

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Lake Washington School District

Independent reading has a positive effect on your child's academic success

When children choose to read material that is not part of a school assignment, they are engaging in *independent reading*. Research shows that there is a strong connection between independent reading and academic success.

To encourage this type of reading at home:

- **Stock your home** with reading materials your child will find interesting. Make sure books aren't too difficult for your child to read independently.
- **Establish a family reading time.** Carve out some time each week when family members gather together to read books of their choosing.
- **Show an interest** in what your child is reading. Ask questions such as, "What do you like about this book?" "What was your favorite part of the story?"



New experiences motivate children to read and learn

When children are exposed to a range of new experiences and ideas, they build their vocabulary and develop new interests. These new interests can inspire your child to read to learn even more.

To spark your child's curiosity:

- **Visit intriguing places together**, such as museums or parks. Have thought-provoking discussions with your child about the things that you see.
- **Read books and articles** together on topics you encounter during your experiences. Try to include both fiction and nonfiction texts.
- **Encourage your child to go online** to research topics and places of interest.

Build your child's vocabulary with crossword puzzles

Children with large vocabularies have an easier time reading. To boost word smarts, introduce your child to crossword puzzles. You can:



1. **Look online** to find age-appropriate puzzles.
2. **Solve the first few** together until your child gets the hang of it.
3. **Suggest taking a break** if your child becomes frustrated. Word games should be fun, not work.

Reading is for the birds!

Looking for a fun spring activity? Set up a simple bird feeder with your child. As you observe the birds that visit the feeder, read about them in a guidebook or online. Help your child learn to identify the different birds and where they come from. Then, together, keep track of which birds visit most often.



Have fun with poetry this month

April is National Poetry Month, so look for collections of funny poetry to read with your child. Try Shel Silverstein's *Where the Sidewalk Ends* or Bruce Lansky's *A Bad Case of the Giggles*.

Don't just read the poems—act them out! Use a booming voice, a whisper or a squeaky voice. Or change the words to make an even sillier poem.



Talk about the different types of nouns

In school, your child will learn that a *noun* is a person, place, thing or idea. There are two types of nouns:

- 1. Common.** These nouns name general items (*brother, kitchen*).
- 2. Proper.** These nouns name specific items and are capitalized (*Patrick, Idaho*).

To practice these concepts at home:

- **List various nouns** and have your child say whether they're common or proper nouns. For example, you might say *dog* (common), *hat* (common), *Mississippi* (proper), *plant* (common) and *Dr. Jones* (proper).
- **Look at a book** or news article together. Challenge your child to find several examples of common nouns and proper nouns.
- **Make it a game.** Read a story aloud and have your child listen for nouns. Your child can raise a hand for every common noun and stand up for every proper noun.



Break down compound words

Examining parts of words helps your child develop a knowledge of language. Make a list of *compound words* (words that are made by combining other words) like *sunshine*, *moonbeam* and *baseball*. Pick one of the words and then say, "The big word is *baseball*. If I say *base*, what is missing?"



For lower elementary readers:

- *I (Don't) Like Snakes* by Nicola Davies. A little girl hates her family's pet snakes. That is, until she learns some cool facts about the slithery creatures.
- *The Day the Crayons Quit* by Drew Daywalt. When Duncan opens his crayon box, he finds a note from his crayons. Each crayon is upset about something, and they've all gone on strike!



For upper elementary readers:

- *Nouns and Verbs Have a Field Day* by Robin Pulver. It's Field Day in Mr. Wright's class—and the nouns and verbs that the students have been studying join in!
- *Other Goose: Re-Nurseried!! and Re-Rhymed!! Children's Classics* by J. Otto Seibold. This fun book remakes classic nursery rhymes into new ones like "Mary Had a Little Band."

Ignite your child's desire to read

When children *like* to read, they do it more often—which boosts reading skills and overall school success. To ignite your child's love of reading:

- **Explore.** Help your child discover an appealing book series. Kids often can't resist picking up the next book in a series.
- **Investigate.** Ask questions and encourage your child to find the answers by doing some research online or at the library.
- **Experiment.** Read a variety of books together. If your child is used to reading fiction, try reading a biography or how-to book instead.



Q: I want my child to do well in reading. How can I set high expectations without nagging?

A: It's important to keep a positive attitude about reading—and to encourage reading without making it seem like a chore. Say something like, "Reading can help us learn about almost anything! Let's think

of something really cool to read about this week." The worst thing you can do is pressure your child by saying things like, "You *have to* read well or you'll *fail*."

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