

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Parkland School District

Be your child's reading buddy to build fluency and comprehension

Some children struggle to sound out every word as they read, which can make it hard for them to understand the meaning of the passage. *Fluency* is the bridge between word recognition and reading comprehension.

Fluent readers can read words easily enough to focus on what the text is saying.

To improve fluency and build comprehension:

- 1. Look for a short passage** at your child's reading level.
- 2. Read the passage aloud** while your child listens and follows along.
- 3. Have your child read** the passage aloud. If this is challenging, read it aloud again. Then have your child read it after you.
- 4. Ask each other questions** about what you read. What was the main idea of the passage? Discuss the characters or the most entertaining part. Thinking and talking about the reading will increase comprehension.



Ask reading-focused questions

During parent-teacher conferences, be sure to ask about your child's reading progress:

- **What are my child's strengths** and weaknesses in reading?
- **How can I support** my child's literacy development at home?
- **Are there resources** you can suggest that would be helpful to improve my child's reading?
- **What types of material** does my child enjoy reading in school?



Find seasonal reading inspiration

Use time outdoors with your child to guide your reading and writing activities. Together, you can:

- **Collect leaves** and label them in a scrapbook.
- **Observe wildlife** at the park. Give your child a journal to record observations.
- **Read about the plants** and animals you have observed.



Boost reading skills on the go

Build your child's reading skills when you're in the car or on the bus—whether you're going on a long trip or just across town! Here are two games you can play with your child:

- 1. Scavenger Hunt.** Before you leave home, brainstorm a list of things you might see along the way. It might include a license plate that ends with the letter G, a sign with four vowels or a town with three syllables. Who can find all of the items on the list first?
- 2. Alphabet License Plates.** Going in alphabetical order, look for every letter on the license plates of cars around you. Call out each letter as you see it. Who can get to Z first?

Cookbooks further love of reading

Story time and snack time go together like macaroni and cheese. Check out these children's cookbooks based on favorite childhood tales:

- **The Disney Princess Cookbook** by Disney Books.
- **Roald Dahl's Even More Revolting Recipes** by Roald Dahl.
- **The Little House Cookbook** by Barbara M. Walker.



Share a story and a story-inspired snack with your child!

Frequent conversations improve vocabulary

One component of being a strong reader is having a large vocabulary. And you can boost your child’s vocabulary with everyday conversations!

By having regular conversations and using advanced vocabulary, you will introduce your child to new words and their meanings—and your child may begin using them.



When using a new word:

- **Provide a definition** that your child will be able to understand. “It’s a *brisk* fall day! The weather is getting cooler, and it makes me want to run to warm up.”
- **Help your child think** of a way to use and make connections to the word. “Can you think back to another time when we were out in the *brisk* fall air?”
- **Keep using the word** in your conversations. “It’s another *brisk* day today—let’s be sure to wear an extra layer for our walk!”

Have some literacy fun with pumpkins

Now that it’s October, pumpkins are everywhere! You can make a pumpkin the center of your family reading with books like *The Biggest Pumpkin Ever* by Steven Kroll or *It’s Pumpkin Time* by Zoe Hall.

Then, boost language skills by playing pumpkin-related word games:

1. **Look at a pumpkin.** Who can make the longest list of words or phrases that describe it? (*round, lumpy, orange, future pie*, etc.)
2. **Write the word *pumpkin*** on a large sheet of paper. How many smaller words can each person make from the letters in it? (*pump, pin, pink*, etc.)



Q: My elementary schooler tends to pick books that are too challenging, then gives up after one chapter. How can I help my child make better choices?

A: Start by identifying several books that are at your child’s reading level. (Your child should be able to read a full page without struggling with more than about five words.) Then, let your child choose from your selections. If your child still struggles or needs an extra boost, read part of the book aloud and take turns reading to each other.

Take advantage of your library

To make the most of the library:

- **Have every family member** get a library card.
- **Ask the librarian** to recommend books.
- **Let your child** select books to check out.
- **Find out** about in-person and virtual story times, as well as free e-books and audiobooks to download.



For lower elementary readers:

- *The Promise* by Nicola Davies. A young girl makes a promise to an old woman—to plant a sack of acorns. As she plants them around the city, the girl’s entire world changes.



- *Calvin Can’t Fly: The Story of a Bookworm Birdie* by Jennifer Berne. When Calvin learns to read, he is consumed by his love of books—so much so that he forgets to learn to fly!

For upper elementary readers:

- *Kitchen Chaos: The Saturday Cooking Club* by Deborah A. Levine and JillEllyn Riley. Liza, Frankie and Lillian start work on a group project and set off on exciting adventures.
- *The Big Bad Wolf Goes on Vacation* by Delphine Perret. Louis is best friends with the Big Bad Wolf. Find out what happens when the Big Bad Wolf accompanies him to the beach!

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Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.

Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Rebecca Hasty Miyares.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525, ISSN: 1533-3302

www.parent-institute.com