

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

Calvin A. Hunsinger School

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ *The New Small Person*

(Lauren Child)

Life as an only child is going well for Elmore, until a new little person comes along to interrupt his TV shows and knock over his toys.



But as his brother gets older, Elmore realizes that a sibling can become a friend—maybe even enough of one to share his prized jelly beans with.

■ *The Word Collector* (Sonja Wimmer)

Luna loves to collect magnificent words, but one day she notices words disappearing from her collection. Soon she discovers that they're missing because people are too busy to remember them. Can Luna bring love, friendship, and fun back into their lives through the power of words? (Also available in Spanish.)

■ *Even Superheroes Have Bad Days*

(Shelly Becker)

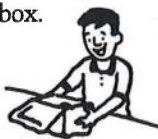
Superheroes could use their powers to do naughty things, like change the weather or cause chaos when they are sad or mad—but do they? Readers will find out how even the mightiest superheroes work through their emotions to make a difference in the world.



■ *How Did That Get in My Lunchbox? The Story of Food*

(Chris Butterworth)

Where do common foods like bread, cheese, and carrots come from? This nonfiction book describes their journeys from farm to lunchbox. Your child will discover that it takes a lot of work to grow and produce yummy foods.



Adventures in reading

What's between the pages of a book? An adventure that your youngster could go on—without leaving home! These ideas will show him all that he can learn on his nonfiction reading expeditions.



Take an animal safari

Together, look for animals outside, and help your child make a list of the ones you see. Then, read books or look online to learn facts about each one. What does it eat? What are its babies called? Does it sleep at night or during the day? Encourage your youngster to write each fact (or dictate it to you) in a notebook to carry on future walks. How many new animals can he “meet”?

or pretend) to the person that includes questions he has.

Visit new places

Let your child plan an imaginary trip to a book's setting. After a story about a rain forest, read a nonfiction book on jungles. He can use facts he learns to make a packing list for his journey. He'll have to think about the climate (hot, rainy) to decide what he needs (wide-brimmed hat, lots of water, umbrella). He could also write a pretend postcard from his destination. ♥

Fine-motor fun

Playing with tiny objects strengthens little hands—building the fine-motor skills your child needs for handwriting, drawing, and more. Try these activities.



● **Cotton-ball race.** Give each player an empty bowl and a bowl containing 12 cotton balls or other small, soft items. Using tweezers or your thumb and forefinger, race each other to transfer them—one at a time—to the empty bowl. Who will win the race?

● **Yarn wrapping.** Let your youngster use safety scissors to cut long pieces of colorful yarn. Then, have her tape one end of each to the outside of a cup, wrap the yarn around and around, and tape down the opposite end. *Idea:* She could use her creation as a pencil or crayon holder. ♥

Ready, set, write!

Drawing is the first way children express their thoughts on paper. You may also have noticed—or will soon notice—your youngster writing scribbles, letters, or words on her pictures. Use these strategies to support your little writer at every stage.

Drawings. Invite your child to tell you all about pictures she draws. Ask questions that encourage her to tell a



story: “Who is in your drawing?” “What are their names?” *Tip:* As your youngster learns to write her name in school, have her start printing it on pictures she draws at home.

Scribbles. Is your child adding scribbles or letter-like shapes to her pictures? Combining drawing and writing is a big step toward learning to write. Acknowledge her efforts by asking, “Can you read that to me?”

Writing. When your youngster begins writing actual letters or words, help her list words she uses frequently. *Examples:* *the, like, Mommy, Daddy.* She can label her list “Words I Know”—and refer to it to help her write captions for her pictures.♥

Q&A Reading aloud—together



Q My son loves when I read to him. Any tips for using story time to help him learn to read himself?

A Sure! Start by asking your child to join in when you read. Try reading a book with a refrain, perhaps *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Eric Carle) or *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* (Laura Numeroff). After a few pages, pause before the repeating part—your son will feel proud to finish the page himself (“But he was still hungry!”).



Your child will also learn from listening to you read rhyming books. Stop before you say each rhyming word to let your youngster fill it in.

Finally, develop his reading comprehension by talking about stories. Share your reactions (“That part really cracked me up!”), and listen while he tells you his response.♥

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Fun with Words Plant an alphabet tree

Read an alphabet book with your child, then encourage him to build his own alphabet tree to identify and remember letters.



1. Let your youngster plant a “tree trunk” (an empty cardboard paper-towel tube) in a cup filled with dirt or sand. Then, help him cut small slits into the trunk and insert craft stick “branches.”
2. Have your child draw 26 “alphabet leaves” on green paper, cut them out, and write a letter on each leaf. *Tip:* He could flip through the alphabet book to remind himself what each letter looks like.
3. Together, recite the alphabet (or sing the alphabet song) while he tapes each leaf to any branch.
4. Read the book again—can your child find each letter on his tree?♥

Parent to Parent Family show-and-tell

When my daughter Erica began kindergarten, she was hesitant to speak up during show-and-tell. Her teacher suggested that we practice at home, so we decided to hold a weekly family show-and-tell night.

Every Friday, we gather in the living room and take turns sharing something that’s important to us. Each person explains why her show-and-tell item is special. Then we

ask questions, such as, “What do you like best about it?” or “Where did you get it?” We’ve shared books, drawings, souvenirs, and more.

What began as a way to help Erica practice speaking has turned out to be a great family conversation

starter. Now Erica is in second grade—she’s speaking up more in class, and we still look forward to family show-and-tell each week.♥



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■ *Doggy Defenders: Willow the Therapy Dog* (Lisa M. Gerry)

Some dogs have incredible jobs helping people, and Willow is one of them. This nonfiction



book follows a therapy dog named Willow through her day at work. She spreads cheer in a hospital and a retired veterans' home, and she even "reads" with children at a library. Part of the Doggy Defenders series.

■ *Hair Like Mine*

(LaTashia M. Perry)

A little girl thinks her hair is too curly and frizzy, and she struggles to find someone with hair like hers. With guidance from her mother, who insists that no two people have the same hair, face, or toes, the girl learns about the value of differences.

■ *The One Day House*

(Julia Durango)

This is the heart-warming story of a young boy named Wilson and his older neighbor, Gigi. When Gigi's house desperately needs repairs, Wilson wants to make it nicer for her. Thanks to caring friends and neighbors, he gets his wish faster than he imagined. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *Ronan the Librarian*

(Tara Luebbe and Becky Cattie)

No legendary barbarian wants to read a book ... right? That's what Ronan the Barbarian thinks until he finds a book in his raided treasure. He loves the book so much that he teaches his fellow barbarians to enjoy reading, too.



Make time for reading

Any time is a great time for your child to read! Here's how to fit more reading into busy days.

Check the weather

Invite your youngster to be the family weather reporter. Each evening, she can read tomorrow's forecast in the newspaper or on your phone's weather app. Encourage her to use weather symbols, such as raindrops or suns, if she needs a little help figuring out the words. Soon she'll recognize words like *rainy* and *sunny* right away.



math practice, she could read the numbers and fractions in the recipe, too.

Explore recipes

When you cook, let your child read the recipe with you. Make it easier by having her get out the ingredients. Hearing you say potatoes or cheese, finding the item, and maybe seeing the word on the package will help her as she sounds out the words in the recipe. *Tip:* For

Listen to audiobooks

While you're working from home or running errands, your youngster can enjoy books independently. Download audiobooks and check out print versions of the same books from the library. She can follow along with the story as she turns the pages and perhaps learn to recognize new words.♥

Write to keep in touch

"Will you be my pen pal?" With this idea, your youngster can write friendly letters and stay close to loved ones.

Together, ask a relative to be your child's pen pal. Explain that your youngster is learning to write—and they can help! Then, let your child pick out stationery or search online for "free stationery printables kids."

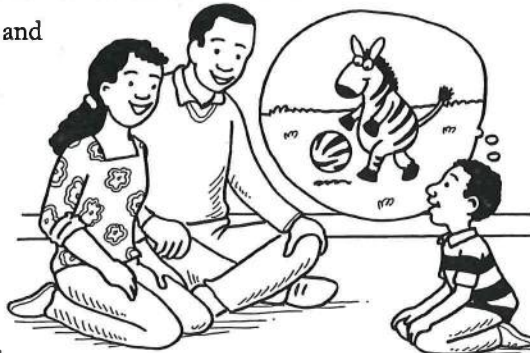
Now help your youngster write a greeting ("Dear Aunt Lori"). Underneath, he could write about or draw pictures of activities he's been doing, like roller skating or caring for his new kitten. He should also ask his pen pal questions. ("How is your job?") When your relative writes back, you and your child can read the letter—and write a reply.♥



What sounds do you hear?

Sounds and syllables are like the nuts and bolts of words. Call your youngster's attention to word parts with these activities that will help him grow into a strong reader.

Swap the sound. With your youngster, think of a word family, or a group of words with the same "last name" (for example, *-all*). Now take turns saying a word with that ending (*fall, wall*). If you say a nonsense word (*zall*), ask your child to make up a silly definition. "*Zall*: A black-and-white striped ball that zebras play with!"



Blend the consonants. Have your youngster put these letter tiles or magnetic letters into a bag: B, C, F, G, H, L, P, R, S, T, and W. He can pull out two letters (perhaps S and P), then help him try to blend them and say a word that includes the blended sound (*spider*). If the sounds can't be blended, like B and T, he should put them back and pull out new letters.

Subtract a syllable. Say a familiar word that has more than one syllable, such as *pumpkin* or *television*. Now encourage your youngster to take away one or more of the syllables: "If you take *pump* out of *pumpkin*, what do you have left?" (Answer: *kin*.) What happens if he "subtracts" *vision* from *television*? (He'll have *tele*.)♥

able, such as *pumpkin* or *television*. Now encourage your youngster to take away one or more of the syllables: "If you take *pump* out of *pumpkin*, what do you have left?" (Answer: *kin*.) What happens if he "subtracts" *vision* from *television*? (He'll have *tele*.)♥

Fun with Words

Sensational writing tools

Put down your pencils! Your child can practice forming letters and words with these fun-to-touch materials.

Sugar

Let your youngster spread a thin layer of sugar on a baking sheet. Then, she could write each letter of the alphabet with her finger.



Paint

Have your child dip her finger in paint and write on construction paper. She might write the color word that matches each color of paint she uses, like yellow for yellow paint.

Soil

Your youngster will get fresh air and enjoy nature by writing outside. Help her find a stick and a patch of soil. She could etch words in the dirt, perhaps to list things she sees outdoors (*birds, clouds*).♥

Q&A

Don't forget the spaces!

Q When my daughter writes, a whole sentence sometimes looks like one long word. How can I get her to put spaces between words?

A Ask her to read her writing out loud so she can "hear" the spaces. As she reads, have her draw a vertical line where she thinks each space should be.

You can also show her spaces in books. Pick a sentence, and ask her to count the words. She'll need to pay attention to the spaces to figure out how many words there are.

Finally, encourage her to use her finger as a "space bar" by laying it on her paper after she writes each word. It will show her how much space to leave before she begins the next word. Or let her decorate a craft stick with stickers and use that as a space bar.♥



Parent to Parent

Play library—at home

My son Elijah and I missed our weekly visits when the pandemic closed down our library. So he came up with the idea to play library at home, which has given us a nice way to talk about books.

First, Elijah made library cards for all of us. To play, we place books around our living room and use the coffee table as the checkout counter. Sometimes Elijah is the librarian. He recommends

books for me, "scans" them at the checkout, and leads story hour. Other times, we trade roles. After we finish playing, we put the books back on the shelf in alphabetical order, just like real librarians do.

We're enjoying library time even when we're not at the actual library, and Elijah is learning to think critically about books to give good recommendations.♥



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■ *Big Red Lollipop* (Rukhsana Khan)

Rubina is excited about going to a birthday party. But then her mother insists that her little sister Sana tag along, and Sana eats Rubina's party favor! Later, when Sana is invited to a party, she makes it up to Rubina. Based on a true story from the author's childhood.



■ *The Secret Explorers and the Lost Whales* (SJ King)

A diverse group of young adventurers must rescue a pod of humpback whales in this first book of the Secret Explorers series. Your child will learn facts about whales as marine-life expert Connor and his fellow explorers try to successfully complete their mission.



■ *How to Read a Book*

(Kwame Alexander)

This vivid picture book presents reading as an experience to savor. It begins with suggestions for finding a great spot to read, compares opening a book to peeling a juicy clementine, and encourages readers to take their time and enjoy every word.

■ *Good Night, Mr. Panda/Buenos Noches, Sr. Panda* (Steve Antony)

Mr. Panda is ready for bed, but each of his friends has forgotten to complete a task in their nighttime routine. As he reminds them what to do, he realizes that he can make an occasional

mistake, too. This bilingual English-Spanish book is part of the Mr. Panda series.



A growing vocabulary

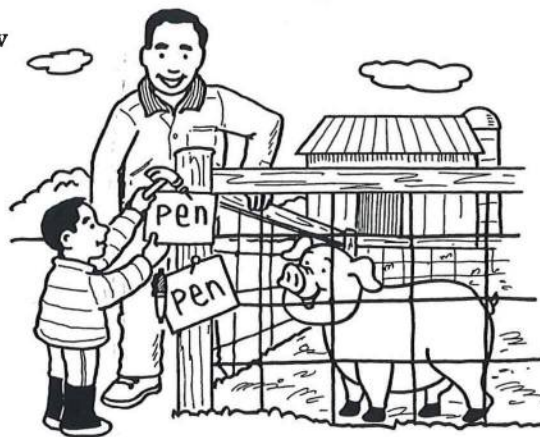
Hearing, learning, and using new words can make them a permanent part of your youngster's vocabulary. Try these strategies to increase the number of words he knows.

Weave in words

When you talk with your child, try using a few words he may not know. If you're gardening together, you could say, "These beets are a nice color. Can you think of anything else that's magenta?" or "The sky is overcast today. Look at all those clouds." Hearing new words on a regular basis will naturally expand his vocabulary.

Draw pictures

Illustrating new words will make it easier for your youngster to remember them. When he hears one (say, *parched*), tell him what it means (very thirsty), or look it up in a dictionary together. Then, help him write the word on a sheet of paper and suggest that he draw a picture. For *parched*, he might draw himself reaching for a big glass of water. *Idea:* Suggest that he staple his drawings



together to make his own vocabulary booklet.

Multiple meanings

Pick an everyday word that has two totally different meanings, such as *pen* (a writing tool or a place for pigs). Say one definition, and ask your child to come up with the other. *Additional ideas:* *ball* (a round toy or a big dance), *star* (a shining object in the sky or a celebrity), *foot* (a unit of measurement and a body part). How many can your youngster think of?♥

Write an ode

Your child can show gratitude during the Thanksgiving season—and enjoy writing poetry at the same time—with this activity.

Explain that an ode is a poem that expresses emotion toward a person, place, or thing. Ask who or what she's thankful for. She might choose a grandparent or a teacher, or perhaps your home or dog. Have her think of what she appreciates about the person or object.

Now help your youngster write the ode as if she's addressing the person or object—and include specific details she's grateful for. *Example:* "Oh, Grandma / How I love your silly jokes! / Your smile is always bright / Playing games with you makes my night."♥



Explore plot patterns

Predictable books follow a pattern—and noticing patterns can help your child follow the story. Here are popular patterns along with craft projects that will boost your youngster's comprehension.

Repetitive story. Read a book with a repeated refrain, such as *It Looked Like Spilt Milk* (Charles G. Shaw). Afterward, your youngster could glue cotton balls on blue paper to show each cloud in the book. Have her repeat



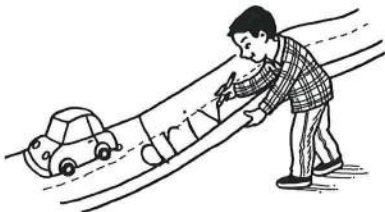
the refrain—"Sometimes it looked like"—and point to each cloud. Also try: *Goodnight Moon* (Margaret Wise Brown), *The Little Red Hen*, and *The Gingerbread Man*.

Circular plot. These stories end the same way they began. Read *If You Give a Moose a Muffin* (Laura Numeroff), and help your child make a paper chain. On separate strips of paper, she can draw and label something the moose was given. Have her tape the ends of each strip together, linking all the loops in a circle. Now she can use the chain to tell the story. Also try: *The Mitten* (Jan Brett), *The Relatives Came* (Cynthia Rylant), and *Stephanie's Ponytail* (Robert Munsch).♥

Q&A Lowercase first?

Q When I was in school, we learned to print capital letters first. Why is my son starting with lowercase letters?

A Lowercase letters appear more frequently in books than capital letters. And since learning to write letters also teaches your child to recognize them, knowing the more common ones first will make reading easier.



The trickiest part of writing lowercase letters is remembering where to write different parts of each letter.

Try this: Draw a "road" (with a dotted line between two solid lines) and add a line below it for the road's "shoulder." Now your son can write letters with each part in its own "lane." For *d*, he would put the circle under the dotted line and the stick extending to the top solid line. And for *p*, the stick would go down to the shoulder.♥

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Parent to Parent

Reading diverse books

My daughter Andrea recently found a library book about a little girl whose family came from Guatemala—just like ours. Andrea seemed proud and excited to recognize Spanish words sprinkled throughout the book and to see pupusas on the family's dinner table.

I asked the librarian for more books with Spanish-speaking characters. She was happy to help, and said children feel comforted and valued when characters remind them of themselves. The librarian also explained that kids learn to appreciate diversity when they read about characters whose lives are different from their own.

Thanks to this advice, Andrea and I have also read books about families from Mexico, Peru, Nigeria, and Japan. My daughter is discovering that she has a lot in common with children who speak or eat differently than she does—from the games they play to the way their parents tuck them in at night.♥



Fun with Words

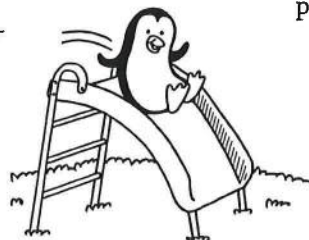
Terrific tongue twisters

Tongue twisters are tricky-talking-tremendous teachers! They help your child hear sounds in words and pronounce words more clearly. Here's how he can say and create his own tongue twisters.

1. Recite familiar tongue twisters such as "How much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?" Ask your youngster to tell you what sounds are repeated (*w* and *ch*).

2. Together, brainstorm a list of words that start with the same sound, like *penguin*, *park*, and *purple*.

3. Now your child can use the words to make up a tongue twister. ("The playful penguin went to the park to play on the purple playground.") Have a silly time together saying his tongue twisters. What a fun way for him to hear and say the sounds!♥



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■ **Earmuffs for Everyone! How Chester Greenwood Became Known as the Inventor of Earmuffs** (Meghan McCarthy)

Chester Greenwood is credited with inventing earmuffs. But he wasn't the first person who designed a product to keep our ears warm. This book shows how inventors often stand on the shoulders of those who came before them.



■ **Smashy Town** (Andrea Zimmerman and David Clemesha)

Follow Mr. Gilly on an eventful day of work at a construction site as his machines crush buildings to make room for new ones. Colorful illustrations and onomatopoeias (words like *vroom* and *hiss* that sound like what they describe) make this an exciting story for budding readers.



■ **Outside In** (Deborah Underwood)
Nature isn't just something that's only outside. From houseplants to sunlight streaming through windows, nature is indoors, too. This inspiring story describes how nature can be a friend to people and encourages readers to appreciate it wherever it's found.

■ **Thank You, Omu!** (Oge Mora)

Omu means *queen* in Igbo, the language of the author's parents, and it's the name she called her own grandmother. In this story, Omu can't wait to eat her delicious stew. But when visitors follow their noses to her door, Omu shares every drop. A final knock brings a special surprise. (Also available in Spanish.)



Let's tell stories

Add excitement to story time by making up your very own stories. Not sure where to start? These activities will turn anyone into a storyteller—and build your child's speaking skills and creativity.

Read and tell

What would happen if Wilbur the pig from *Charlotte's Web* met the Three Little Pigs? Read two familiar books with your youngster, and together, make up a story that combines elements of each. Maybe the little pigs will live on Wilbur's farm, safe from the Big Bad Wolf. Your child will stretch her reading comprehension as she thinks of ways to connect the two plots.

Share family tales

Children love to hear stories about when they were "little"—and these tales of her past are nice examples of nonfiction. Ask your youngster to pick a memory (say, her first trip to the beach), and begin a story: "Stella saw the ocean for



the first time when she was five years old." Now take turns adding details. ("She built a big sandcastle.")

Make story dice

Let your child make three giant "dice" out of empty cardboard boxes. Help her write nouns (*cereal*, *house*) on one die, verbs (*fly*, *dance*) on another, and adjectives (*tasty*, *striped*) on the third. Take turns "rolling" the dice and telling a short story using all three words you roll. ("Once upon a time, I got to fly over my house in a striped hot-air balloon.")♥

How to build a snowman

Whether it snows where you live or not, your youngster can build a snowman with this idea for writing instructions.

First, have your child cut snowman parts out of construction paper: three circles for the body and head, plus eyes, nose, mouth, buttons, and hat. Now he can build his snowman by gluing the parts on a big sheet of paper. As he adds each one, help him write an instruction beside it for building a real snowman. ("Step 1: Roll up a big snowball." "Step 2: Put a smaller snowball on top." "Step 3: Add an even smaller snowball for a head.")

Then, if it snows, he could use his instructions to make a snowman outside!♥



All kinds of lists

List making lets your youngster practice writing and recording his thoughts. Here are different types of lists he might create.

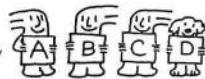
Favorites journal. Have your child fill a notebook with lists of his favorite things. He could write a different topic (books, foods, animals, toys) at the top of each page, then add items as he thinks of them. *Idea:* Suggest that he invite a friend or relative to do the same, and they can compare lists to see what they have in common.



Screen-time alternatives. Show your youngster that lists are practical. Listing screen-free activities he likes can help him cut down on using electronics. He might include “Collect acorns and pinecones,” “Make a maze in the hallway with streamers,” and “Read a book to the dog.”

Questions collection. Encourage your child to keep a list of questions he has, like “Why are clouds different shapes?” or “Why do our eyes close when we sneeze?” He could use his list to pick out library books that might have the answers or post his list by the computer so you can research his questions together online.♥

Q&A Virtual read-alouds



Q My daughter’s favorite part of school is when her teacher reads books in class or on video chat. Now she wants to watch more online read-alouds. Any suggestions?

A Consider setting up virtual story times for her with grandparents, aunts, and uncles. She’ll get to hear different reading voices, and everyone will discover it’s a great way to stay in touch!



Also, the internet is full of high-quality read-alouds these days. Your local library may offer online story hours—call or visit the website to find out.

Your child might also watch authors read aloud online. Some children’s writers, like Dav Pilkey, Mo Willems, and Susan B. Katz, provide free virtual readings on their websites or social media pages. Help your youngster search for specific book titles or authors followed by “read-aloud.”♥

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Alphabetical order

Send your child on these missions that will encourage her to read words around the house and arrange them in ABC order. *Bonus:* She’ll help to keep things organized!



Organize the pantry

Let your youngster sort foods in the kitchen by type of container (boxes, cans, bags, jars), and arrange each section in alphabetical order. When you need an item, ask her to use her ABCs to find it: “I need a can of beans—where would it be?” She might say the *beans* are between the *artichoke* hearts and the *carrots*.

Arrange colors

Ask your child to put crayons or markers in ABC order. She’ll need to look beyond the first letter of each color word (*black, blue, brown*). As she puts each crayon in its spot, she can say the first letter and read the color word. (“G is for *green*.”)♥



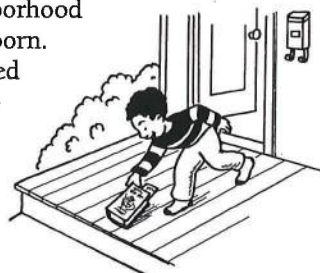
Neighborhood book exchange

One day my son Aiden and I found a book on our porch. A note from our neighbor was attached: “My son just read this and thought Aiden would love it!” And with that, our neighborhood book exchange was born.

Aiden and I emailed neighbors to see who would be interested in lending and borrowing books. Several people replied with book titles they

were willing to share—for children *and* adults—and I helped my son type titles we could lend. Now anyone can request a book from someone else and have it delivered to their porch.

Aiden and I enjoy reading new-to-us books, and it feels good to share with neighbors. Sometimes, before we return a book, my son writes a note to tuck inside. He’ll thank the person for the “share” and tell what he liked about the story.♥



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■ Flashlight (Lizi Boyd)

If you went outdoors at night, what would you see with your trusty flashlight? That's what the boy in this wordless picture book wants to find out. Your child can explore the woods as the boy meets charming characters and discovers the not-so-scary secrets the night holds.



■ Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match / Marisol McDonald no combina

(Monica Brown)

Marisol adores her world full of colorful clothing and creative games. The other kids think she's too "mismatched." In this bilingual English-Spanish story, Marisol decides to be more like her friends. But it doesn't take her long to realize she's wonderful just the way she is.



■ The Black Book of Colors

(Menena Cottin)

What does red taste like? How does green smell? This black-and-white book gives readers insight into what it's like for visually impaired people to "see" with their other senses. The words in the book are also printed in Braille—a writing system of raised dots.

■ The Opposite Zoo (Il Sung Na)

Explore a zoo full of opposites, where animals of all types—shy and bold, slow and fast, and hairy and bald—live together. Your youngster can follow an adventurous monkey through enchanting exhibits to learn about opposites before the zoo opens again for a new day.



Flex reading "muscles"

Just like muscles get stronger with regular exercise, your child will become a stronger reader with regular reading practice. Help him work out his reading "muscles" all year long with these ideas.

Read the rainbow

Encourage your youngster to draw an outline of a rainbow with six stripes and label them red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. Now help him find a library book for every color, perhaps *Green Eggs and Ham* (Dr. Seuss) or *Harold and the Purple Crayon* (Crockett Johnson). After reading each book, he can write the title on the matching stripe and color it in.

Read with others

Let your child start his own book club! He could invite a few friends or family members to help choose a book to read. Then, suggest that they set a date to meet (in person or online) to discuss the book—and pick their next one. *Idea:* He can ask each member to



bring at least one interesting discussion question to the meeting.

Read something new

Becoming familiar with different book genres prepares your youngster to read all kinds of books in school. Have him pick a topic (say, airplanes) and read books from various sections of the library. He might check out a story about a child's first airplane ride, a biography of Amelia Earhart, and a how-to book on paper airplanes.♥

Write me a riddle

Q: What building has the most stories?

A: The library!

Give your youngster practice writing questions and answers as she creates her very own riddles.

Let her think of an answer for a riddle, perhaps a favorite animal, food, or sport. She can use facts about the answer to write her riddle on one side of an index card. If she picks pizza, she might write, "I am round, cheesy, and can be delivered to your front door. What am I?" Then, have her write and illustrate the answer on the back.

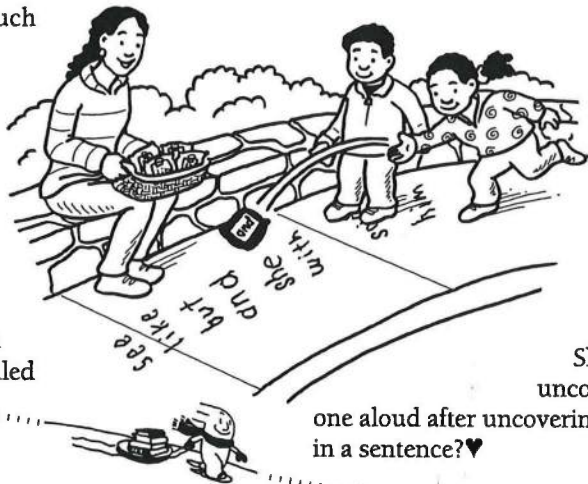
Suggest that she read her riddles to friends and family. Can she stump them?♥



See the sight words!

Instantly recognizable words—such as *and*, *the*, and *play*—appear in many of the books your youngster reads. Ask her teacher for a list of these *sight words* or find one online, and try these activities to help your child learn them.

Beanbag toss. Together, write 10 sight words with chalk on a sidewalk or blacktop, and again with pencil on separate sticky notes. Tape each word to a beanbag (or a sock filled



with dry beans and secured with a rubber band). Take turns picking a beanbag, reading the word, and tossing the bag onto the matching word. Whoever matches the most words is the winner.

"Treasure" hunt. Send your child on a search for "buried" sight words. Write 10 words randomly all over a sheet of paper. Lay the paper in a shallow baking dish and let her "bury" it in dry rice.

She can move the rice around to uncover the words. Have her read each one aloud after uncovering it. Can she use each sight word in a sentence?♥

Q&A Read to understand

Q My son will sometimes read every word in a story correctly and still be unable to tell me about what he just read. What should I do?

A It's great that your youngster knows so many words. It's possible he's choosing books with plots that are too complex for him. Or he may not be paying attention while he reads—in this case, suggest that he read in a spot free from distractions like TV or people talking.

Also, while the teacher will let you know if she's concerned about his progress, you can tell her what you've

noticed, too. She may suggest books he can read (and understand) at home.

Finally, try this strategy:



Ask him to "pre-view" a book before he reads it. He can read the title, look at the cover, and flip through the pictures. Knowing what to expect will prepare him to understand the book.♥

OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote their children's reading, writing, and language skills.

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Fun with Words

Vowel patterns

Encourage your child to explore common vowel patterns that can help him sound out words. Here's how.

1. Write the letters A–Z on separate slips of paper, and make an extra set of vowels (a, e, i, o, u). Put all the vowels on the table or ground and the other letters (the consonants) in a paper bag.
2. Ask your youngster to pull two consonants from the bag and lay them on the table or ground.
3. Help him combine those consonants with any two vowels to make as many four-letter words as possible. For *m* and *t*, he could make *team*, *meet*, and *moat*. Have him read each word. He'll hear that *ea* in *team*, for instance, makes a long *e* sound.
4. When you can't make any more words, return the consonants to the bag. Pick two new ones, and play again.

Note: The letter *y* is sometimes a vowel when it's used to make vowel patterns like *oy* in *toy*.♥



Parent to Parent

Give your sentence a partner

My daughter Anna is learning to write stories in school. Up until this point, she was drawing a picture and writing one sentence underneath. Now she's ready to give her sentence a "partner," the teacher said, meaning to write a second sentence to support the first. So I'm helping Anna practice at home.

Sometimes I'll say a sentence like "It's snowing a lot." Then Anna comes

up with a logical partner for my sentence, such as "Tomorrow we can go sledding." Next it's her turn to think of a sentence, and I'll give it a partner.

Anna seems to be getting the hang of this—the other day when I was reading to her, she noticed that a page had only one sentence. She said, "The author should have given that sentence a partner!" And I had to agree.♥



Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

Calvin A. Hunsinger School

Book Picks



Read-aloud favorites

■ *Amy Wu and the Perfect Bao* (Kat Zhang)

All Amy wants is to make a perfect *bao*—a steamed Chinese



bun—just like her family makes. But each *bao* is either too big or messy, until a helpful idea pops into her head. Includes a recipe that you and your child can use to make *bao* together.

■ *A Little Calm Spot: A Story About Yoga and Feeling Focused* (Diane Alber)

A cute little character named Calm



Spot explains yoga to young readers. Your youngster will learn how yoga helps people relax and concentrate. Includes basic yoga poses, breathing techniques, and positive words. Part of the Spot series.

■ *Press Here* (Hervé Tullet)

Find a surprise on every page of this interactive book, starting with a simple yellow “button” to press. Readers will follow instructions like “Try shaking the book” and “Clap your hands once” to discover what their actions do to the dots on the page.

■ *¡Vámonos! Let's Go!* (René Colato Lainez)

There are many noises to encounter on



an adventure through the neighborhood, from the bus's screech to a horn's honk. This adaptation of “The Wheels on the Bus” introduces different vehicles and sounds in English (*choo choo choo*) and Spanish (*chucu chucu chu*).

Build a story character

Who will star in the next story your child writes? Share these ideas for creating fun and interesting characters that will bring her stories to life for her readers.

Draw pictures

Invite your youngster to draw a picture of a character she'd like to write about, perhaps a turtle or kangaroo. Then, ask questions to help her develop the character.

Examples: “Where does the turtle live?” “What does it like to play?”

Maybe she'll draw a pond in the background of her picture and add a soccer ball for the sports-loving turtle to kick around.

Act out scenes

Suggest that your child get to know her character by stepping into its role while you play together. She might pretend to be a turtle and move her game token s-l-o-w-l-y around the board. Also, carry on a conversation so she gets



a feel for its personality and ideas for dialogue. Perhaps she'll imagine a kind, friendly turtle telling a kangaroo, “Congratulations on winning your game!”

Write a story

Now your child is ready to write. Encourage her to include descriptions to help her readers picture the character. For instance, she might begin, “Taylor the turtle was little and green. She watched the faster animals play soccer. She wished she had a friend.”♥

What doesn't the book say?

Learning to *infer*, or “read between the lines,” is a strategy your youngster can use to understand what he reads. Try this activity to help him make inferences:

- Gather three household items related to a specific task. For example, you might choose a hairbrush, toothbrush, and shirt for getting ready in the morning. Can your child use these “clues” to infer what your task is?
- Read a book aloud, without showing your youngster the pictures, and encourage him to make inferences. If you read “As it got dark, the sky turned shades of red, orange, and purple,” he might infer there's a pretty sunset.♥



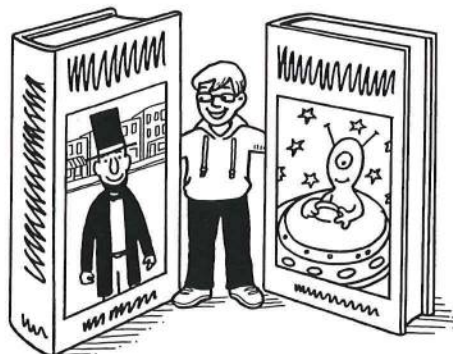
Blending fact and fiction

Some books are nonfiction, and some are fiction. Other types of books combine both! Here are two popular examples for your child to read and learn from.

Historical fiction

What it is: A made-up story based on historical facts.

What to do: Help your youngster separate historical fact from fiction. He could make a chart with two columns, one labeled “Fact” and the other “Fiction.” Read a historical fiction book like *Players in Pig-tails* (Shana Corey). Then, he could list examples from



the book of facts (“Some people said women shouldn’t play baseball”) and fiction (“Katie Casey is a made-up character”).

Science fiction

What it is: A fictional tale that includes futuristic science ideas.

What to do: Read a picture book like *Harry and Horsie* (Katie Van Camp). Then, encourage your child to draw a picture of his own design for a bubble machine like Harry’s Bubble Blooper. You could also help him make a bubble solution by experimenting with different amounts of water, dish soap, and corn syrup. Now suggest that he design a totally different machine that people might use in the future.♥

Fun with Words

Rhyme time!

Send your youngster on these rhyme hunts to help her hear sounds in words:

- Ask your child to find things in your home that rhyme. Hand her an item that has a one-syllable name, such as a *sock*, *shoe*, or *book*. She can walk around with the object and try to spot rhymes. For a *sock*, she might see a *clock* and a *lock*.

Idea: Try this activity outdoors, too.



- Give your youngster old magazines and catalogs. She could make rhyming collages by cutting out pictures of things that rhyme and gluing them on paper. For one collage she might cut out pictures of a *car*, a *bar* of soap, and a *jar* of peanut butter. Ask her to say the rhyming words to you.♥



Q&A Dinnertime chats

Q How can I liven up our family’s dinner conversations and encourage my daughter to practice speaking?

A Carrying on conversations over family meals can improve your child’s vocabulary and speaking skills—and help everyone stay close. Luckily, there are lots of ways to switch things up each day to keep your talks exciting.

One idea: Think of witty questions to ask each other! You might ask, “Would you rather ... ?” questions. Or try superlative questions (ones with words ending in *-est*), like “What is the silliest thing you’ve ever done?” or “Who is the bravest person you know?”

Each person can also bring something to the table to talk about, like a photo or favorite toy. When someone finishes sharing their object, others can ask questions or make comments about it. Try this once or twice each week to spark new conversations—and introduce new vocabulary.♥



Write a math book

“I have 6 colored pencils and 4 regular pencils. $6 + 4 = 10$ pencils.”

With these three steps, your child can work on writing and math as he creates a book of story problems.

1. Suggest that your youngster look for opportunities throughout the day to make up problems. While playing with his marble run, he

might say, “I had 17 marbles. I dropped 10 into my marble run. How many marbles were left? $17 - 10 = 7$ marbles.”

2. Now help your child write and illustrate each story problem on a separate sheet of paper. He can also write the number sentence that goes with each problem on the facing page.

3. Finally, your youngster could staple the pages together into a math book and read it aloud to you.♥



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