

Turn reading into a habit for your family



Does your family have certain routines that are “just the way you do things”? Do you eat breakfast together every day? Eat pizza together every Friday night? Do you take walks as a family on Saturday afternoons? You can make reading one of those habits, too. Add reading to your

schedule in appealing ways. You can:

- **Visit the library.** Make an effort to go to the library once a week. Pick a day to be your library day and stick to it.
- **Make reading a treat.** Let everyone stay up an hour later to read on weekend nights.
- **Initiate reading dinners.** Make reading dinners weekly events. Take turns picking the book and reading aloud. Or, discuss a book that everyone in the family has read. You can also enlist your child’s help in



planning themed dinners based on books you have read.

- **Read the newspaper.** Browse the Sunday newspaper together. Read the children’s sections or comics. Even looking for and clipping coupons can be fun!

Make reading a regular family activity. It’s likely to lead to more reading, better reading and increased enthusiasm for books and learning!

Writing and reading assist with spelling



Even if your child is already a good speller, he may still find ways to improve on this important skill. The more he reads and writes, the better his spelling will become. Make learning words fun for your child.

Try these tips to lead your child to even more spelling success:

- **Help your child** learn to say words correctly. Sing songs and recite poetry so he can hear how words sound when they're pronounced correctly.
 - **Give your child** writing tasks, including letters, thank-you notes and your shopping list.
 - **Encourage your child** to proofread his schoolwork for spelling errors.
 - **Don't always spell** words for your child. Help him think of possible ways to spell a word. Show him how to find words in a dictionary.
- **Have your child** keep a list of challenging words. Review the words with him until he masters them.
 - **Point out misspelled words** that you see. Praise your child when he finds them, too.
 - **Teach your child** the meanings of words he doesn't understand.
 - **Encourage lots of reading.** Reading will help your child recognize how words are supposed to be spelled.



Help your child get on the ‘write’ track



Your child may never become a famous author, but children who can express their thoughts in writing are likely to do better in school.

Writing is a learned skill. Children improve at it with practice. Here are some suggestions for helping your child become a better writer:

- **Encourage your child to write.** Get in the habit of writing letters to family and friends. Write notes to your child. As soon as your child can print her name, give her paper for writing her own notes.
- **Show your child how writing is important in your life.** If you are writing a letter, a paper for school or a job application, let your child see what you’re doing.
- **Use writing to preserve memories.** Ask your child to write down what happens on a family outing. Encourage her to keep a diary.



Digital Vision

- **Make writing easy.** Keep pencils and paper handy. Buy her some special paper for writing letters or jotting down thoughts.
- **Don’t worry too much about spelling at first.** Beginning writers know and want to use many more words than they can spell. Studies show that children who use *invented spelling* write more and actually learn more about phonics than children who write only words they know they can spell.

Help your child get the most out of textbooks



Reading a textbook is different from reading a storybook. When your child starts using textbooks, he will have to learn how to pick out main ideas in a chapter and decipher new terms.

To get your child started, look at the book together. Help him develop strategies that will make reading his textbook—and eventually studying from it—easier. Try the following techniques:

- **Review the components of the textbook.** Encourage your child to use the table of contents to preview what he will learn. Notice different sections, introductions, summaries, features and images.
- **Learn to use the index.** Practice looking up specific topics and finding them in the textbook.
- **Look at the text's style.** Why are some things in bold? In italics? Numbered? Why are they important?



- **Use the book's features.** Textbooks often include helpful learning tools. Read the information that is pulled out of the main text and placed in sidebars. Look at information in other forms, like charts or graphs.
- **Learn to study from the textbook.** Rewrite the chapter and section headings into questions. Write their answers, too. See if the chapter ends with review questions. Answer them to practice for tests.

Develop reading confidence at home



Does your child read too quickly or seem to guess at words? Does she avoid sounding out words? If so, she may have reading anxiety. This makes reading for school more difficult. Try the following tips to reduce your child's stress about reading:

- **Read to your child often.** It's a fun activity for both of you that will develop her love of books.
- **Don't force your child to read to you.** If she wants to, great! If not, don't make her.
- **Don't insist that your child read only** grade-level material. She will enjoy reading more if she is reading something that interests her.
- **Let your child stay up** an extra half-hour to read just for fun.
- **Make audio recordings of materials** that your child finds challenging so she can read along.



- **Act out plays so your child** can build confidence with words.
- **Set an example** by keeping reading material around. Let your child "catch" you reading.
- **Be patient and encouraging.** Without pressure, your child can learn to love reading. If problems persist, talk privately with her teacher. Ask about ways that you can help at home.

Diversify your child's reading material



Parents often ask teachers and librarians how to find the “right” book for their child. The key is to let your child explore different types of books and even other reading materials. Try these tips to encourage your child to read different genres:

- **Build on interests.** A child who likes horses will love a book about these animals. It’s hard to go wrong when you choose a book about something you know will interest your child.
- **Suggest both fiction and nonfiction.** Some children want to get lost in a make-believe world. For them, suggest fiction books. Other kids want to read about things that have actually happened. Steer them toward nonfiction books. Encourage your child to read both fiction and nonfiction.



Jack Hollingsworth

- **Read biographies.** Your child may be interested in reading the story of the life of someone she admires. Biographies can teach important lessons. You might talk about how a person overcame challenges.
- **Look for award winners.** Awards like the Newbery Award or the Caldecott Medal recognize the best children’s books every year. Ask a librarian for suggestions for some of these award winners.