

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Bartlett City Schools

Suggest literacy resolutions to boost your child's reading and writing skills

The start of a new calendar year is the perfect time to set goals. This year, help your elementary schooler create a few literacy resolutions. Your child could resolve to:

- **Read more.** Challenge your child to read a certain number of books each month. If your child is already a bookworm, suggest exploring a new genre every month, like science fiction or historical fiction.
- **Write more.** Encourage your child to set aside time each day to write. This could be anything from a poem or a letter to a journal entry. If your child can't decide what to write about, use a picture to spark creativity.
- **Learn new words.** Suggest learning one new word every day. Your child can find words in books or the dictionary.



Together, use the new words in conversation so they stick. By the end of the year, your child will have mastered 365 new words!

Make the most of digital reading

Digital reading is a crucial skill for today's students. Many platforms offer tools that can boost your child's comprehension and motivation. To get the most out of digital reading, encourage your child to:

- **Minimize digital distractions.** Show your child how to turn off notifications and use "reader view" features to focus solely on the text.
- **Take notes while reading** and highlight key phrases.
- **Use digital tools** to find definitions for unfamiliar words or answers to questions while reading.
- **Make it a game.** Many platforms allow readers to track progress and earn points, badges and reading streaks, which can be a powerful motivator for reluctant readers.

Read up on the daily weather

Check out the weather page of your newspaper (or use a weather app) for an activity that combines reading and science.

Have your child start with today's weather. Is the prediction correct? What's the forecast for the rest of the week?



Focus at first on simple words, like *cloudy* and *rainy*. Then, have your child practice reading more challenging words, such as *report*, *forecast* and *predict*, or even *Celsius* and *Fahrenheit*.

Keep reading aloud

Even if your child is a strong reader, there are benefits to continuing to read aloud together. Read-alouds:

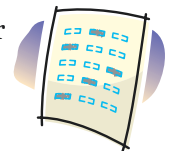


- **Build your child's vocabulary.**
- **Strengthen listening skills.**
- **Introduce new literature** and more advanced text.
- **Provide opportunities** to talk about stories and how they relate to real life.

Build reading skills for test success

To succeed on tests, students must understand what they read—including the directions. To help your child practice for tests:

- **Play board games.** Ask your child to read the instructions before you play.
- **Review assignments.** What words are used often?



Together, practice any that give your child trouble. For example, math tests may often include words like *measure* or *amount*.

Four tips for motivating reluctant readers

It's tough to get children excited about reading if they're already reluctant. To make reading a rewarding experience for your elementary schooler:

- 1. Encourage with enthusiasm.** Instead of nagging, show your child how much you value reading by sharing your own enjoyment of books. Let your enthusiasm be contagious.
- 2. Reward effort, not results.** Instead of offering bribes to read, acknowledge the effort your child puts into reading. Celebrate milestones like trying a new genre or showing persistence.
- 3. Support without judging.** Focus on progress, not perfection. Offer help when your child stumbles over a word, but do so with patience and kindness.
- 4. Respect reading choices.** Allow your child to choose what to read. Remember, all reading counts—even comics and graphic novels.



Boost your child's decoding skills

When students can break down new words to figure them out, they become more confident and fluent readers. Help your child strengthen decoding skills with this four-step plan.

Your child should:

- 1. Look for morphemes.** These word parts are at the beginning, middle or end of a word. In the word *unbelievable*, the morphemes are the prefix (*un*), the root (*believe*) and the suffix (*able*).
- 2. Sound out each part of the word separately.**
- 3. Blend the sounds together to say the word.**
- 4. Read the sentence again.** Does the word make sense? If not, your child should try sounding it out one more time.



Q: Is comprehension something that happens during or after reading a story?

A: Both. The more easily children can read, the better they can understand a story's content—not just its individual words—while they are reading it. So, help your child work on reading smoothly and quickly. Then, help your child think about the content after reading by asking questions such as: *Where did the story take place? Does it remind you of anything in your life?*

Discover more books

Having trouble finding books for your child? Common Sense Media (commonsensemedia.org) can help.



The website offers age-based ratings and reviews of books' content—including themes, language and potential discussion topics. It helps families find books that are appropriate and engaging.

For lower elementary readers:

- ***Ada Twist, Scientist*** by Andrea Beaty. Ada is a natural born scientist who likes to question everything. Find out what she discovers when she investigates an unpleasant smell.
- ***Archibald and the Furry Dinosaurs*** by Suzanne Lang. After setting out to find hair, the world's only bald dinosaur discovers the importance of embracing his unique identity..



For upper elementary readers:

- ***Wonder*** by R.J. Palacio. Because he has severe facial abnormalities, August Pullman has never been to school—until he starts fifth grade.
- ***The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate*** by Jacqueline Kelly. Growing up in Texas in 1900, Calpurnia Virginia Tate, better known as Callie Vee, would much rather learn about science than cooking and sewing.

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