

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Parkland School District

Students should use different strategies for reading nonfiction texts

Reading a novel and reading a science text require different skills. *Reading to learn* in a subject such as math, social studies or science requires a distinct approach. You can help your child by reinforcing these teacher-recommended strategies:

- **Before reading**, students should think about what they already know about the topic. They can jot down a few notes to get their minds going.
- **During reading**, students should highlight, underline or write down important information. Then, they should write down any questions they have about the reading.
- **After reading**, students should summarize what they have read. If they are confused about something, they can go back and reread that section. Then, students should try to connect what they're read to something they already know.



Language skills improve reading

Studies show that when students have strong oral language skills, they read and write with greater ease. To strengthen your child's oral language skills:

- **Build vocabulary.**
- **Model correct grammar.**
- **Ask your child questions.**
- **Have conversations** together daily.



Source: M.J. Snowling and C. Hulme, "The critical importance of oral language," *The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, The Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health.

Ask questions about reading

When students talk about what they're reading, it boosts memory, critical thinking and comprehension. Ask your child these questions:

- **Why did you select** this book?
- **What is it about?**
- **Where does the story** take place?
- **Who is your favorite** character? Why?



Challenge your child to recall details

Recalling key details is an important part of reading comprehension—understanding the reading's meaning.

Play this game with your child to build recall skills:

1. **Collect magazine** or news articles on interesting topics. Let your child choose which one to read.
2. **Read the article together**, then take turns with your child recalling details from what you read.
3. **Give your child time to think** and restate the details. If needed, offer prompts by asking the five W questions: *who, what, when, where* and *why*.

Players get one point for every detail recalled. The person with the most points wins!

Venn diagrams help students make comparisons

Venn diagrams are graphic organizers that help students clarify similarities and differences they encounter while reading. Your child can:

1. **Draw** two overlapping circles.
2. **Write** the similarities between the objects your child is comparing (such as two characters) in the overlapping section.
3. **Write** the differences in the sections that do not overlap.



Thanksgiving offers literacy opportunities

Holidays bring more than big meals and football games on TV. They also offer you and your child a great chance to work on literacy skills together. You can:

- **Work on writing.** In the U.S., the pilgrims observed the first Thanksgiving because they were thankful for their survival in a new land. Have family members write a list of things for which they are thankful. Post the list.
- **Read the poem** “Over the River and Through the Woods” by Lydia Maria Child with your child. It tells the story of a Thanksgiving long ago. Together, write a story or poem about your family’s holiday traditions.
- **Set aside extra time** for reading aloud. Consider delaying bedtime over the holiday to allow for a longer reading time.



Teach your child new words naturally

You’re reading a book aloud and you come to a word your child doesn’t know. Should you stop, look up the word and give your child the definition? Experts say parents should try to explain the word naturally. For example:

- **Provide** a simple definition. “*Asphalt* is the black stuff used to make roads.”
- **Give** an example of how the word is used. “The driveway at our house is made of *asphalt*.”
- **Suggest** that your child use the word. “I bet you can make up a sentence that includes *asphalt*.”
- **Use the word repeatedly.** Over the next week and more, make a point of using the new word in conversation.



Q: I gave my child a journal, but he doesn’t want to use it. How can I encourage him to write in it?

A: Journals are great for building writing skills, but some kids don’t like to write about their daily activities and feelings. They may respond, however, to interesting “prompts.”

Suggest that your child start entries with fun things like: “If I could design a school, I would ...” or “If I could have one superpower, it would be ...” or “If I could travel to space, I would ...”

Try biographical nonfiction

Many kids stick with fiction when choosing books at the library. But don’t overlook biographies and autobiographies.

They’re exciting because the stories are true. Explain that to your child. Then ask, “Who would you like to learn about?” Look for books about that person’s life.



For lower elementary readers:

- *Flight of the Honey Bee* by Raymond Huber. Follow Scout, a honey bee, on her journey to find a flower full of nectar. This book includes many fascinating facts about honey bees.
- *Are You Awake?* by Sophie Blackall. Edward isn’t ready to sleep. He’s curious about a lot of things! Despite his mom’s answers, the questions keep coming.



For upper elementary readers:

- *The New Kid* by Mavis Jukes. Carson is moving from a small school where he knows everyone to a new town and a new school. Join him for all of the adventures he has in store.
- *Happy Happy Clover* by Sayuri Tatsuyama. This story about a bunny’s adventures is told in comic-book style, which may appeal to reluctant readers.

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