

# BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Great Falls Elementary School  
Learning Lab

## Boost school skills while having some reading and writing fun!

There are lots of entertaining reading and writing activities that can help your child strengthen valuable skills. Encourage her to:

- **Look up events that happened** on the day she was born. Your child can write about them in a journal or use the newspaper headlines to make a poster.
- **Invent a new board game.** Have your child design the board and game pieces. Then she can write down the rules.
- **Look at a globe** and pick a country. Challenge your child to discover and share five interesting facts about it.
- **Conduct a nature study.** How many animals, birds and insects can your child find in your backyard or a local park? Have her make a list or take pictures of them so she can research the critters online.



## Reading aloud offers many benefits

Even though your child is beginning to read on his own, continue reading aloud to him. Reading aloud not only gives you quality time with your child, it also exposes him to new ideas, concepts and vocabulary.

Each time you read aloud together, you are developing your child's:

- **Reading comprehension skills.** Talk about what you read. Ask your child to summarize the passage.
- **Vocabulary.** Look up new words together.
- **Listening and speaking skills.** After reading a passage, have your child tell you what he heard. Ask questions.
- **Analytic skills.** Have your child explain why events happened in the story, why a character is his favorite or why he believes the author made specific choices.

## Read about spring cleaning safety

Will your older child be helping you with household cleaning chores this spring? Ask him to read the safety labels on cleaning products before he starts. Then, have him explain the label directions to you so you are both sure he understands.



Reading safety labels is a great example of how reading is essential to our daily lives.

## Exposure to correct grammar improves language skills

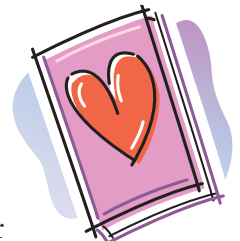
Learning grammar rules can be tough—but reading makes it easier! When your child reads well-written text, she sees how language should be used. She'll soon learn to recognize mistakes in other materials.



## Combine reading with fun

The more fun your child has reading, the more motivated he may be to keep reading! Try these ideas:

- **Play games** that involve reading, such as Boggle, Scrabble and Apples to Apples.
- **Build activities** around what your child is reading. For example, act out the story or do crafts that relate to it.
- **Keep a reading calendar.** Mark the days that he starts and finishes a book.



## Help your child evaluate online information

When your child is doing a research project, help her find reputable and reliable information online. To evaluate the information she finds on the internet, your child should ask herself these questions:

- **Is the source reputable?** Be sure your child does some research on the source to see where the information is coming from.
- **Is the source biased?** Information that comes from a company might be designed to sell their product. Information from an organization might reflect a particular agenda.
- **Is the information accurate?** Do other reliable sites include the same information?
- **Is the information up-to-date?** Science studies, for example, may become outdated when newer research is completed.



## Share five steps to writing success

Whether your child loves or dreads writing assignments, five steps will make them easier. Encourage him to:

1. **Prewrite.** Brainstorm and bounce ideas off someone.
2. **Draft.** Write a first copy—*without* worrying about mistakes!
3. **Revise.** Read through the paper at least once. Does everything make sense? Are there better ways to say things?
4. **Edit.** Check grammar, punctuation and spelling.
5. **Review.** Read the paper aloud to catch other mistakes.



**Q:** My child loves math—but will do anything to avoid reading. How can I combine the two?

**A:** Read books about math subjects together, such as *Why Pi?* by Johnny Ball. You can also do reading activities that involve math. For example, have her read sale signs (such as “20% off all shirts” or “Buy one pair of shoes, get the second pair free.”) Then she can figure out how much you’d pay for certain items. Challenge her to solve interesting word problems, too!

## Serve your community by reading to others

Do you and your child enjoy reading aloud? Maybe you could brighten others’ days by reading to them. Consider being volunteer readers in a school, nursing home or hospital.



## For lower elementary readers:

- ***Hiromi’s Hands*** by Lynne Barasch. This biography tells about chef Akira Suzuki and his daughter Hiromi, as they each discover a passion for making sushi.
- ***Mine-o-saur*** by Sudipta Bardhan-Quallen. The Mine-o-saur refuses to share his toys and his snacks—and soon he realizes he has no friends to play with! How will the Mine-o-saur solve this problem?



## For upper elementary readers:

- ***Poem Runs: Baseball Poems and Paintings*** by Douglas Florian. Get ready for baseball season with this collection of poems about various positions and pieces of equipment.
- ***Bronte’s Book Club*** by Kristiana Gregory. When Bronte Bella moves to a new town, she worries about making friends. A book club helps her find things she has in common with girls in the new place.

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