Elementary School • May 2024

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Lake Washington School District

Help your child choose an irresistible book to read together this summer

Summer's relaxed pace makes it a great time to read the same book as your elementary schooler—and to have fun discussing it, too. Let your child choose the book you'll read to boost excitement about the idea.



Encourage your child to look for books with elements such as:

- **Humor.** Young readers giggle at pictures and wordplay. Older kids understand jokes that play out through dialogue and plot points.
- **Personality.** Suggest looking for main characters who are similar to your child in feelings and experiences.
- **Excitement.** Reluctant readers like short chapters with lots of action. Even the first paragraph should draw your child in.
- **Quirkiness**. Sometimes a book's cover draws readers in. Stand-out topics (like "gross bugs") attract young readers, too.

A word challenge boosts vocabulary

This summer, introduce your child (and yourself!) to one new word a day. Try doing it in ways that feel more like games than learning. Then, be sure to use the words several times to reinforce them. To have fun with words:

- **Open a children's dictionary** and pick a random word. Have everyone in your family take turns guessing its definition before reading the definition out loud.
- **Sign up for a "word of the day" app** or email. Read the words together and see who can come up with the funniest sentence using the word.
- **Read an interesting article aloud.** Choose one unfamiliar word and look it up. Challenge each other to use it in a conversation!

Task your child with being the family fact checker

Want your child to engage more with reading? Ask your child to be the family fact checker! When someone has a question about something, ask your child to get the facts.



If you need to double-check an ingredient in a recipe, ask your child to read it to you. If you want to know the capital of Bulgaria, have your child look it up. Fact checkers quickly learn how important reading is in daily life.

Spice up those bookshelves!

Looking for a rainy-day reading activity? With your child, rearrange your family's books in a fun way.



Show off pretty covers, arrange books by color, or add small toys in front of the books. The new look at old books can spark your child's interest in rereading the wonderful stories inside.

'Show and tell' isn't just for school

A simple way to build your child's oral language skills and confidence is to do "show and tell" at home. Think of something your child would love to describe, such as a favorite toy or book. Then, ask your child to tell you all about it. Encourage the use of descriptive language and offer prompts if necessary: "Wow, that truck is a vibrant red! Ask questions to keep your child talking.



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Look for free summer programs at a public library

Has your child joined a library summer reading program yet? Children who participate in these types of programs not only have fun, they also keep their reading skills strong.

Library programs:



- **Offer exciting activities.** Your child may be able to participate in a book club, do art projects and meet authors.
- **Encourage the use of a variety** of reading materials. Your child will be exposed to magazines, graphic novels and audiobooks.
- **Provide reading motivation** through contests and fun. Library events also give kids opportunities to socialize with other readers.
- **Foster positive reading habits,** such as visiting the library often. Many children who enjoy summer reading events want to keep coming back during the school year!

Try some fun family reading activities

Get the whole family involved in reading this summer by planning exciting reading events. Here are two to try:

1. **Trivia night.** Choose a book that everyone in your family can take turns reading. Or, read a short book together. Then, have each person write three trivia questions about the story. Take turns quizzing each other. Who remembers the most?
2. **Theme dinners.** What do the characters in your child's books have for dinner? Base a meal around a favorite book. If the story takes place in another country or time period, help your child research what to put on the menu.





Q: I've heard that if children don't keep reading over the summer, they may lose important skills. Is this true?

A: Yes. Research shows kids' reading skills can weaken significantly over the summer without practice. So it's critical to do fun reading activities all summer long. Take books on picnics, read by flashlight, make up family stories and write them down. Ask your child's teacher for additional reading activity ideas.

Confidence is key in reading

To strengthen your elementary schooler's self-confidence about reading:

- **Ask your child** to read out loud to you. Praise efforts and avoid criticizing.
- **Discuss** what your child is reading. Your child will get to be the expert and share new knowledge.



For lower elementary readers:

- ***Ling & Ting: Not Exactly the Same!*** by Grace Lin. Ling and Ting are twins. But does that mean they're alike in every way?
- ***Picture Day Perfection*** by Deborah Diesen. A boy tries his hardest to make picture day great, but between a bad hair day and a wrinkly shirt, his efforts don't go exactly as planned.



For upper elementary readers:

- ***Big Whopper*** by Patricia Reilly Giff. Destiny tells a lie about an ancestor. What if other kids at the Zigzag Afternoon Center find out the truth?
- ***Pay It Forward*** by Catherine Ryan Hyde. Trevor receives an assignment to do good deeds for three people—who must pay those good deeds forward to three more people.

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