humble background, her early interest in the law, and obstacles she overcame.



Boost reading comprehension

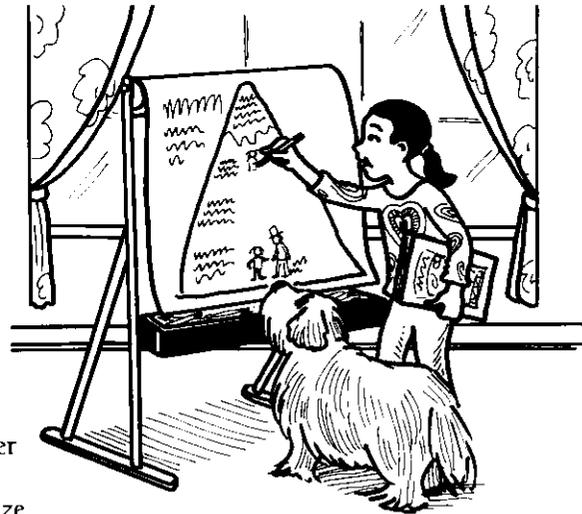
Your child can talk, write, and draw her way to better reading comprehension. Try these fun activities to help her understand and remember what she reads.

Talk

Did you know that talking about books can improve your youngster's comprehension skills? Invite her to retell stories and share details about what she reads. Ask open-ended questions like "Why do you think...?" or "What did you like about...?" Describing the story in her own words will prompt her to think through what she read and to organize her thoughts.

Write

Encourage your youngster to jot down insights and questions while reading. The process of asking and answering "How does Jamal really feel about having a baby brother?" lets her monitor how well she is understanding what she reads. *Tip:* Sticky notes are ideal for writing notes and marking passages, or she could use a small notebook.



Draw

Like a mountain, the plot of a story builds to a peak. Have your child draw a mountain on a sheet of paper and illustrate it with characters, places, and objects from the story. On one side of the mountain, she can write about the characters, setting, and problem. At the top, she could summarize the most critical part. And on the way down, she might explain how the problem was solved. ▣

Three cheers for writing!

When your youngster shows you his summer vacation essay or book report, you have a chance to recognize his writing accomplishments. Here are three ways to celebrate.

1. Display. Reserve a wall in the hallway or family room to hang writing samples. You might even frame them like the masterpieces they are.

2. Arrange a read-aloud. Encourage your child to read his writing to grandparents, aunts, and uncles when they visit—or during a video call.

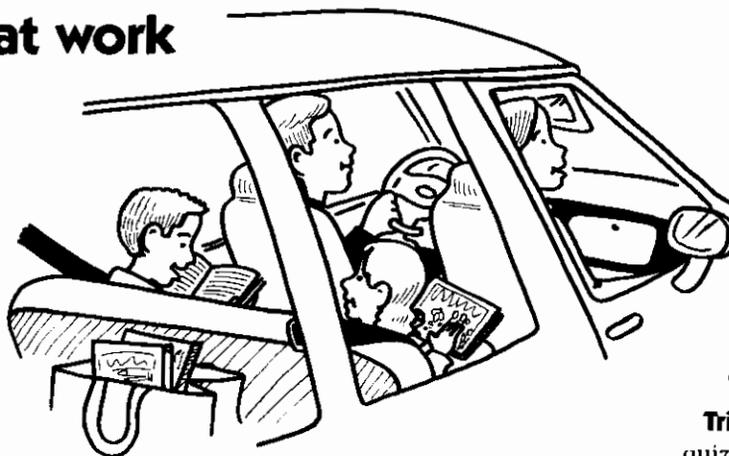
3. Create a coffee table book. Let your youngster decorate a binder to fill with his favorite stories or reports. Place it on a coffee table so visitors can enjoy his work. ▣



Reading rituals that work

Establishing regular routines helps busy families find more time to read. Fit more reading into your child's day with these clever ideas.

Breakfast broadcasts. Morning reading can be as easy as bringing the newspaper to the table. Your youngster might read movie reviews, sports columns, or comics. Or ask him to check the weather page and announce the forecast.



Road-trip reads. In the car, keep a stash of books that includes short items—perhaps an almanac, a book of world records, a volume of poetry, or a joke book. Your child could pull out a variety and read to everyone.

Trivia time. Cards from quiz games (*Trivial Pursuit Junior*, *Beat the Parents*) offer fun ways to get kids reading—and learning new facts—any time of day. Put a batch of questions in a tote bag, and quiz each other after dinner or in a waiting room. ■

Parent ² Parent Loving the school library

My daughter Lily loves library day at school, but last year she kept forgetting to return books. This year, we have a plan to help her remember so she can check out new books each week.



I asked Lily to find a special place for library books. She covered a cardboard box with wrapping paper and put it on the counter with her books inside. Then, she added a sign that says “Thursday: Books go in backpack” on one side and “Friday is Library Day!” on the other.

Now Lily flips the sign to the front on Thursdays and to the back on Fridays. Hopefully our new plan will remind Lily to return books throughout the year—and enjoy the new books she brings home each Friday. ■

Fun with Words

Pop goes the spelling word!

Give your youngster's spelling study time a fun burst of energy with this active balloon game.

1. Blow up one balloon for each spelling word on your child's list. Have her use a permanent marker to write a word on each balloon.
2. Now the action starts! She and her friends take turns picking a balloon and saying the word that's written on it.
3. Players bat the balloon back and forth. Each time someone hits it, that person calls out one letter in the word in order. The player who finishes spelling the word by shouting the last letter gets to pop the balloon with a pin.
4. The “popper” chooses another balloon and starts the next round. Repeat until all the words have been spelled and all the balloons have been popped. ■



Q&A

Brainstorming story starters

Q For homework this year, my son has to write a weekly journal entry on a topic of his choice. He's already saying he doesn't know what to write about. How can I help?

A Your son may be surprised to discover that an ordinary event like a soccer game or a family picnic can inspire an interesting story.

Chat with him regularly about his week—what was exciting, surprising, or funny? He might say, “Even though my team

lost, I made a great save,” or “I love picnics because Dad packs surprises like spicy mustard with pretzels.”

After these conversations, your son could write story ideas on slips of paper

(“Soccer save,” “Picnic treats”). Put them in an envelope for easy reference. Do this together frequently, and he'll soon develop a knack for brainstorming story ideas all by himself! ■



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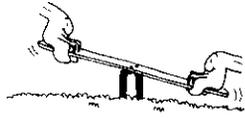
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Home & School CONNECTION[®]

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SHORT NOTES

Excellent attendance

Being in school every day means your child won't miss out on learning. Try to schedule appointments and family trips outside of school hours. If he asks to stay home "just because," remind him of what he'll miss, such as his reading group or PE class. Explain that he can be absent only if he's sick or if there's a family emergency.

DID YOU KNOW?

Children who regularly eat meals with their families tend to do better in school and avoid risky behavior.

Eating dinner together is great, but other meals count, too. If you work at night, maybe you could make time for a family breakfast. Or on a weekend, try a picnic lunch.

Celebrate progress

Suggest that your youngster create a fun reminder of all the things she has accomplished. Let her cover a box with construction paper and label it "I did it!" Then, she can write each success ("I learned to add fractions") on a slip of paper and put it in the box. If she's feeling discouraged, have her read the slips.

Worth quoting

"The best way to cheer yourself up is to try to cheer somebody else up!"
Mark Twain

JUST FOR FUN

Q: Can a kangaroo jump higher than the Empire State Building?

A: Of course. The Empire State Building can't jump!



Conversations about school

When you think of parent involvement, do you picture moms and dads volunteering in classrooms? That's one way to help—but research shows that supporting your child's education at home is even more important. Here are conversation starters that will help you stay involved.

"Let's see what you brought home."

Look at completed work to find out what your youngster is learning and how well she's doing. You could comment on her math work or social studies project, for instance. ("You know a lot about our state's history!") Also, respond to notes from her teacher, and sign her weekly folder or daily planner if required.

"Show me what you have for homework."

It's your child's job to do her homework, but you play a role, too. Make sure she knows what she's supposed to do by having her explain the assignments to you. After she finishes her homework, glance over the work to see that it's complete.

"Describe a book you enjoyed today."

This gives you an idea of what your youngster prefers to read. Then, build a daily reading habit by asking what she'd like to read tonight. Encourage her reading and listening skills by reading aloud to her and letting her read to you.

"Tell me what you learned that you'd like to know more about."

Use her interests as jumping-off points for activities to share. If she likes geometry, you might hunt for

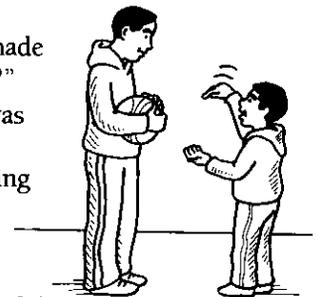


shapes together. If she's fascinated by how animals adapt to winter, take her to the library to research the subject or to the zoo to see live animals.♥

After-school questions

Asking "How was school today?" might not get you far. Instead, ask questions like these for a better picture of your youngster's day:

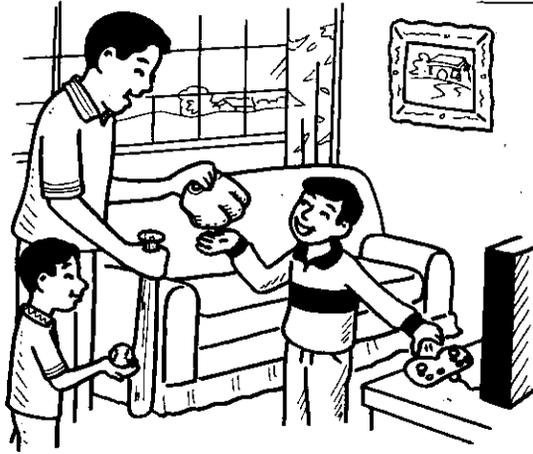
- "What's the coolest thing that happened? What wasn't so cool?"
- "Pretend you're the teacher. How would you describe the day?"
- "What made you laugh?"
- "What was the most creative thing you did?"
- "How were you kind or helpful today? Was anyone kind or helpful to you?" ♥



What does respect look like?

Your youngster's daily dealings with adults and kids alike will be more pleasant if he speaks and acts respectfully. Try these tips for helping him learn about respect.

Respectful replies. Think about something that you and your youngster disagree on (say, whether his video game time should be limited). Model having a respectful discussion about it. You might say that his brain and body are growing and that he needs to run and play to stay healthy. Then, suggest a respectful response, such



as, "I want to be healthy, but I love video games." Have him brainstorm other situations where people have different opinions but still speak to each other with respect.

Everyday acts. When you mow the lawn or clean up after your dog, you can teach your child about respect for neighbors.

Explain that keeping your neighborhood clean and neat makes it nice for everyone. Ask him to think of other respectful things neighbors should do. If you share an apartment laundry room, he might say that you respect neighbors' time by removing your clothes when they're done so others get to use the washers and dryers.♥

A reading challenge

By reading more complex books, your child can learn new words, facts, and ideas. He'll also be exposed to more complicated plots and will grow as a reader. Share these suggestions:

- Knowing something about the topic or setting makes a tougher book easier to comprehend. If your youngster is reading a novel set in China, he could talk to someone who has been there or look up the country online (try a children's site like kids.nationalgeographic.com).



- Encourage your child to look at a simpler book on the same subject. A picture-book biography about Harriet Tubman may help your youngster better understand a textbook chapter on the civil rights movement, for instance.

- Suggest that your child read complicated material with pencil and paper in hand. He can jot down questions, words to look up, or facts he wants to learn more about.♥



Strong study habits

Q: My third grader has to spend more time studying this year. How can I make sure she studies effectively?

A: Set your daughter up for success by helping her find a distraction-free study spot. Also, have her come up with a study routine. For instance, she could reserve time each evening to review her textbook and notes in the days leading up to a test.

Also, many students find it helpful to jot down a purpose each time they study. Your child might write: "I will learn the definitions of all the boldfaced words in chapter 7, section 1."

Finally, encourage her to experiment with study strategies to find what works best. She could close his eyes and imagine how a word is spelled or draw a grid with 9 squares to solve 3 x 3. Or she might find it helpful to spell or recite math facts aloud in rhythm or to a familiar tune.♥



Talking to kids about money

My children were always asking to buy things like dress-up shoes or new games. They didn't seem to understand that these items weren't in our budget.

I wanted them to learn about how we spend our money—and that it is limited. So I got a spiral notebook and labeled it "Family Spending Journal." I explained that for two weeks, everyone would keep a record of what they spent money on. I listed items like my

subway fare, the electric bill, and food at the grocery store. The children wrote down expenses such as school lunch, soccer cleats, and field trip fees.

After a few days, they were surprised by how many things we needed money for. Our kids had no idea, for example, that we paid for taxes on our income, several types of insurance, and membership in our homeowners' association. Sometimes they still ask to buy too many things at the store, but when I say no, at least they understand why.♥



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