Elementary School • May 2026

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Bartlett City Schools

Printed books offer deeper reading benefits for elementary school students

Many children enjoy reading online. However, studies show that there are some reading benefits that can come only from reading a printed book. For example:

- **Fast-paced, digital media** trains the brain to process information more rapidly and less thoroughly. Online readers are more likely to skim than to read for meaning. They may be able to answer simple questions but they stumble on questions that involve thinking and they don't retain material long-term.
- **A printed page** remains the same. Readers can take their time and turn back to refer to something they've just read. Readers are more likely to remember the story and recall many more details.

This summer, give your child plenty of opportunities to unplug and read some printed books!

Source: K. Benson. "Reading on Paper Versus Screens: What's the Difference?" BrainFacts.org.

Promote reading as a summer activity

To keep your child reading over the summer, include it in fun summer activities. Demonstrate that reading is enjoyable—and never make it feel like a chore.

To encourage reading:

- **Select books that match your child's activities**—sports books for a baseball player or camping books for a camper.
- **Let your child stay up** past bedtime when a book is just too good to put down.
- **Help your child find a series** of fiction or thriller books and then have the next exciting book ready to go!
- **Share favorite books** with your child.
- **Change location.** Read books at the pool, in a tent or at the park.

Build writing skills this summer

Summer is a great time for your child to keep a log. Your child could start a:

- **Research log** on a favorite subject.
- **Travel log** to keep track of places and people encountered away from home.
- **Observation log** and record how something changes over a period of time.
- **Reading log** to note reactions, favorite quotes and lessons learned.

Pets and stuffed animals make great listeners

If your child is self-conscious about reading aloud, consistent practice is key for improvement. To ease any anxiety, suggest reading to a family pet or favorite stuffed animal.

These listeners allow your child to relax and focus solely on the words without the pressure of a human audience.

Set goals for summer reading

As summer approaches, encourage your entire family to set some reading goals. Family members could strive to:

- **Read a certain number** of books or pages each week.
- **Read all the books** by a favorite author.
- **Read to learn** a new skill.
- **Read for a certain amount** of time each day.
- **Listen to an audiobook.**
- **Meet regularly** to talk about what they are reading.
- **Read a book** you wouldn't normally read.

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Summer reading programs boost skills

Have you looked into your library's summer reading program yet? In addition to being fun, these programs can help your child keep reading skills sharp over the summer months. Typically, they also:

- **Offer exciting activities.** For example, kids may do art projects, enter contests and meet authors.
- **Encourage the enjoyment** of all kinds of materials—from magazines to graphic novels and audiobooks.
- **Provide motivation** in a safe environment. Library events are wonderful opportunities to socialize with other readers, too.
- **Foster strong reading habits,** such as visiting the library often for more reading material. When children enjoy summer reading events, they may want to come back all year long.

Strong reading skills improve test success

Strong reading skills are essential for success on tests, especially when tackling multiple-choice questions. Share these tips with your child:

1. **Look for key words,** such as *who, what, when* and *where*. Your child should also pay attention to words like *not* and *except* that can change the meaning of a sentence.
2. **Predict the answer** before looking at the choices.
3. **Read every choice.** Even if your child sees the answer immediately, it's important to consider all the possibilities. One answer may be more complete than another.
4. **Eliminate wrong answers.** Crossing them out boosts your child's chances of selecting correctly from the remaining answers.

Q: I want to help my elementary schooler think more deeply about reading material. How can I encourage this during my child's reading time?

A: You can encourage thinking and strengthen your child's reading comprehension by asking questions such as, "What happened in the beginning of the story? The middle? The end?" "Why do you think the author wrote this book?" "What did you like or dislike about it?" "Can you teach me something you learned from the book?" "Does the book remind you of another one you've read?"

Boost literacy with maps

Making maps can be a fun way to read and write. Have your child draw a map of your community that includes landmarks, like school, stores and friends' houses.

Give your child directions to use a finger to navigate around the map. Use words like *left, right, east* and *west* that explain which way to go. Then, have your child give you directions.

For lower elementary readers:

- ***Uh-oh, Cleo*** by Jessica Harper. Uh-oh! A minor accident sends eight-year-old Cleo to the doctor for stitches. This amusing story is a fun introduction to chapter books.
- ***Waiting Is Not Easy*** by Mo Willems. Piggie tells Gerald he has a big, special surprise for them to share—and Gerald just cannot wait!

For upper elementary readers:

- ***Running Shoes*** by Frederick Lipp. Sophy receives the most wonderful gift—a pair of running shoes—and is inspired to do great things.
- ***The Invention of Hugo Cabret*** by Brian Selznick. Meet Hugo, a young boy who lives in the clock tower of a busy Paris train station. When he's not making sure the clocks are on time, he's working on his secret invention.

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