



Growing our Readers: Nonfiction Reading

Helping Your Child Learn from
Informational Texts Grades K-5 Volume XIV

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Why Nonfiction Matters



Informational (nonfiction) texts are everywhere — from books about animals and space to recipes, maps, labels, and even signs on your way to school. These texts help children:

- **Build vocabulary and background knowledge** about the world around them.
- **Develop critical thinking skills** as they learn to understand facts, main ideas, text features, and how information is organized.
- **Connect learning to real life**, which boosts curiosity and engagement.



Research shows that kids who practice reading informational texts become stronger readers overall because they learn strategies that help them understand *what a text is teaching* — *not just what the words say*.





How Kids Learn from Informational Texts



Understanding the Text Structure

Informational books often organize information in patterns like *cause and effect*, *compare/contrast*, or *chronological order*. Recognizing these patterns helps children follow the author's ideas more easily.



Using Text Features

Features like **headings**, **table of contents**, **glossaries**, **diagrams**, and **captions** aren't just decorations — they guide understanding. Helping children notice and use them makes reading feel more purposeful.



Asking Questions & Summarizing

Encourage your child to think about:~

- *What did I learn?*
- *What surprised me?*
- *What questions do I still have?*
- Simple activities like the **3-2-1 strategy** (three things learned, two interesting facts, one question) can strengthen comprehension.





Practical Tips to Try at Home

Explore Text Features Together



Before reading a new book, *skim* the contents:

- Look at chapter titles
- Talk about photos and charts
- Find the glossary or index

Help your child predict what they might learn — it builds purpose!

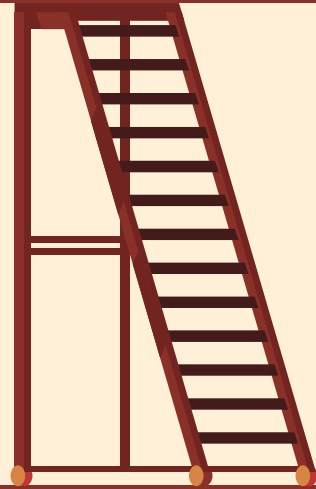


Connect Reading with Everyday Tasks



Informational texts aren't only books! Try:

- Reading directions on a recipe while cooking
- Looking at a map while planning a family trip
- Exploring an article or fact video about something your child wonders about



Ask Thoughtful Questions

Pause sometimes and ask:

- "What's the big idea here?"
- "Why do you think the author included this fact?"
- "Did you learn something new?"

These prompts support deeper thinking.





Choosing the Right Informational Books



For Younger or Beginning Readers



Look for:

- ✓ Short, simple text
- ✓ Large print and supportive pictures
- ✓ Familiar topics (animals, weather, space)



For Older or More Experienced Readers

Let your child choose topics they *care about* — interest boosts persistence and comprehension.

Also consider:

- ✓ More complex texts with captions, maps, and charts
- ✓ Books with clear text structure (compare/contrast, cause/effect)
- ✓ Subjects that build background knowledge for school projects





Great Nonfiction Book Lists





Kindergarten & Grade 1

Great for first nonfiction experiences — short text, engaging photos, and simple facts.

Recommended Books

- Fly Guy Presents series (e.g., *Sharks*, *Space*) — fun facts with kid-friendly text.
- *Tornadoes!* by Gail Gibbons — accessible science with clear diagrams.
- National Geographic Readers: Ponies and other *National Geographic Kids* level readers — nonfiction photos and facts.
- *Me on the Map* by Joan Sweeney — nonfiction about geography and place.
- *The Tiny Seed* & *From Head to Toe* by Eric Carle — nonfiction themes in picture book form



Second & Third Grades

Readers are ready for richer facts, more text features, and greater independence.

Recommended Books

- **Animal Atlas for Kids** – visual journeys through wildlife and habitats.
- **Wild Vet Adventures: Saving Animals Around the World** – true stories about animal care and conservation.
- **The Magic School Bus** nonfiction titles — science topics presented in fun, informative ways.
- *National Geographic Kids Everything Battles* — fascinating comparisons and photos.
- **Who Would Win?** series — engaging fact “vs.” format kids love.



Fourth & Fifth Grades

Older elementary readers are ready for more complex nonfiction — deep facts, biographies, science concepts, and historical topics.

Recommended Books

- **I Am Albert Einstein** (Brad Meltzer's *Ordinary People Change the World*) — biography that inspires curiosity in science and history.
- ***Who Would Win?*** titles — still engaging for older kids who love animals and facts.
- **National Geographic Kids Almanac** — tons of facts across science, culture, and nature.
- **Biographies & History:** Look for books about real people, explorers, scientists, or events (e.g., civil rights heroes, astronauts, inventors). *Common Sense Media* lists many age-appropriate options.
- **Engineering and science topics** – books about inventions, space missions, or discoveries (e.g., *Isaac Newton and Physics for Kids* style titles) have great crossover between facts and real-life application.





Favorite Nonfiction & Author Series

Gail Gibbons

clear, informative
picture books on many
topics.

National Geographic Kids Series

consistently rich,
photo-driven nonfiction.



Science Comics

engaging graphic
nonfiction series
covering STEM topics.

Who Was/Is Series

biographies kids enjoy
(older grades).





Nonfiction reading is not just about *reading* — it's about *thinking, questioning, and connecting ideas*. With your support at home, your child can become a confident informational reader who enjoys discovering new things every day!



The background is a dark brown color with a subtle pattern of horizontal lines. At the top, there are two shelves filled with colorful books in shades of red, purple, blue, green, and orange. In the center, a woman with short brown hair, wearing a purple dress, is sitting at a wooden desk. She is reading an open book. To her left is a lamp with a red shade and a gold base. To her right is a red mug with a white steam rising from it. The desk has three drawers with decorative patterns. The overall style is a flat, cartoonish illustration.

We appreciate your feedback!

Was this resource helpful?
Take a moment to answer three short questions to help guide future Growing our Readers Newsletters.