

# BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Great Falls Elementary School  
Learning Lab

## Five strategies can help you support a struggling reader

If your child is having trouble with reading, it can affect all of his classes. His confidence is a key element of his reading success. To help your child keep a positive outlook:

- 1. Avoid comparing him** with others. Children develop reading skills at different rates—and that's OK. Help your child focus on his strengths.
- 2. Ask his teacher** for suggestions of how to help him with reading at home.
- 3. Plan small steps** to help him overcome struggles. Match goals to his age and ability so he can experience success. Nothing breeds success like success.
- 4. Create a reading routine** that your child finds enjoyable.
- 5. Keep up-to-date** with his progress in school. Don't let problems escalate.



## A snowman makes winter reading fun

There's just something about a snowman that seems to inspire writers. And December is the perfect time of year to check out one of these wintry titles:

- ***Sneezy the Snowman*** by Maureen Wright.
  - ***The Greatest Snowman in the World!*** by Peter Hannan.
  - ***Beware, The Snowman*** by R.L. Stine.
  - ***Case of the Sneaky Snowman*** by Carolyn Keene.
- After sharing one (or all!) of these snowy stories with your child, build a snowman together—either outside out of actual snow, or inside out of paper, cotton balls or even marshmallows.

What kinds of adventures could your child's snowman have? Ask her to write down a tale. Then, make it a tradition to read her story on the first day of winter every year.

## Strong attendance has a direct impact on your child's reading skills

Research shows that missing school has negative effects on reading and learning. This winter, recommit to ensuring your child is in school on time every day. Then, begin 2019 with routines that support good attendance. Stick to a regular sleep schedule and gather items for school the night before. This makes mornings easier and prevents tardiness.



**Source:** "Attendance in the Early Grades: Why it Matters for Reading," Attendance Works, [nswc.com/br-attendance](http://nswc.com/br-attendance).

## Don't let cold weather increase time spent in front of screens!

Experts recommend parents set limits on kids' recreational screen time. But it's easy to lose track of screen time when it's too cold to play outside.

Brainstorm and make a list of fun reading-related alternative activities.

On cold days, have your child choose an activity from the list.



## Pay attention to textbook pictures

Pictures in textbooks can give students a clearer idea of what a chapter is about. Before your child reads a chapter in her textbook, have her look at the pictures and ask herself:

- **What does the picture** show?
- **What details** are there?
- **Why did** the authors and editors include this picture?



## Boost your child's reading comprehension

The older your child gets, the more complex his school reading becomes. He needs strong reading comprehension skills to do his best in school. To help your child understand what he reads, encourage him to:

1. **Read aloud.** This slows down reading and helps your child "process" words.
2. **Read to relax.** Encourage your child to read enjoyable books for fun.
3. **Reread.** Reading things more than once can help your child understand new concepts and learn new vocabulary.
4. **Supplement his reading.** Look for interesting, non-intimidating materials related to what your child is learning in school.
5. **Discuss his reading.** Ask questions that encourage thinking. "Would you recommend this book to a friend? Why or why not?"



## Play dictionary games to learn new words

To build your child's vocabulary, have some fun with a dictionary. Before starting, make sure your child understands how a dictionary works. Show how the entry word is in bold letters. It's followed by one or more definitions and perhaps a sentence that includes the word.

Then, take turns leading these games:

- **Definition First.** Read only the definition of a word. Have the other players try to guess the word.
- **Which Is It?** Find an unusual word in the dictionary. Say the word. Then, read two definitions: the correct one and a definition of another word. Ask players to guess the correct definition.



**Q:** My child gets frustrated when he struggles to read a word. How can I help?

**A:** Suggest that he become a "reading detective." He can look for clues, such as sounds in the word and nearby pictures. You can also discuss similar words he knows. Sometimes it helps to reread the sentence or to skip the troublesome word and keep reading. Then say, "What word would make sense there?"

## Story starters bring life to writing

To help your child practice writing, share irresistible story starters:

- **It's the year 2118.** What are your future relatives doing?
- **You're a space explorer.** What does your ship look like, and where are you going?
- **It is raining** cats and dogs—real ones! What do you do?



## For lower elementary readers:

- **President Taft Is Stuck in the Bath** by Mac Barnett. Legend has it that the 27th president, William Howard Taft, was once stuck in a White House bathtub! Did that happen?
- **Mirror, Mirror: A Book of Reversible Verse** by Marilyn Singer. These poems based on fairy tales have a special feature. They can be read down the page or up the page for different meanings!



## For upper elementary readers:

- **Confetti Girl** by Diana López. Join Lina as she goes through her school year—playing volleyball with her best friend, running a booth at the school carnival and adding to her unique collection of socks.
- **Word After Word After Word** by Patricia MacLachlan. A writer tells fourth graders that everyone has a story to tell—and together they discover how right she is.

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