Elementary School • October 2026

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Bartlett City Schools

Give your child's vocabulary a boost with daily conversations

Talking together is one of the best ways to help your elementary schooler build vocabulary. When you have regular back-and-forth conversations with your child and use interesting words, your child learns new things—and might even start using the words! This is great because the more words your child knows, the easier and more fun reading becomes.

When you use a word your child doesn't know:

1. **Provide a definition** that is easy to understand. "It's a *brisk* fall day. The weather is getting cooler, but it's not cold enough for snow yet."
2. **Help your child make** connections to the word. "Can you remember another time when we were outside in the brisk fall air?"
3. **Keep using the word** in your conversations during the week. "It's another brisk day today. Let's be sure to put on an extra layer for our afternoon walk."

Enhance reading skills *and* math success

Did you know that strong reading skills can help your child do better in math? Math word problems require students to read in order to figure out what they are being asked to do. This involves three main steps:

1. **Read and understand the text.** Review key math terms that act as hints with your child. What do the terms *increased, fewer than* or *difference* mean in a problem? Encourage your child to read a word problem carefully several times to look for these key words.
2. **Identify what needs to be answered.** Have your child underline the final question to stay focused on the goal.
3. **Create and solve the equation.** Help your child translate the words into a number sentence to see the math clearly.

Autumn offers literacy inspiration

Use time outdoors with your child to guide your reading and writing activities. Here are a few ideas:

- **Collect leaves.** Read a guide to identify them, then label them in a scrapbook.
- **Observe wildlife** in a park or in your neighborhood. Ask your child to record observations in a special journal.
- **Do some research together** to learn more about the plants and animals your child has observed.

Mix up your reading routine

Change your daily reading routine occasionally to keep it interesting for your child. One day, you might read to your child. The next day, have your child read to you. Ask other family members to join you. A little variety goes a long way in raising a lifelong reader!

Play October-themed games

These games are a timely way to enjoy building word power. With your child:

- **Create words** using the letters in the word *October*. How many can you each come up with?
- **Brainstorm a list of words** that begin with the letter O. Ask your child to put them in alphabetical order. Then, have your child write one sentence for each word and read it to you.

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Ask reading-related questions at your parent-teacher conference

Parent-teacher conferences are a great time to check on your child's reading progress. Ask the teacher questions such as:

- **What are my child's strengths** and weaknesses in reading?
- **How can I support my child's** literacy development at home?
- **What types of material** does my child enjoy reading in school?
- **How are my child's** writing skills developing?
- **What reading strategies** are you using with my child?
- **Are there resources** you can suggest we use at home that would be helpful to improve my child's reading?"

Boost your child's desire to read

When children enjoy reading, they read more often, which improves skills and school success. Developing this lifelong habit early on also broadens your child's perspective on the world.

To ignite a love for reading:

- **Make it an event.** Instead of just picking up books, make library visits special. Choose interesting stories and find a cozy spot to enjoy them together.
- **Explore.** Help your child discover an appealing book series. Kids often can't resist picking up the next book.
- **Investigate.** Ask a question and encourage your child to find the answer by doing some research together.
- **Play.** Turn what you read into a game. Ask your child to summarize a story using only five sentences.

Q: My child has a journal, but doesn't want to use it. How can I encourage my elementary schooler to write in it?

A: Journals are great for building reading and writing skills, but some children don't want to write about their daily activities and feelings. They may respond, however, to "prompts." Suggest that your child start entries with interesting sentences like, "If I could design a school, I would ..." .

Create a personal dictionary

Children encounter new words every day. What can help them remember them all?

Encourage your child to:

1. **Use a small notebook** to create a personal dictionary.
2. **Write down tricky words,** add definitions and draw pictures.
3. **Review the dictionary regularly** to keep memory fresh and improve reading skills for life!

For lower elementary readers:

- ***Itsy Mitsy Runs Away*** by Elanna Allen. Itsy Mitsy despises bedtime, so she decides to run away. But first, she must pack up all the essentials.
- ***Calvin Can't Fly: The Story of a Bookworm Birdie*** by Jennifer Berne. When Calvin learns to read, he is consumed by his love of books and forgets to learn how to fly!

For upper elementary readers:

- ***Eliza Bing is (Not) a Big, Fat Quitter*** by Carmella Van Vleet. Eliza is determined to take a cake-decorating class. But first, she must convince her parents that she can follow through with an interest.
- ***Guys Read: Funny Business*** edited by Jon Scieszka. This collection of humorous short stories is designed for boys—including those who avoid reading. But girls will enjoy it, too!

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