

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

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Three ways to breathe new life into reading

If your child views reading as a chore, he'll be reluctant to do it on his own. But when it becomes an exciting experience, he'll want to do it more and more!

To make reading more interesting for your child, you can use:

- 1. Cartoons.** Cut the panels of comic strips apart. Have your child rearrange them in the correct order to read the comic.
- 2. Writing.** Write a story with your child. Have him write a line. Then you write the next. Continue alternating until you're finished—then read the story together!
- 3. Newspapers.** Send your child on a scavenger hunt through the newspaper. Make a list of 10 questions that he'll be able to find the answers to, such as, "What was last night's basketball score?" or "What's today's high temperature?"



Source: "Fun Ways to Encourage Your Children to Read," University of Illinois Extension Family Works, niswc.com/newlifereading.

"Read the best books first, or you may not have a chance to read them at all."

—Henry David Thoreau

Look for reading inspiration at a museum

This winter, explore reading in a new setting—in a museum! When you stop at a painting or exhibit, take time to read the signs and explanations posted.

Discuss what you see with your child. When looking at artwork, talk about the shapes, colors and actions you see. What time period does the painting depict? What emotions does your child see or feel when looking at the artwork?

At a local history exhibit, talk about what you and your child learned. Did you find out an interesting piece of your town's history? What else does your child want to know about your town's past?

When you get home, check out the museum's website. Read about the exhibits you saw. What did your child learn after reading about the exhibit that she didn't notice while viewing it? Ask your child to record her thoughts and observations in a journal.

Sight words will help with reading

Sight words are words that your child sees often, can recognize quickly and doesn't need to sound out, such as *because*, *where*, *favorite* and *another*. The more sight words your child knows, the more time she'll have to learn new vocabulary words—and the more she'll be able to enjoy what she reads.



Have fun with acrostic poems

Encourage your child to write an acrostic poem. Have him pick a word or a name and write it in a vertical line. Then, he should brainstorm words that describe that topic. The catch is that each word has to start with a letter in the initial word!



Source: K. Nesbitt, "How to Write an Acrostic," Poetry4Kids.com, niswc.com/acrosticpoems.

Make your own zoo book

If your child is an animal lover, she can make her own zoo book. To do this, help her:



- 1. Gather several pictures** of animals from magazines or online. Glue each picture onto a piece of paper.
- 2. Research each animal** at the library or on the Internet. Your child can label the pictures and write captions using facts she learns.

Source: S. and R. Bennett, *365 TV-Free Activities You Can Do With Your Child*, Adams Media Corporation.

Unlock the secret to reading by developing decoding skills



To read, children must first learn the sounds that letters make. For example, the letter *m* makes an *mm* sound, like the beginning sound in *mouse* or *me*.

The next step in learning to read is to *decode* written words. Children decode a word by sounding out each of its letters, then blending the sounds together.

To help your child improve his decoding skills:

- **Play word games.** Write words on index cards. Take turns selecting a card and sounding out the word. Make a sentence using the word.
- **Place packaged items** on your table. See if your child can sound out words on the labels: *f-l-o-u-r*, *p-e-a-s*, etc.
- **Have a treasure hunt.** Hide words written on slips of paper throughout your house. Have your child find the slips and sound out the words.

Source: "Letters and Sounds: Practical Ideas for Parents," LessonSense.com, niswc.com/phonicsdecoding.

Encourage your child to 'ask the author'

One way for your child to process and understand her reading, especially nonfiction, is to think of questions she'd like to ask the author. This strategy helps her look closely at nonfiction work in order to enhance her comprehension of the text.

When your child reaches a stopping point in her reading, help her brainstorm questions, such as:

- **What is the main message** of this passage?
- **Does the author** have any bias evident in the text?
- **What information is missing** from this passage?

By asking and answering questions, your child will connect with the text and develop a



deeper understanding of what she's reading.

Source: "Question the Author," Reading Rockets, niswc.com/questionauthor.



Q: Part of my child's homework is to read every day, but he often refuses to do it. How should I handle this?

A: This is a concern to discuss with your child's teacher. Share your ideas about possible causes of your child's refusal. The teacher will have suggestions that make reading time easier, such

as taking turns reading aloud. Work together to find a way to help your child.

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

Bookmarks make reading special

Making bookmarks for friends and family can get your child excited about reading—and they make great gifts! You'll need:



- **Construction paper**, cut 6" long and 2" wide.
- **Colored pencils**, markers or crayons.
- **Small photos** of your child.

Have your child glue the photos on the paper and decorate the bookmarks. Personalize the bookmark with your child's name and a short message.

For lower elementary readers:

- ***The Day the Crayons Came Home*** by Drew Daywalt (Philomel Books).

A new bunch of crayons—from Turquoise to Maroon—have a bone to pick with Duncan. Your child will delight in these crayons' gripes!



- ***Art and Max*** by David Wiesner (Clarion Books). Max doesn't know what to paint, so Arthur suggests he paint him—a suggestion that Max takes very literally!

For upper elementary readers:

- ***Romeo and Drooliet*** by Nina Laden (Chronicle Books). This clever adaptation of Shakespeare's classic *Romeo and Juliet* features a cat and dog as the star-crossed lovers.

- ***The Spaghetti Detectives*** by Andreas Steinhöfel (Chicken House). Rico and Oscar are an interesting pair who, together, take on a number of mysteries to solve.

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