

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Lake Washington School District

Share strategies with your child to get the most benefits from digital reading

Technology is an important part of education today; however, reading on a screen does not provide all of the same benefits that reading a traditional book does. When children read text on a tablet or computer screen, they tend to:

- **Skim** the text instead of reaching a deep understanding.
 - **Abandon** specific strategies that improve reading comprehension.
- But learning to read with technology is important to students' success. To support your child:
- **Review** reading strategies and encourage your child to use them when reading on a screen. Your child can take notes and summarize the reading material.
 - **Show** your child how to find answers to questions or definitions of unfamiliar words while reading.



Recharge your child's reading habits

January is the perfect time to assess your child's reading progress. It may be time to increase variety or the level of difficulty of reading materials.

To help your child strengthen reading habits:

- **Recommit** to a regular reading time. Make sure your child sets aside time every day to read.
- **Challenge** your child to increase the amount of time spent reading or the number of books read. Have your child set new goals and brainstorm ways to reach them.
- **Introduce** advanced reading materials gradually. Read them together first so you can help if your child has any difficulty or questions.
- **Lead** by example. Show your child how much you enjoy your reading time.

Consider characters' feelings

To help your child get a feel for main characters, suggest making a "mood chart." Have your child write down two details from each chapter:

1. **The main character's** mood.
2. **The reason** why the main character may have felt that way.

Encourage your child to notice how the character's mood changes throughout the book.

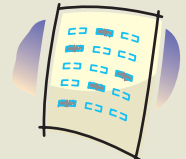


Practice reading directions

To succeed on tests, your child must understand how to read directions.

To practice:

- **Play board games.** Have your child read the directions before you play.
- **Read assignment directions** together. What words are used often? Practice any that give your child trouble.



Read and write about science experiments

Hands-on learning is a fun way to improve reading and writing skills.

Look for books at your library that contain simple science experiments you and your child can do at home.

Then, read the directions, gather materials, write predictions and conduct the experiment together. Have your child take notes on the outcome.



Encourage your child to be a book critic

Creating “book review” cards is a fun way to boost literacy skills. On an index card, write down the title of a book your child read and its author. Have your child create a rating system with numbers or smiley faces. Then, your child should rate and write a short review of the book on the card.

Offer sentence starters like these to help with reviews:

- **I liked this book** because ...
- **My favorite character** was ...
- **My favorite part** of this story was ...
- **I wish the author** would have ...



When elementary schoolers evaluate the books they read, it enhances their reading experience and gives them a sense of accomplishment. Book reviews also help kids remember which books they liked—which will give them ideas of what books to read next!

Help your child practice decoding skills

After learning the sounds that letters make, the next step in reading is *decoding*—figuring out written words.

Readers decode a word by sounding out each of its letters and blending them together. To improve decoding skills:

- **Show your child a word.** Point to each letter from left to right, saying its sound. Then, say all the sounds together to pronounce the word.
- **Play word games.** Write words on index cards. Take turns selecting a card and decoding the word. Make a sentence using the word.
- **Have a treasure hunt.** Hide words written on slips of paper throughout your home. Then, have your child find the slips and decode the words.



Q: The teacher says my child needs to become a more **fluent reader**. How can I help with this?

A: A *fluent* reader progresses through material with competence, confidence and feeling. Fluency makes it easier for your child to understand material. To increase fluency, make sure your child reads often

(even if it’s the same material repeatedly). When you read aloud to your child, model fluency by reading with clarity and expression.

Read up on the weather

Check out a weather website and have your child read today’s forecast. Does it match the current conditions? What’s the forecast for tomorrow and the rest of the week?



First, focus on simple words, like *cloudy* and *rainy*. Then, introduce more challenging words, such as *forecast* and *predict*, or even *Celsius* and *Fahrenheit*.

For lower elementary readers:

- **Stalling** by Alan Katz. Even though it’s time for bed, Dan has plenty of things to do. He devises several ways to stall bedtime for just a few more minutes.

- **Knuffle Bunny Free: An Unexpected Diversion** by Mo Willems. Trixie and her family are on their way to Holland—but her favorite stuffed animal Knuffle Bunny is accidentally put on a plane to China!



For upper elementary readers:

- **Hothead** by Cal Ripken, Jr. and Kevin Cowherd. Connor loves baseball, but his temper puts his game at risk. In order to win, he must overcome his anger.
- **Moon Runner** by Carolyn Marsden. Mina is very nervous when she must start track at school, until she discovers that she loves it—and excels.

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