

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

January 2019

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ *Creepy Pair of Underwear!*

(Aaron Reynolds)

Jasper chooses a pair of neon green underwear when he goes shopping with his mom. That night, after lights-out, he decides that glow-in-the-dark underwear is scary instead of cool. But when he gets rid of it, he misses his “night-light.” What will Jasper do next? (Also available in Spanish.)

■ *Hello Ruby: Journey Inside the Computer*

(Linda Liukas)

This book from the Hello Ruby series uses a fictional story to explain how computers work. Follow along with Ruby as she shrinks down and crawls inside her father’s broken computer. Includes fun activities that let readers put their new knowledge to work.

■ *Mama’s Saris*

(Pooja Makhijani)

On her seventh birthday, an Indian American girl decides she’s old enough to wear a sari. She feels proud and special when her mother lets her wear the traditional garment to her party. This sweet story celebrates family traditions.



■ *Hoop Genius: How a Desperate Teacher and a Rowdy Gym Class Invented Basketball*

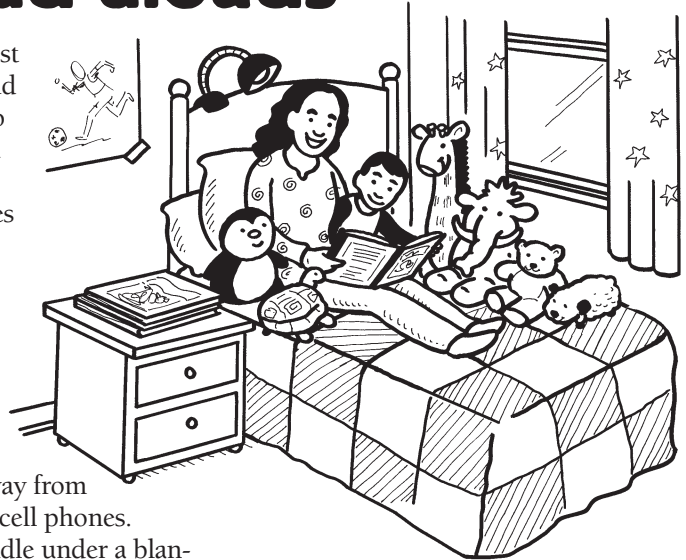
(John Coy)

In 1891, James Naismith was teaching a gym class full of unruly boys. This nonfiction book tells how Naismith got control of the class by inventing a game with two peach baskets and a soccer ball. Today, we call that sport basketball!



Cozy read-alouds

What’s one of the best ways to make your child a better reader? Read to him! Studies show that reading aloud builds youngsters’ vocabularies and their reading and writing skills. Snuggle up with your child and a good book, and try these ideas.



Get comfortable

Let your youngster choose a quiet spot, away from distractions like TV or cell phones. Maybe he wants to cuddle under a blanket on the sofa while you read, or perhaps he’d like to pile pillows and stuffed animals on his bed for story time. *Tip:* Hold the book so he can see the words and pictures while you read.

Slow down

Find a time to read when you won’t be rushed. Reading at a leisurely pace allows your youngster to absorb the story. Tell him that he’s welcome to stop you if he doesn’t know what a word means or if he wants more time to look at an illustration.

Asking questions and examining the pictures help him understand and enjoy the book.

Be playful

Use different voices for the characters, or read scary or exciting parts dramatically. For example, use a high, chirpy voice for a parrot or a low, booming voice for a giant. You might even assign him the part of a character. Stop and let him read the dialogue so he practices reading fluently.♥

Build “writing muscles” in the kitchen

Lots of kitchen tasks work the same muscles your child uses for writing. Offer her these jobs.

● **Boost strength.** Let your youngster mash potatoes or stir pancake batter. Or she could decorate cupcakes or cookies. Put frosting in a zipper bag, snip off a corner, and encourage her to squeeze it onto the goodies like a pastry chef!

● **Improve coordination.** Show your child how to roll a ground beef or turkey mixture between her palms to make meatballs. Let her use her fingers to tear lettuce for a salad. Have her hold her wrist steady as she uses a spatula to transfer cookies to a cooling rack.♥



I can read!

New readers are proud of their skills as they go from “reading” pictures to reading words—and then entire stories. Use these tips to support your youngster at each stage.

Pictures. Suggest that your child use the illustrations to tell herself the story. You could point out words she says that appear on the page. For instance,



if she says, “The kids are riding the school bus,” show her the words *school* and *bus*. She’ll begin to connect written words with spoken ones.

Words. If your youngster reads a word incorrectly, help her figure it out. You might say, “Does ‘Everyone got a parking hat’ make sense?” Then, have her reread the sentence—she’ll probably realize that the word is *party*. If not, she could try sounding out the word.

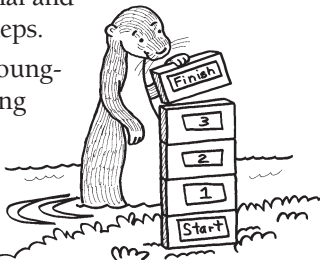
Stories. This is a good stage for getting your child hooked on a series of books. Ask a librarian to recommend one that matches your youngster’s interests. Your child will build confidence as she reads about familiar characters and settings in each new installment.♥

Fun with Words

Why my favorite animal is awesome

With this activity, your child will construct a block tower as he “constructs” an opinion piece. Encourage him to pick a favorite animal and follow these steps.

1. Help your youngster use masking tape and a marker to label five blocks: “Start,” “1,” “2,” “3,” and “Finish.”



2. Let him place the “Start” block in front of himself and then, on a sheet of paper, write (or dictate to you) an opening sentence. (“My favorite animal is an otter.”)
3. Have your child stack the numbered blocks on top of “Start.” As he adds each one, he could write a reason for his opinion. *Examples:* “Otters are cute.” “They like to play.” “They are good swimmers.”
4. Now it’s time for him to put the “Finish” block on top and write his conclusion. (“Now you see why I love otters.”)
5. Finally, invite him to read his opinion piece to you.♥

Q&A

Becoming a good speller

Q My son misspells a lot of words. For example, he’ll write *frnd* for *friend*. Should I be concerned?

A Your son is using the sounds he hears to figure out how words are spelled—an important strategy at this age.

The fact that he knows *friend* starts with the consonant combination *fr* shows that he’s probably on the right track. As he learns vowel patterns like *ie* and *ei*, you’ll notice that he incorporates those into his spelling, too.

Encourage your son to spell common words (*the*, *and*, *have*) correctly. If his teacher sends home weekly spelling lists, he should learn to spell those words the right way, too. You might have him practice by writing the words on a sidewalk, for instance.

Over time, he’ll combine what he knows about letter sounds with spelling rules, and the better his spelling will become.♥



Parent to Parent

Our family reading board

Recently, my daughter Ella proudly pointed out a photo

She hangs the photo on the board, and I make sure to ask her what the book is about or what made her decide to read it.

of herself on a bulletin board in the school hallway. She was holding her favorite *Curious George* book, and the board was titled “What we’re reading.”

We decided to make a board like that at home. Now when Ella reads a new book, I take a picture of her with it.



She also asks what I’m reading and offers to take my picture. We even have relatives send us “reading selfies.”

Ella enjoys seeing that everyone reads. And the board is getting us to talk about books regularly!♥

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Book Picks



Read-aloud favorites

■ *My Dog is as Smelly as Dirty Socks: And Other Funny Family Portraits* (Hanoch Piven)

A little girl decides that the portrait she drew in school doesn't show how special her family is, so she gets creative. See how she shows her dad is "as fun as a party favor" and her baby brother is "as sweet as candy."



■ *About Birds: A Guide for Children/ Sobre los pájaros: Una guía para niños* (Cathryn Sill)



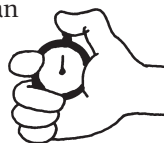
Most birds fly, but others swim or run. This nonfiction picture book, with both English and Spanish text, lets readers discover the lives of different birds. It's also a handy field guide for identifying birds.

■ *Pedro, First-Grade Hero* (Fran Manushkin)

First grade is full of fun for Pedro. These four short stories describe Pedro's exploits as he collects bugs for science, competes to become a soccer goalie, starts a mystery club, and runs for class president. The first book in the Pedro series.

■ *Me Counting Time: From Seconds to Centuries* (Joan Sweeney)

In one second, your child could blink her eyes. And in one minute, she might be able to write a party invitation. This book presents examples that tie measurements of time to concepts that young readers will understand. Your youngster can follow along as the narrator describes ways she measures time.



A love of nonfiction!

Where can your child explore favorite topics like animals and outer space, find fascinating facts, and learn new vocabulary? In the pages of nonfiction books! Try these ideas.

Compare fiction and nonfiction

Together, read a nonfiction book about a storybook character your youngster loves (say, a sloth). Then, ask her which parts of the story are realistic or unrealistic, based on what she learned from the nonfiction book. She might say that real sloths do look like they're smiling, but she couldn't actually have one as a pet like the girl in the story does.

Collect facts

"A day on Venus is longer than a year on Venus!" Suggest that your child fill a special binder with interesting facts like this from nonfiction books. She could label



each page with a topic ("Outer space," "Sports"). As she reads more nonfiction, she'll add more and more facts.

Discover new words

As you read nonfiction with your youngster, she'll find words that are fun to say—and build background knowledge in history, science, and other subjects. Point out unfamiliar words like *galaxy*, *pueblo*, or *vertex*, and encourage her to say them aloud and try to figure out what they mean.♥

Pasta punctuation

A macaroni noodle makes a cute comma, and a penne noodle plus a wagon wheel is a good exclamation point! Use this pasta-licious activity to help your youngster practice using punctuation correctly.

On a big strip of paper, write a sentence for your child in giant letters, leaving out the punctuation (I love macaroni and cheese said Sam). Now have him glue uncooked noodles where the punctuation marks should go. He could use one macaroni noodle for the comma after "cheese," two pairs of ziti noodles for the quotation marks before "I" and after "cheese," and a wagon wheel for the period following "Sam."♥



Write stories together

When you and your child write stories together, that's called *interactive writing*. It's also called fun! Try these two suggestions. They'll help him write more complex stories and use bigger words than he might by himself.

1. Create a board game. Ask your youngster to call out random events (meet a robot, find a treasure, visit a farm). Write each one on a separate sticky note, and let him arrange the notes to make a game board path. Take turns rolling a die and moving a token along the path—using the events you land on to write a story. (“Once upon a time, Kevin met a tall green robot.” “The robot led him to a secret

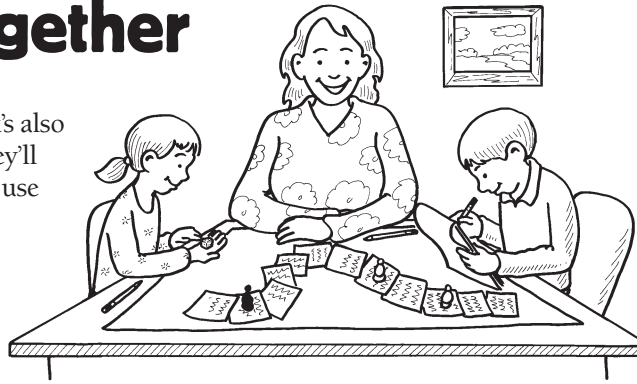


photo shows a toy pirate ship, your child could write, “Nate the pirate set sail with his purple parrot.” If the next picture is of a lemon, you might add, “They landed on a beautiful island with lemon trees.” Finish the story using the last picture.♥

treasure.”) Have your child write down the story as you go and then read it to you!

2. Hang a story string.

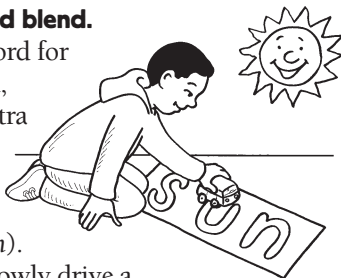
Help your youngster cut a dozen photos from magazines, catalogs, and advertising circulars. Hang a piece of string along a wall, and have him tape the pictures to it. Now make up a story based on the photos. If the first

What's that word?

Breaking words into sounds and putting them back together is one strategy your youngster can use to decode words. Help him practice with these tips.

• Drive and blend.

Write a word for your child, leaving extra space between the letters (*s u n*). Let him slowly drive a toy car across the word, stopping on each letter to say its sound (“s-uh-n”). Next, have him race the car across the word, blending the sounds as he goes (“sun”).



• Listen and write. Say each individual letter sound in a word. For flag, you would say “fl,” “a,” and “g.” Your youngster can write each letter as he hears its sound. Can he blend the sounds of the letters he has written and figure out your word? Now swap roles.♥

Q&A Is it dyslexia?

Q My kindergartner often says *aminal* instead of *animal*, or *pasghetti* for *spaghetti*. My friend says that's a symptom of *dyslexia*. What should I do?

A Dyslexia is a language-based learning disability that leads to reading difficulties. Struggling with spoken language, such as mixing up syllables in longer words, can be an early symptom of dyslexia that shows up before a child learns to read. But it could also be a normal part of your child's language development.

Tell her teacher what you've noticed, and ask whether your youngster has other symptoms of dyslexia. These include difficulty with rhyming, learning the alphabet, and making the connection between letters and sounds.

Also let the teacher know if you have a family history of dyslexia, since the condition is sometimes inherited. If the teacher is concerned, she will refer your child to the school's speech-language pathologist or another appropriate specialist on the staff.♥



Fun with Words Over, under, and through

Play this game of Simon Says to help your child understand common prepositions like *over*, *under*, and *through*.

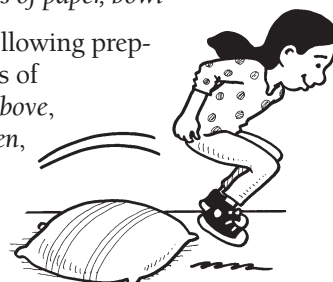
Materials: pencil, slips of paper, bowl

Together, write the following prepositions on separate slips of paper: *around*, *against*, *above*, *behind*, *on*, *beside*, *between*, *over*, *under*, *inside*, *outside*, *with*, *up*, *down*, and *through*. Mix up the slips in a bowl.

Pull slips from the bowl, one at a time, and use them to tell your youngster how to move. Say “Simon says” before some instructions. *Examples:* “Simon says, ‘Hold your right knee *with* your left hand’” or “Simon says, ‘Jump *over* the pillow.’”

The round ends when you run out of slips or your child does something Simon didn't say to do (“Put your hands *between* your knees”).

Then, return the slips to the bowl, and let her be Simon.♥



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Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ Shelter Pet Squad: Jelly Bean

(Cynthia Lord)

Suzannah has just become the youngest member of the Shelter Pet Squad, a group of kids who help local shelter animals. Her first mission is to find a forever home for an adorable guinea pig named Jelly Bean. Book one in the Shelter Pet Squad series.



■ In Mary's Garden

(Tina and Carson Kugler)

This biography tells how Mary Nohl loved art as a little girl and grew up to create an unusual garden. She used materials like sand, metal, wood, and rocks to make interesting sculptures, turning her garden into what would become a historic landmark.

■ The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs!

(Jon Scieszka)

According to the big bad wolf, the story everyone knows about the three little pigs is wrong. And he's here to set the record straight. Readers will laugh at the wolf's elaborate tale of how he never meant to eat the pigs—he just wanted to borrow a cup of sugar. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ If You Were the Moon

(Laura Purdie Salas)

The child in this story thinks the moon just hangs around in the sky. But it really has many "jobs," from making ocean waves to waking nighttime animals. This picture book uses a conversation between a girl and the moon to present scientific facts.



Pretend play boosts vocabulary

"I'm grooming my stuffed dog." "I can fix that car—I'm a mechanic!" Imaginary play gives your child chances to say words that he might not use every day. Try these ideas to grow his vocabulary through make-believe.



Find props

Give your youngster new things to talk about. You could put a wrench and a socket with his toy cars. Or offer him empty food packages to play store. When you notice him using the props, name them for him. You could say, "I see you're repairing your cars with a wrench and socket" or "Oh, your grocery store sells relish and chickpeas."

Play together

Spend time pretending with your child, and introduce new words. Maybe you'll hold a chopstick and say, "I'm a conductor. I'm using this baton to conduct the symphony." Or if you're playing vet, ask,

"What kind of dog do you have? Mine is a Siberian husky."

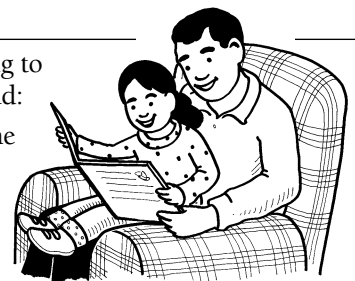
Act out a story

It's common for youngsters to pretend they're book characters after hearing a story. When you read to your youngster, explain unfamiliar words he can use to act out the book. If the story was about a scuba diver, perhaps he'll pretend his pajamas are a wet suit. He might turn a cardboard tube into a snorkel and go on an imaginary underwater adventure! ♥

How to handle reading errors

Oops! Your youngster just goofed while reading to you. What should you do? Keep these tips in mind:

- Wait to see if she catches her own mistake. If she doesn't notice her error by the end of the sentence or paragraph, ask, "Did that part make sense?" or "What other word would make sense there?" She'll learn to self-correct—an important step toward becoming an independent reader.
- Resist the urge to correct every mistake your child makes. That can interrupt the flow of the story. For example, if her error doesn't really affect the meaning of the sentence (say, she reads *house* instead of *home*), consider letting her keep going. ♥



“Just right” books for now—and later

Q: What are the three categories of books that help new readers grow?

A: Books that are too easy, ones that are too hard, and those that are just right!

Too easy. That favorite book you think your child has outgrown is similar to a “beach read”



for adults. She knows all the words and doesn't have to think too hard about the plot. Encourage her to relax with books like these—they build confidence and her enjoyment of reading.

Too hard. Sometimes kids want to read books that are out of reach of their reading abilities. If

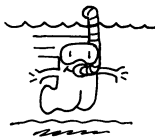
your youngster has her heart set on one, read it aloud to her. She'll enjoy listening to a book she chose. Plus, she'll pick up new words and be exposed to a more complex plot.

Just right. These books are ones your child can read with a little help. To determine if a book is a good fit, have your child read the first couple of pages to you. If she knows most of the words and understands what she's reading, it's likely the book will challenge her abilities without frustrating her.♥

Fun with Words

Rhyming dominoes

Forget dominoes with dots—this game uses rhyming words instead! Play it to help your child hear sounds in words.



Materials: 40 slips of paper, pencil

1. Have your youngster draw a line on each slip to divide it in half like a domino. On each half, help him write a word ending with one of these letter combinations: *all, et, in, og, un.* (Be sure to have 8 words per letter combination. Repeat words as needed.)



2. Spread the dominoes facedown, let each player take three, and flip a starting domino faceup.

3. Players take turns trying to form a chain of dominoes where rhyming words touch. Say the starting domino has *met*. If your child has a rhyme (say, *pet*), he links his domino with that one, end to end. If he doesn't have a rhyme, he takes a new domino, and his turn ends.

4. Continue taking turns, adding a rhyming domino to either end of the chain. The first player to get rid of all his dominoes wins.♥

Parent to Parent

And now...the family news

After a local news anchor visited my daughter's class for Career Day, Amelia wanted to be a reporter, too. I suggested that she interview her grandparents and deliver a news report about their activities. What a hit!

Her grandparents loved being interviewed, and Amelia remembered to ask *who, what, where, when, and why* questions—just like the news anchor said she does. For instance, Amelia asked her grandmother, “When did you start your new job?” and “What do you like best about it?” She listened carefully and wrote down the responses.

Finally, I videotaped Amelia reading her report in her best “anchor voice.” This has been a great way for her to work on writing, speaking, and listening skills.♥



Q&A

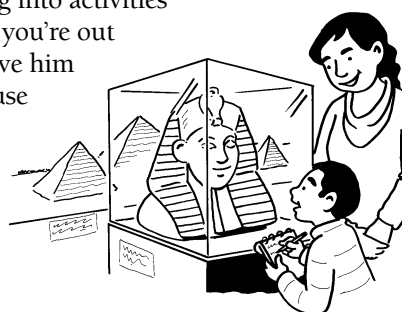
Writing on the move

Q My son's teacher says he needs more writing practice, but it's a struggle to get him to sit still and write. Any ideas?

A Try weaving writing into activities your son can do while you're out and about together. Give him a special notebook to use when you go places together, perhaps to a museum or the park. Encourage him to write about what he sees. At a museum, he

could jot down information about the Egyptian pyramids or a Tyrannosaurus rex. In the park, he might write a description of a carousel or a waterfall.

At home, suggest that he expand on what he wrote. Maybe he'll write a story about visiting a real pyramid in Egypt or making friends with a T-rex. Or perhaps he'll write a “visitor's guide” to the park.♥



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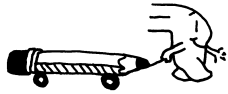
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Book Picks



Read-aloud favorites

■ *The Big Adventures of Tiny House*

(Susan Schaefer Bernardo)

Tiny is a little house on a big journey. He travels across the country



with his friend Big Truck, looking for a place to settle down. Along the way, he meets all kinds of houses and learns that home is anywhere, as long as you feel it in your heart.

■ *LOOK I'm a Scientist*

(DK Publishing)

Just like a scientist, your child can ask

questions and use her five senses to make discoveries. The experiments in this



book call for everyday materials and include easy-to-follow directions for creating bubbles, making slime, learning about sound, and more.

■ *Calendar Mysteries: January Joker*

(Ron Roy)

When seven-year-old Bradley Pinto's friends go missing, all the clues point to an alien abduction. But are those mysterious lights and footprints really caused by something from a UFO? Bradley will need to follow the clues to solve the mystery. Book One in the Calendar Mysteries series.

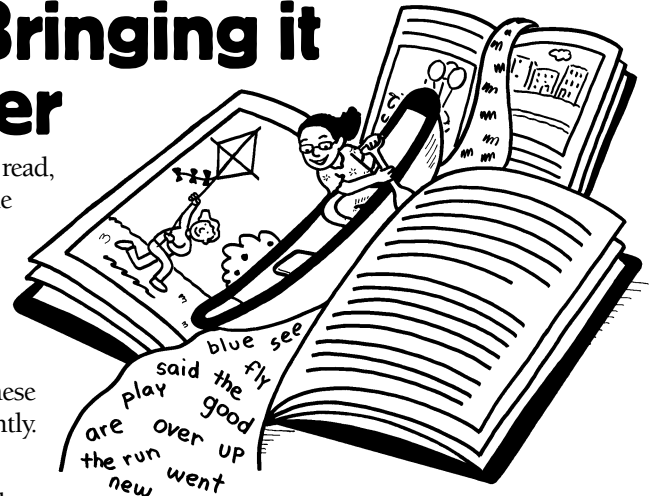
■ *Mapping Our World* (Sandy Phan)

This nonfiction book introduces your youngster to maps and globes. He'll begin by exploring map symbols and lines of longitude and latitude before moving on to fun facts about the seven continents. There's even an activity for inventing a new continent. (Also available in Spanish.)



Fluency: Bringing it all together

As your youngster learns to read, a main goal is for her to become fluent. Fluency happens when all the pieces click into place: recognizing many words instantly, reading smoothly and expressively, and understanding what she reads. Try these tips to help her read more fluently.



Build word recognition

The more words your child knows at first sight, the more fluently she'll read. Ask her teacher for a list of sight words (frequently used words), and play games with them. She could write them in a hopscotch grid to read as she hops. Or play cooperative "Scrabble." Place all the tiles faceup, and together, make a crossword of sight words.

Practice with familiar books

Fluent reading sounds like normal speech—not too fast or too slow, but just right. To practice, let your youngster read books she knows well. She won't need to stop to figure out words, so she'll

be free to read at a comfortable pace and focus on the meaning of the story. Also, ask a librarian for books with a refrain—the same phrase repeats on each page.

Use punctuation "clues"

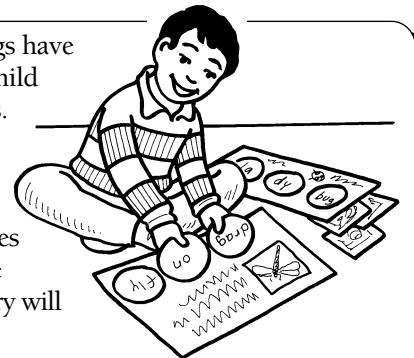
Encourage your child to think of punctuation marks as clues for reading with expression. Commas and periods tell her to pause slightly. For quotation marks, she might change her voice to show a character is speaking. Have her listen to an audiobook and follow along in the print version, noticing how the narrator uses the punctuation. Then, she can read the book to you.♥

My sylla-bug book

Dragonfly, caterpillar, bumblebee... many bugs have long names. Making this cute book lets your child spell big words by breaking them into syllables.

1. Help your youngster list bug names (*grasshopper, ladybug, centipede*).
2. Let him trace around a soup can to make circles on colored paper and cut them out. He can write each syllable on a separate circle. *Tip:* A dictionary will show him how to break a word.

3. Mix them all up. Have your child glue the circles for each word back together onto separate sheets of paper. He could draw each bug and write about it. Now staple the pages into a book for him to read again and again.♥



Writing: Start with a plan

Before your youngster writes, making a kid-friendly graphic organizer helps him plan what he'll say. And looking at his plan while he writes will remind him of facts or details to mention. Suggest these clever ideas.



Rays of sunshine. To plan a report or story, your child could draw a big sun. He can write a report topic ("Hamsters") in

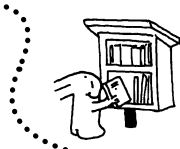
the center and then a fact on each ray ("Sleeps all day," "Stuffs cheeks with food," "Runs on a wheel"). Or before he writes a story, he might put his main idea in a sun ("Visited relatives") and a major plot event on each ray ("Rode a train," "Played with cousins," "Went to a fair").

Rungs on a ladder. If your youngster needs to write instructions or explain a scientific process, have him draw a ladder with a rung for

each step. "How to Pack a Suitcase" may include "Choose clothes," "Fold clothes," "Open suitcase," and "Put clothes inside." If he's describing how a seed becomes a plant, his rungs could say "Seed is planted," "Seed sprouts," "Leaves grow," and "Flowers bloom." Let him refer to his ladder to write a thorough explanation.♥



Spot the consonant combo



Here's a portable activity that will help your child learn consonant combinations like *bl* and *st*—an important part of sounding out words.



First, have her look through a book and choose words that start with two consonants (*dragon*, *twins*). Suggest that she draw columns on a sheet of paper, write one of the words at the top of each, and circle the beginning consonants.

Now let her take her paper when you go out. Together, try to spot words on signs that begin with the same combinations, and she can write them in the correct columns. Under *dragon*, she might write *drive*, *drilling*, and *drain*.

At home, help her read unfamiliar words. Then, she could count to see which combination she saw the most.♥



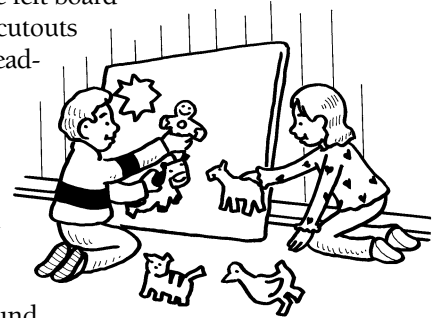
Make your own felt board

My son Antoine loves the felt board at school. The kids use felt cutouts to retell stories, which the teacher said boosts reading comprehension. So I decided to make a felt board for Antoine to play with at home.

I stapled felt to a big piece of cardboard. Then I gave my son smaller pieces of felt, and he used them to make the characters from *The Gingerbread Man*. He drew them with a marker, and I cut them out for him.

Antoine had fun moving the characters around on the board as he retold the story. I smiled when I heard him chanting, "Run, run, as fast as you can. You can't catch me, I'm the gingerbread man!"

Now Antoine is eager to make more characters and retell other stories on his felt board.♥



Q&A "Swap" to find new books

Q My daughter wants new books for her shelf, but we're on a tight budget. Any suggestions?

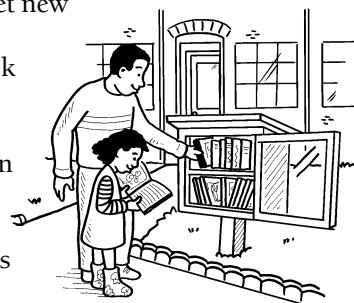
A Luckily, you don't need to spend money for your child to get new books.

Consider starting a book swap. Invite friends, relatives, and neighbors with older and younger children to gather at your home and trade books. Your daughter's outgrown books can be passed on to a

younger reader, and she could find ones that are just right for her now.

For another type of book swap, scout your area for Little Free Libraries. These cute mini-libraries let people exchange

books for free. Check littlefreelibrary.org, and click on "Map" to find ones near you. When your daughter takes a book, it's hers to keep. Just have her leave one in its place for someone else to enjoy!♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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