

INTERMEDIATE EDITION Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

January 2019



Book Picks

■ *The Jigsaw Jungle* (Kristin Levine)

Claudia's world changes when her father disappears. Desperate to put her family back together, she collects clues to solve the mystery of why he left home. The story is told through Claudia's scrapbook, which includes transcripts of conversations via email, text, and phone.

■ *Beatrice Zinker, Upside Down Thinker* (Shelley Johannes)

Thinking upside down is how Beatrice dreams up fantastic plans to carry out with her best friend, Lenny.



But when Lenny finds a new friend and seems to have forgotten her, Beatrice needs all of her upside-down thinking to get things back on track. Book one in the Beatrice Zinker series.

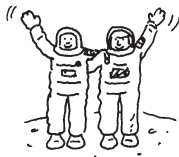
■ *The Kid Who Invented the Popsicle and Other Extraordinary Stories Behind Everyday Things* (Don L. Wulffson)

This nonfiction book is full of interesting stories about how familiar toys, foods, and gadgets were invented. Your child will discover that ordinary people tinkered and experimented, leading to carousels, teddy bears, sandwiches, and more.



■ *Astrotwins: Project Blastoff* (Mark Kelly)

How did Mark Kelly and his twin brother Scott become astronauts? Facts about the twins and about space science are woven into the fictional tale of a group of kids who set out to build a rocket. The first book in the Astrotwins series.



Less screen time, more reading time

Amber would rather watch TV than read. Eric used to read at bedtime, but now he asks to play video games instead.

If your child prefers electronic devices to books, you're not alone. Use these ideas to set reasonable limits and motivate her to read more.



Create rules

Your youngster will be more tempted to pick up a book if screen time isn't an option. Decide how much time she's allowed each day—perhaps less on weeknights than on weekends. She could read to settle down at night rather than watch TV or play video games.

Make reading convenient

Think “out of sight, out of mind.” Ask your child to put devices away when screen time is over. On the flip side, keep reading material in plain sight.

She might fill a basket with library books and place it in the family room—next to the turned-off TV. And have her leave devices at home and read or listen to audio books in the car or waiting room.

Build on interests

Help your youngster find reading material related to her interests. For example, if her video games feature sports, animals, or outer space, she might enjoy books or magazines on those topics. Also consider having her read books that were made into movies she liked. 📖

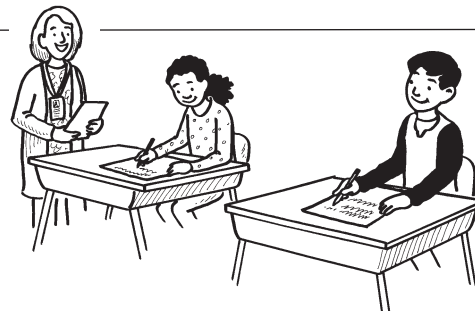
Note-taking 101

Taking good notes and using them will help your youngster learn and remember information. Here are suggestions.

Develop shorthand. He might use abbreviations like *w/* (*with*) or *b4* (*before*). He can make up his own and create a key that tells what they mean.

Double-space. Your child could leave a space between each line and use the blank lines to add details or examples as the lesson goes on.

Review. Have your youngster think of notes as a study tool. He might use them to explain the lesson to you or to create a practice quiz for himself. 📖



Sound-it-out strategies

When your youngster comes across a new word in a book, sounding it out is one strategy that can help him keep reading. Share these sound-it-out tips.

● **Find a part you know.** Your child may spot a familiar portion of a word, such as a vowel pattern or a shorter word within a longer one. Say he comes to the unknown word *feign*. He might think, “*Neigh* and *weigh* have *ei*, and that letter combination makes the *long a* sound. I think that word is pronounced *fayn*.”



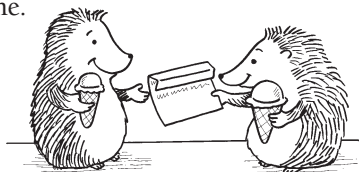
● **Break it into syllables.**

Suggest that your youngster say each syllable separately. If he’s not sure how to break up the word, here’s a clue: Every syllable contains at least one vowel. For *emancipation*, he might say “*e-man-ci-pa-tion*” slowly, then read it again smoothly.

Once your child has sounded out a word, it’s important that he reread the entire sentence with the word in it. If he can’t figure out its meaning from the context, he could ask someone for help or look up the word in a dictionary. 📖

Fun with Words Write and pass it on!

Writing a story together will get your child’s creative juices flowing. Try this back-and-forth writing game.



1. At the top of a sheet of paper, your youngster writes the opening line of a story (“There once was a little hedgehog who loved ice cream”) and hands the paper to the person beside her.
2. That player reads the sentence silently, folds the paper to hide it, and writes a sentence that follows logically. (“Her favorite flavor was chocolate-chip cookie dough.”)
3. Players continue passing the paper around, folding it so that only the last sentence written is visible.
4. When there’s just enough room for one more sentence, the person with the paper writes an ending for the story.
5. Now let your child read the tale aloud. 📖



Q&A Young adult books?

Q My daughter wants to read books that I think are too mature for her. She says “everyone” reads them. How should I handle this?

A Luckily for both of you, there are plenty of books out there that your daughter will enjoy—and that are appropriate for her. Explain to your child that some stories can be confusing or upsetting. And while her friends might read a particular book, it may not be a good match for her maturity level or your family’s values.



Ask a librarian to help you find books you and your daughter can agree on. She could suggest stories with popular themes (outdoor adventures, friendship) but without subjects that you might consider too mature (romance, horror). 📖

Parent 2 Parent Editing makes writing better

My son Kevin was working on an essay recently. He was supposed to write a rough draft, edit it, and write a final copy. But after he checked the spelling, grammar, and punctuation in his draft, he declared it error-free and said he didn’t need to edit.

I used to work for a publishing company, so I explained to Kevin that there’s more to editing than correcting errors—and that even professional writers edit their work.

Then I had an idea. I suggested that my son pick a paragraph from a favorite book and edit it. He made the writer’s description of a castle more vivid and added a funny line of dialogue for the king.

He was surprised that he preferred his version. But I pointed out that if the writer reread the book, she’d almost certainly find changes she’d like to make, too. This helped Kevin understand that writing can often be improved. 📖



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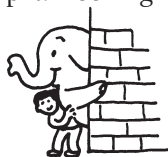
February 2019



Book Picks

■ *The Magician's Elephant* (Kate DiCamillo)

Peter is an orphan looking for answers about his missing sister. He turns to a fortune-teller, who proclaims that an elephant will help Peter, setting off a chain of events that the boy never could have imagined. But will it lead him to his sister—or to more questions? (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *Dewey the Library Cat: A True Story* (Vicki Myron and Bret Witter)

On a cold morning, librarian Vicki Myron discovers a freezing kitten in the book drop. This is her true story of Dewey, who found a home at the library. He attended story hours, napped among the stacks, and eventually became famous around the world.



■ *Young, Gifted and Black* (Jamia Wilson)

These 52 short biographies introduce your child to important people in black culture. She will learn about the childhoods, struggles, and accomplishments of historical figures as well as present-day people. Features civil rights leaders, athletes, musicians, and others.

■ *Lola Levine Is Not Mean!* (Monica Brown)

Lola accidentally hurts a classmate during a soccer game, and the other kids start to call her “Mean Lola Levine.” Lola feels terrible and wants to show everyone she’s not mean! She turns to her best friend, her family, and her passion for writing for help. The first book in the Lola Levine series.



Understanding fiction

Charles is a strong reader. He follows complicated plots, and he gets to know story-book characters so well that he often correctly predicts what they’ll do next. Help your child be a strong reader, too, with these fun ways to boost reading comprehension.

Basic facts	Traits	Actions
~~~~~ ~~~~~ ~~~~~	~~~~~ ~~~~~	
~~~~~ ~~~~~ ~~~~~		



Create a storyboard

Filmmakers use a series of drawings called a “storyboard” to write movies. Let your youngster try this idea to visualize a book’s plot. Have him divide a sheet of paper into eighths and sketch simple pictures (one per box) as he reads. *Tip:* Drawing arrows from box to box will show the sequence. With the storyboard, he can retell the story or write a summary.

into three columns: one for basic facts (name, age), one for traits (shy, brave), and one for actions (goes to the beach, makes the softball team).

Map the characters

Understanding a book’s characters will help your youngster grasp the story. Encourage him to make a character chart while reading. He could divide it

Predict the future

To forecast what will happen in a book, your child has to think about what has taken place so far. Ask him to make predictions as he reads and jot down his ideas (best friend will move away, dad will recover). Suggest that he write his own ending about two-thirds of the way through. He’ll enjoy seeing how it compares with the real one! 📖

Replace it

“The party was really *fun*!” We played *fun* games.” Your child will write fresher, more original stories if she finds alternatives for words she uses often, such as *fun*, *went*, and *good*.



Have each family member flip through books and copy a few sentences to jazz up or make more precise. Pick one, and circle the word to avoid. (“Wayside is a small village.”)

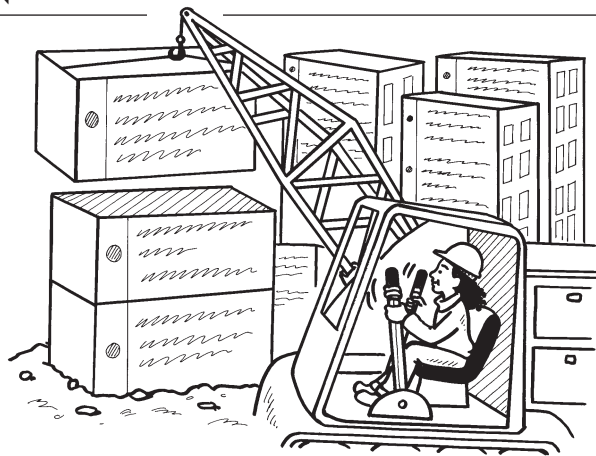
Set a timer for three minutes. Everyone writes as many alternatives as possible—replacing just one word or maybe changing the whole sentence. (“Wayside is a tiny village” or “If you weren’t paying attention, you could travel through the village of Wayside without noticing it.”) Now when your youngster catches herself using a word too many times in a story, she’ll remember this game. 📖

Build stronger essays

Encourage your child to approach her next essay as if she's building a tower. Here's how she can succeed from the first "brick" to the last.

1. Lay the foundation. A strong essay begins with a solid introduction. Your youngster should think about what her essay aims to accomplish and state her main idea. For example, will she inform readers about childhood in Colonial America? Or will she try to persuade readers to follow recycling rules?

2. Construct the framework. Have her think of each paragraph as a floor of her building. She might include one



paragraph about school in the Colonies, another on chores, and a third on play. Under each heading, she could write supporting facts and details. ("Education was considered more important for boys than for girls.")

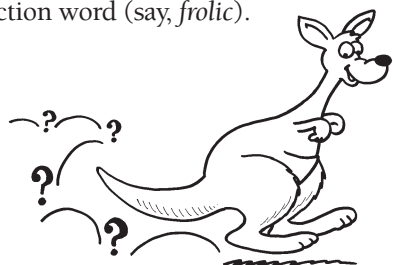
3. Top it off. A building isn't finished until it has a roof. Similarly, a strong conclusion finishes off an essay. Maybe your child will refer back to her introduction. ("Following the rules for what and how to recycle makes our planet a cleaner place to live.") Or perhaps she'll ask a question. ("What changes will you make to the way you recycle?")

Fun with Words

Name the mystery word

This word game helps to strengthen your youngster's vocabulary and critical thinking skills.

First, make one person the "word master." His job is to think of a mystery action word (say, *frolic*).



Then, players take turns asking questions to figure out the word—substituting the word *book* for the mystery word. The word master answers "Yes" or "No" and adds a clue to lead players to his word.

If someone asks, "Have you *booked* today?" the word master could reply, "Yes, I *booked* at recess." Another person may say, "Did you *book* down the slide?" ("No, I *booked* on the grass.") If a player asks, "Do animals *book*?" his reply might be "Yes, rabbits and kangaroos do."

The first person to identify the mystery word gets to pick the next one.

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Q&A

Are comic books "real reading"?

Q My son reads mostly comic books. Is this okay?

A It's wonderful that your son enjoys reading. And comic books often have complex storylines and well-developed characters, which strengthen reading skills.

Let your child explore a variety of comic books so he encounters new vocabulary and plots. He might choose a historical fiction series or a comic book retelling of classic children's literature. Also, many comic book fans like graphic novels, such as the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series (Jeff Kinney) or the *Dog Man* series (Dav Pilkey).

Finally, since your son will be expected to read a variety of books in school, consider helping him branch out. Suggest that he set a goal to read one new type of book each month. Perhaps he'll try a biography in February, a science fiction novel in March, and a mystery in April.

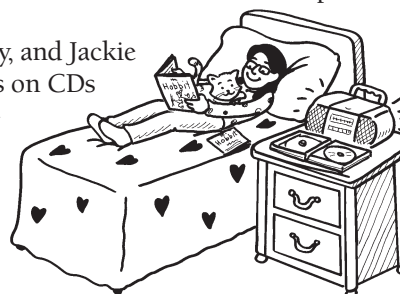


Parent 2 Parent

An audiobook station

My daughter Jackie loves the listening center in school, where students listen to audiobooks. So she asked if we could set one up at home.

We went to the library, and Jackie checked out a few books on CDs along with the print versions. At home, she put the CDs and books into a basket beside an old CD player I found in the basement.



Now Jackie enjoys listening to at least a chapter a day while she follows along in the book. It's great because she can hear the pronunciations of harder words while she sees them in print.

I told my sister-in-law about our listening station. Now she and her son are going to set one up using their smart speaker!

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March 2019



Book Picks

■ *Heartseeker* (Melinda Beatty)

What if you could “see” lies? In this novel, an eleven-year-old girl named Only Fallow can! Now she must help a king determine who is loyal to him. Along the way, she learns some uncomfortable truths about the kingdom.



■ *National Geographic Kids Brain Games: The Mind-Blowing Science of Your Amazing Brain* (Jennifer Swanson)

Youngsters will explore the human brain in this book of fascinating—and often surprising—facts. It’s full of brainteasers and challenges for your child to try and includes an



explanation of the science behind each activity.

■ *The BFG* (Roald Dahl)

In a land of scary giants, the Big Friendly Giant (BFG) is special. Follow the BFG and a little girl named Sophie as they try to stop the not-so-friendly giants from getting up to no good. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ *Some Writer! The Story of E. B. White* (Melissa Sweet)

This scrapbook-style biography introduces readers to the author of classics like *Stuart Little* and *Charlotte’s Web*. See photos of animals that White’s stories were based on, writing samples from his childhood, rough drafts of his manuscripts, and more.



Strategies for summarizing

“What was that book about?”

Listening to your child summarize a book shows her teacher (or you) how well she understood it. And the act of summarizing builds comprehension. Suggest these ideas.



Start with questions

Pretend to be a reporter, and ask your youngster the “5W” questions (who, what, when, where, and why) about her book. She can use her answers to give a brief summary. *Example:* “tiger cub” (who), “adopted” (what), “2018” (when), “India” (where), “orphaned” (why). Her summary could begin, “An orphaned tiger cub was adopted by another mother tiger in India last year.”

Rank importance

Can your child convince you to read a book she enjoyed? Record her making a commercial about it. The catch? She has a 60-second time slot, so she must stick to what matters most. Ahead of time, suggest that she list details, then number them from most to least relevant. For instance, clues that helped a detective

solve a mystery belong in her summary, but a description of the detective’s clothing probably doesn’t.

Draw a picture

A colorful graphic organizer lets your youngster visualize her summary. She might draw an ice cream cone labeled with the book’s title and add a different color scoop for each story element: characters, setting, problem, and solution. Now she could fill in details and look at her cone as she summarizes the story. (“A young girl from a small town moved to a big city. She had to learn how to fit in.”) ▮

Write a how-to guide

What’s a fun way for your child to practice his writing *and* help someone out? He can write a how-to guide for something he’s good at!

Let your youngster choose a topic (say, drawing portraits) and list numbered steps. *Example:* 1. Gather supplies. 2. Find a model. 3. Draw an outline. 4. Refine the outline.

5. Add features. Then, he could expand on each step to explain it thoroughly. “Add features” might become “Add facial features, such as eyes, a nose, and a mouth.”

To see if his instructions work, he should follow them step by step. If they don’t, he may need to add steps or be more specific. ▮



Tips for standardized tests

Knowing how to approach different types of questions can improve your youngster's performance on state reading and writing tests. Share this advice.

Multiple choice. Your child should read the entire passage and all possible answers before choosing one. There might be several options that seem good but perhaps aren't the best choices.

Short answer. On some standardized tests, your youngster may have to read



passages and write answers to questions. He could highlight or jot down facts or details on scratch paper first. Then, he can refer to the passages or his notes as he writes and include evidence if required.

Essay. Taking his time with each stage of the writing process (planning, rough draft, editing) will make your child's final product better. Encourage him to read the instructions

carefully so he knows what kind of essay he needs to write (narrative, informative, persuasive) and how it will be scored. If sources or samples are provided, he should read through all of them, too. ■

Fun with Words Vocabulary: Stack the cups

Build towers (and your youngster's vocabulary!) with this cup-stacking word game.



1. Have your child get a textbook or another nonfiction book with a glossary. Together, pick 25 words, and write each one on a separate plastic or paper cup.



2. Take turns choosing any cup, then reading the word and giving its definition. Another player checks the book to see if your definition is correct. If it is, you keep the cup.

3. As players win cups, they stack them to build towers. If the tower falls, they must return all of their cups to the middle of the table.

4. When every cup has been claimed, count to see who stacked the most. ■

Q&A Learning to listen

Q My daughter's gymnastics coach said Rachel doesn't always listen when he gives instructions to the team. How can I help her be a better listener?

A Listening takes practice. In addition to having regular conversations, use these activities to sharpen your child's ears:

- Have her close her eyes. Make four noises (rustle paper, jingle keys, snap your fingers, stomp your feet). Name one sound, and ask her if it came first, second, third, or fourth.
- Let your daughter listen closely to a song and write down the words, pausing or rewinding as necessary. She can compare what she wrote to the actual lyrics. *Tip:* Search for lyrics online. ■



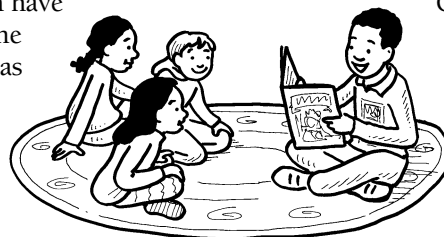
Parent 2 Parent Read aloud with confidence

My son Luke loves to read silently, but he's hesitant about reading aloud. I'm trying different ideas at home to make him more comfortable reading out loud at school.

First, I suggested that he read to his younger cousins when they visit. It was cute watching them have "story time." And the book Luke chose was easier than what he normally reads, so I think that helped him feel confident.

Also, I find opportunities for him to read out loud in everyday situations. For example, I'll ask him to read the list of pizza toppings from a takeout menu. Or when we're driving around town, I'll have him turn on the GPS, mute it, and read the directions to me in his best "GPS voice."

Luke's teacher recently mentioned that he volunteered when she asked for someone to read a poem. I guess the practice at home is helping! ■



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April 2019

Book Picks

■ *We Are the Ship: The Story of Negro League Baseball* (Kadir Nelson)

In 1920, Negro League Baseball formed when African American players were not allowed on major league teams. Narrated by a fictional baseball player, this true story shows readers what life was like for players who faced discrimination daily but showed up to do the thing they loved: play baseball.



■ *Annie's Life in Lists*

(Kristin Mahoney)
Annie makes lists of everything in her life, from what she sees in the mirror to why she gets quiet or feels nervous. When her family moves, she must overcome her shyness to make friends. Follow along in this story written entirely in lists, and see how Annie adjusts to living in her new town.



■ *The Word Snoop*

(Ursula Dubosarsky)
Why is the *k* in knight silent? How did American English develop? Turn your child into a word lover with this entertaining look at language. Chapters cover punctuation, word origins, acronyms, word plays, and more. Solve a puzzle or code at the end of each section to spell out a secret message.



■ *The Bad Guys* (Aaron Blabey)

A shark, a piranha, a snake, and a wolf go on a high-stakes adventure to prove they're "good guys." This first book in the hilarious graphic novel series tells how the group tries to do good deeds, like freeing dogs from a pound, to save their reputations. (Also available in Spanish.)

Write to communicate

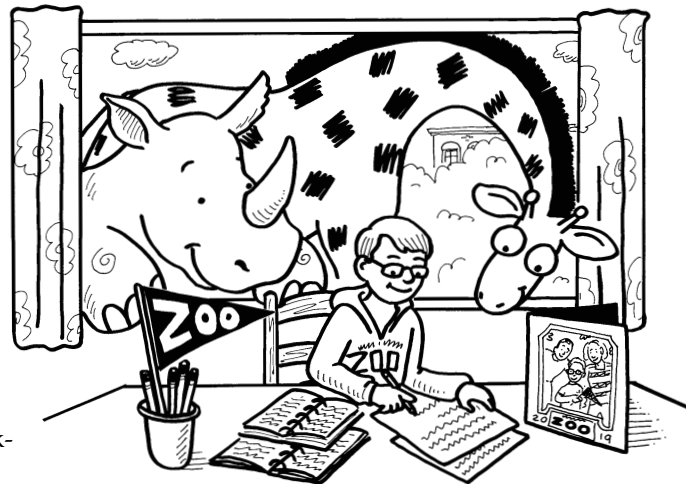
What do emails, newsletters, and thank-you notes have in common? They all give your child everyday reasons to write. Show him how writing can be easy, fun—and useful.

A click away

Become email buddies with your youngster. You might write reminders ("Mom is picking you up Tuesday after school for your orthodontist appointment"), discuss plans ("What should we do on Saturday?"), or ask about school ("What words were on the vocabulary quiz?"). Your child will get practical writing experience as he responds.

Extra, extra!

Put your youngster in charge of writing a family newsletter, and he'll practice taking notes and writing nonfiction accounts. Give him a notebook to track things that happen (a trip to the zoo, birthday parties, books read). At the end of the month, he



could use his notes to write a newsletter to send to relatives.

Thanks again

Make thank-you notes a part of daily life. Keep a stack of index cards handy so your child can write quick messages to family members. ("Thanks for helping me clean my room. The job went a lot faster.") Let him use cards to write longer notes when he gets gifts. He'll work on writing—and also learn to show appreciation to others. ■

Be an inventor

Does your youngster have an idea for an invention? Maybe she wants to walk dogs in the rain without anyone getting wet, or she wants to keep her markers from drying out. Encourage her to read about inventions and then write about her own:

- Together, look for nonfiction books on inventors (try *The Kids' Invention Book* by Arlene Erlbach or *Brainstorm!* by Tom Tucker). She'll read about clever ideas like an edible pet-food spoon invented by a six-year-old girl.
- Suggest that your child write about a product she'd like to invent. She can start with a problem (dogs and dog walkers getting wet in the rain). Then, she could draw and describe a gadget to help (mini doggy umbrellas and a hands-free umbrella for the dog walker). ■



Learning with poetry

Poems can tickle your child's funny bone, stretch her imagination, and improve her reading comprehension. Find poems online or check out poetry books from the library, and enjoy these activities together.

1. Take turns reading verses of a rhyming poem that tells a story, such as "The Swing" by Robert Louis Stevenson. Poems that rhyme will help your youngster read smoothly and with expression. *Tip:* Try having her clap the rhythm as she reads ("How do you like to go up in a swing...").



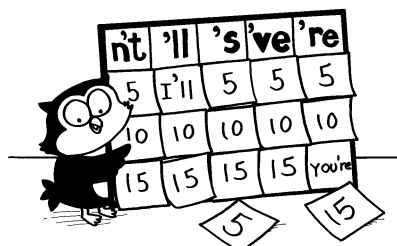
2. Poems often contain imagery, or words and phrases that paint pictures for readers. Suggest that your child read a poem carefully and then illustrate it. For instance, after reading "Where the Sidewalk Ends" by Shel Silverstein, she might draw a bright red sun, swirls of wind striped like peppermint, and flowers growing from the pavement. Drawing what is happening will help her understand and enjoy poems. 📖



Fun with Words

And the answer is...

This Jeopardy-like game helps your child learn contractions.



Have him make a Jeopardy game board with five columns and four rows. In the top row, he should write *nt*, *'ll*, *'s*, *'ve*, and *'re*. In the rows under each heading, he can write three contractions using that ending. For *nt*, he could write *didn't*, *can't*, and *won't*. Then, ask him to label sticky notes with point values (5, 10, 15) and put one over each contraction.

Players take turns selecting a category and a box. *Example:* Lift up the "5" note under *'ve* and find *we've*. Answer with a question. ("What is 'we have?") If you're correct, score 5 points and continue. If not, the next person picks a new box.

Play until all the clues have been used, and tally the scores. 📖

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Q&A

Online fact checking

Q My son believes everything he reads online. How can I help him figure out what's really true?

A Recognizing inaccurate information online can be a challenge for anyone. Encourage your son to ask himself a few questions.

How current is the information? Remind him to look for the date an article was posted or updated. (It's often at the bottom of the main page.) In today's fast-paced world, the date should be pretty recent. If it "feels old," it probably is.

Who published it? Anyone can post online. Encourage your child to look for reliable sources, such as universities or government agencies on websites that end in *.gov* or *.edu*. Your child can search online for the writer's or the organization's name to find out more. If no author is listed, suggest that he look elsewhere.

What do other sites say? If three or more reputable sites contain the same fact, it's more likely to be true. 📖



Parent 2 Parent

My own résumé

When my husband was recently looking for a new job, our daughter Mary became curious about his résumé. We explained to her that a résumé is a summary of a person's job history and skills. Then, we challenged her to write her own.

Mary listed clubs, sports, and classroom projects she had been involved in as well as "jobs" she has held. She included the skills and new knowledge she had

gained from each one. For instance, taking care of our neighbor's goldfish taught her responsibility for living things and keeping a schedule. As secretary of her school's student government, she learned to take minutes at meetings and give presentations.

When Mary finished her résumé, she was pleased with all her accomplishments. Plus, she had gotten some great writing practice! 📖

