

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Great Falls Elementary School
Learning Lab

Help your child get the most benefits from digital reading

While technology is an important part of education today, reading on a screen does not provide all of the same benefits that reading a traditional book does. When children read text on a tablet or computer screen, they tend to:

- **Skim** the text instead of reaching a deep understanding.
 - **Abandon** specific strategies that improve reading comprehension.
- But learning to read with technology is important to students' success. To support your child:
- **Review** reading strategies and encourage her to use them when she is reading on a screen. For example, she can take notes and summarize what she reads.
 - **Show** her how to find answers to questions or definitions of difficult words while she's reading.



Recharge your child's reading habits

January is the perfect time to assess your child's reading progress. It may be time to increase the level of difficulty or variety of his reading materials.

To help your child improve his reading habits:

- **Recommit** to a regular reading time. Make sure he sets aside time every day to read.
- **Challenge** your child to increase the amount of time he spends reading or the number of books he reads. Have him set new goals and help him reach them.
- **Introduce** advanced reading materials gradually. Read them together first so you can help if your child has any difficulty or questions.
- **Lead** by example. Show your child how much you enjoy your reading time.

Read up on the weather

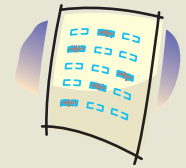
Check out the weather page of your newspaper (or a weather website) for an activity that combines reading and science. Have your child read today's forecast. Does it match the current conditions? What's the forecast for tomorrow and the rest of the week?



Focus at first on simple words, like *cloudy* and *rainy*. Then, introduce and practice more challenging words, such as *forecast* and *predict*, or even *Celsius* and *Fahrenheit*.

Practice reading directions

To succeed on tests, your child must understand what he reads—including the directions. To give him practice:



- **Play board games.** Have your child read the directions before you play.
- **Read homework directions** together. What words are used often? Practice any that give your child trouble.

Consider characters' feelings

To help your child get a feel for main characters, suggest that she make a "mood chart." Have her write down two details from each chapter:

1. **The main character's** mood.
2. **The reason** why the main character may have felt that way.



Encourage your child to notice how the character's mood changes throughout the book.

Boost your child's decoding skills

After learning the sounds that letters make, the next step in reading is *decoding*—figuring out written words. Readers decode a word by sounding out each of its letters and blending them together.

To help your child improve her decoding skills:

- **Show her a word.** Point to each letter from left to right, saying its sound. Then, say all the sounds together to pronounce the word.
- **Play word games.** Write words on index cards. Take turns selecting a card and decoding the word. Make a sentence using the word.
- **Have a treasure hunt.** Hide words written on slips of paper throughout your home. Then, have your child find the slips and decode the words.



Check out book suggestions from teachers and kids

Having trouble finding a good book for your child? The International Literacy Association can help. Visit www.literacyworldwide.org/get-resources/reading-lists. There you'll find "Choices" reading lists. They include book suggestions from teachers and children.



For lower elementary readers:

- ***Knuffle Bunny Free: An Unexpected Diversion*** by Mo Willems. Trixie and her family are on their way to Holland—but her favorite stuffed animal Knuffle Bunny is accidentally put on a plane to China!
- ***Lissy's Friends*** by Grace Lin. When Lissy is lonely at lunch, she makes a paper crane. And soon she has a whole collection of origami friends.



For upper elementary readers:

- ***The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate*** by Jacqueline Kelly. Growing up in Texas in the 1900's, Callie Vee was expected to learn to cook and sew, but she wanted to learn about science!
- ***Hothead*** by Cal Ripken, Jr. and Kevin Cowherd. Connor loves baseball, but his temper puts his game at risk. In order to win, he must overcome his anger.

Handwriting Day celebrates the 'write' stuff

January 23 is National Handwriting Day. That's because on January 23, 1737, John Hancock was born. According to the legend, Hancock had problems with writing as a youth. The ink from his quill pen was always dripping and creating a mess. After years of practice, he became more proficient—as seen in his signature on the Declaration of Independence.

To help your child celebrate penmanship, have him:

- **Practice his signature.** See if he can add flourishes to his letters, like John Hancock did.
- **Choose a favorite saying** by Hancock or another famous person and write it in his best handwriting. Post the saying in your home.
- **Read a book** written in "handwriting," like Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. Ask your librarian for other suggestions.



Q: My child's teacher says we should work on "sight words" at home. What does this mean?

A: Sight words are written words that readers see often, such as *I, me, dog, open* and *school*. Becoming familiar with them is important because it makes reading easier. Ask your child's teacher for a list of

sight words. Then use homemade flash cards (with simple pictures at first, if you wish) to help your child practice reading them.

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