Reading is the foundation of success in school—and in life. The ability to read and write is necessary to master other subjects and to communicate what is learned. Even more important, children who enjoy reading will continue to learn and grow throughout their lives. Reading is one of the most inexpensive and readily available forms of education and entertainment. Parents have an important role to play in helping their children become better readers. You know your child better than anyone else, so you can help him choose books that meet his own special interest. You can offer encouragement and support. And because you love your child more than anyone else, you want him to succeed. Here are 10 tips to improve your child’s reading.

1. **Reading is a skill**, and it gets better with practice. Research shows that kids who spend as little as 30 minutes a day reading books, magazines and newspapers are more likely to become good readers. Encourage your child to spend some time reading every day.

2. **Make reading easy**. If your TV is within easy reach, but books are stored on a high shelf, you can probably guess how your child will spend her free time. But if she has her own bookshelf filled with interesting books and TV times must be scheduled in advance, she’ll probably pick up a book.

3. **Read aloud to your child**. Research shows this is probably the most important thing you can do to encourage your child’s reading success. Here are some tips:
   - Begin to read to your child as soon as possible—no matter how young. Your child will remember 10 minutes of reading together far longer than he’ll remember two hours of television.
   - Try to set aside time every day for reading aloud. You can start with just 10 minutes a day.
   - Remember that the art of listening is an acquired one. It must be taught and cultivated gradually.

Here are some read-aloud don’ts from the research:

- Don’t read stories you don’t enjoy yourself.
- Don’t be surprised if your child interrupts with a lot of questions. Answer his questions right away.
- Don’t compete with television. If parents ask children if they’d prefer a story or TV, kids will usually choose television. But since you are the adult, you choose. Tell your child the TV will be turned off at 8:30—regardless. If he wants a satyr, fine. If he doesn’t, that’s okay, too. But don’t give your child that idea that books are the reason he can’t watch TV.

4. Here are some tips teachers use to help kids become better readers. All are things you can try during your read-aloud times at home:
   - Stop before the end of the story. Ask your child to predict what she thinks may happen next.
   - If you’re reading a poem, encourage your child to guess what the next rhyming word may be.
   - After you finish a story, ask your child to think about how the story relates to a personal experience she may have had.
   - Ask your child how she might have changed the story.

5. Too busy to schedule read-aloud times? Here are some tips from parents on ways to squeeze reading into a busy day:
   - **Breakfast**. One mom makes sure her kids get a “breakfast of champions” by scheduling read-aloud time first thing. Best of all, she says, her kids are so engrossed with the story they’ve stopped fight with each other!
   - **Bathtub time**. On hectic days, one family schedules read aloud time during a bath for good, clean fun.

6. How can you tell whether a book is on your child’s reading level? Use a rule of thumb—Have your child read a page of the book aloud. Have her hold up one finger for each word she does not know. If she holds up four fingers and a thumb before the end of the page, the book is probably too hard for her to read alone. But it might be a great book to read aloud.

7. Limit the amount of TV your child watches. Studies show that kids who spend more than 10 hours a week watching television do worse in reading than kids whose parents set limits on TV time. Some families give their children TV ticket, each good for 30 minutes of television time. When the tickets are gone, the set is turned off for the week. In some families, kids can redeem unused ticket for money to buy books. The same idea works for video games and computer time.

8. Following a recipe together is an excellent way to give your child practice in reading directions. Choose a simple recipe, and be sure it’s for a food your child enjoys. Have him read the directions out loud to you. Work together, step by step. Then enjoy!

9. For a child who’s just learning to recognize letters, play “Alphabet Concentration.” On one set of 3” x 5” cards, print the alphabet in capital letters. On another set, print the alphabet in lower-case letters. Now shuffle the cards, turn them over, and lay them all out. Players can make a pair by matching the capital letter with its lower-case partner. For very young children, start with a few pairs, gradually working up the entire deck.

10. If your child seems to lose interest in reading, don’t make an issue out of it. But make a special effort to find reading materials on subjects that interest your child. Leave them around the house in easy reach. You might subscribe to a magazine for children. Odds are, your child will be back reading in no time.