

# BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Orange County Public Schools  
Title I

## Journaling can reinforce your child's reading and writing skills

Keeping a journal is an effective way to build reading and writing skills. But elementary schoolers aren't always enthusiastic about journaling. Try giving your child a notebook, a pen and some irresistible entry starters. Here are some ideas:

- **Write fan fiction.** Encourage your child to write something new about a favorite character.
- **Write a silly poem.** Challenge your child to craft a poem that uses fun combinations of words.
- **Pass notes.** Write a silly question in a notebook for your child to answer. Then, your child can write back and ask you something.
- **Write for TV.** Suggest that your child imagine a new episode of a favorite TV show. Read—and discuss—your child's writing.



## Integrate screen time and reading time

With a little planning, screen devices can become effective tools for learning. You can even use them to encourage your child to read. Here's how:

- **Have your child** read reviews and descriptions of shows and movies. Decide together if you'll watch them.
- **Encourage your child** to write down unfamiliar words when watching shows and movies. Then, ask your child to look up their definitions.
- **Watch the news** with your child (making sure that it's age-appropriate). Then, read news articles together to learn more about current events.
- **Look for books** and articles that relate to a show that interests your child.

## Patience pays off when reading nonfiction

Some students rush through reading assignments just to be finished quickly. But when they do that, they miss out on learning. When reading nonfiction, your child should:

- **Skim the text**, noticing main ideas.
- **Turn headings into questions**, and then find answers by reading the text.
- **Restate main ideas** after each section.
- **Pause and review** what was learned.



## Talk about mnemonic devices

*Mnemonic* devices are memory aids that help students remember information more easily. They can be acronyms, rhymes or associations.

When learning the names of the Great Lakes, for instance, show your child how to use the acronym HOMES to remember Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie and Superior!



## Use reading as inspiration for family activities

The next time your elementary schooler has to read a book for school, plan a fun family adventure related to the book.

For example, after reading a biography of Benjamin Franklin, your child might learn that Franklin supported fire departments. As a family, you could visit a local fire department in honor of Franklin's work.



## Retelling improves reading comprehension

You've just finished reading a story with your child. One of the best ways to check for understanding is to ask your child to retell the story. Retelling a story requires your child to think about the details and decide what's really important.

Give your child these three rules for retelling a story:

1. **Tell what's important.**
2. **Tell it in an order that makes sense.**
3. **Don't tell too much.**

Your child should be able to tell you what happens at the beginning, the middle and the end of the story. If your child doesn't remember certain details, go back and look at that part of the story again. Revisiting parts of the story demonstrates that sometimes it's necessary to read things more than once to gain a thorough understanding.



Source: B. Taylor and J. Ysseldyke, *Effective Instruction for Struggling Readers: K-6*, Teachers College Press.

## Suggest comic books for reluctant readers

Does your reader hesitate to pick up traditional chapter books but eagerly read comic books? That's OK!

Comic books provide many of the same benefits and opportunities to boost reading skills as traditional books. In fact, picture books and graphic novels have adopted elements of comics, including motion lines and speech bubbles.

By reading comic books, students learn how words and pictures come together to tell a story. They also see the progression of a story from beginning to middle to end. So when your child doesn't want to read, suggest a comic book featuring favorite characters.



**Q:** Is it normal for children to reverse letters? I'm worried that my child has dyslexia.

**A:** It's common for early readers to confuse similar-looking letters, such as *b* and *d*. As reading skills improve, however, this shouldn't happen often.

It's wonderful that you pay attention to your child's skills! But if you are worried about reading difficulties, be sure to discuss your concerns with the teacher.

## Get read-aloud assistance from famous actors!

Need a break from doing dramatic read-alouds for your child? Visit Storyline Online. There, you'll find video recordings of popular stories read by members of the Screen Actors Guild. Check it out at [www.storylineonline.net](http://www.storylineonline.net). Or, download the app on your tablet or phone.



## For lower elementary readers:

- ***Because Amelia Smiled*** by David Ezra Stein. Because she saw Amelia smile, Mrs. Higgins smiled and baked some cookies. See what else happens in this chain of events started by a smile.
- ***Ish*** by Peter H. Reynolds. Ramon loves to draw, but gets discouraged when his brother says his drawing of a vase doesn't look realistic. That is, until his sister says that it looks *vase-ish!*



## For upper elementary readers:

- ***Nuts*** by Kacy Cook. When Nell and her brothers find two baby squirrels in their yard, they figure out a way to take care of the animals.
- ***Dig It!: Archaeology for Kids*** by Caitlin Sockin. This engaging book takes readers on a tour through the fascinating world of archaeology.

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