Elementary School • November 2026

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Orange County Public Schools
Title I

Share this four-step process for reading and understanding nonfiction texts

The process for reading nonfiction text is a bit different from reading a story. To strengthen the skills needed to understand and remember assigned readings, encourage your child to:

1. **Preview the text.** Before reading, have your child look at the headings, pictures and words in bold type. Your child should ask: *What do I already know about the topic? What is this text trying to teach me? What new words will I need to learn?*
2. **Use active reading strategies.** Have your child pause after reading small sections to summarize the main ideas. Encourage your child to learn the meaning of any new words.
3. **Think analytically.** Your child should look closely at the facts in the text itself and ask: *How does the author support the main points? Why was this written?*
4. **Extend learning.** Suggest your child read other texts on the same topic to build a stronger understanding of facts and ideas.



Practice using synonyms and antonyms

Working with *synonyms* (words with similar meanings) and *antonyms* (words with the opposite meaning) is a great way to grow your child's vocabulary. Here's a fun game to get started! Give players two pieces of paper, each divided into three columns. Next, have each player:

1. **Write a list of words** that describe themselves in positive terms in column one. "I am *kind* and *generous*."
2. **Write a synonym** for each word in column two. "I am *nice* and *giving*."
3. **Write an antonym** for each word in column three. "I am not *mean* or *stingy*."
4. **Exchange pages.** Read about each other. Then, play the game again—this time describing the other person.

Community service and reading

Does your elementary schooler enjoy reading aloud? If so, your young reader can brighten others' days by reading to them.

Together, research places where you and your child can sharpen skills and volunteer to read. Try:

- **Local day care centers.**
- **After-school programs.**
- **Retirement homes.**
- **Libraries.**
- **Community centers.**
- **Animal shelters.**



Be a fluency role model

Fluency means reading with speed, accuracy and expression. To help your child build fluency:

- **Model smooth reading** by reading aloud in a conversational tone.
- **Listen to audiobooks** together.
- **Attend library story time** so your child can hear fluent reading.



Go on a letter and word hunt

Turn reading practice into an interactive treasure hunt! Grab an old magazine and try this activity:

1. **Mark the pages.** Write a few target letters at the top of several magazine pages.
2. **Circle and count.** Ask your child to circle words starting with those letters, then count which letter has the most.
3. **Discuss and create.** Read the circled words together, talk about their meanings and challenge your child to use them in new sentences.



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Increase the fun factor in your family reading routines with fun activities



Reading together every day is one of the most important things you can do for your child's academic success. To keep it exciting:

- **Find new reading spots.** Pick fun, unusual places to read. Build a fort with blankets and couch cushions. Or bundle up and read outside.
- **Plan a performance.** Choose a favorite passage from a book to recite and help your child master it.
- **Find a book-inspired craft** to complete together after reading.
- **Celebrate reading success.** When your child reaches a goal (such as 100 reading minutes in a week), do something special together!

Encourage editing to improve writing

Writing is more than just finishing a draft. Taking time to refine ideas is what turns a good piece of writing into a great one. To help your child polish writing:



- **Listen and discuss.** Offer to read the writing aloud or listen to your child read it. Start by pointing out what your child did well. Then, suggest small improvements.
- **Encourage a fresh view.** Ask your child to pretend to be the teacher. What would your child add, change or remove? This helps your child see the work more clearly.
- **Guide the revision.** Support your child's effort to turn the rough draft into a final piece. Celebrate your elementary schooler's progress to build confidence and demonstrate that great writing happens one step at a time.



Q: Playing video games is my child's favorite activity. How can I get my child to spend more time reading instead?

A: It can be difficult to motivate some kids to read—especially when there are so many entertainment options available. To make more time for reading, place limits on recreational screen use. Keep interesting reading materials around the house, such as magazines, graphic novels and books based on your child's favorite shows or games.

Try this fun dictionary game

Open a dictionary to any page. Have your child point to a place on the page without looking. Then, try to define the word closest to where your child pointed.

Take turns being the pointer and guesser. A correct definition equals one point. See who can get to 10 points first.



For lower elementary readers:

- ***Luke on the Loose*** by Harry Bliss. What's it like to be a pigeon in New York? Luke finds out when he chases a flock in this comic-book adventure.
- ***Chloe and the Lion*** by Mac Barnett. When Chloe gets lost in the woods, an argument breaks out between this book's author and illustrator, who have different views of how the story should end.



For upper elementary readers:

- ***Because of Mr. Terupt*** by Rob Buyea. Seven fifth-grade students start their school year, each bringing a unique perspective to Mr. Terupt's class.
- ***The New Kid*** by Mavis Jukes. Carson is moving from a small school where he knows everyone to a new town and a new school. Join him for all of the adventures he has in store!

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