

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Grand Elementary School

Be your child's reading buddy to boost fluency and comprehension

When kids have to stop and sound out every word as they read, it's much harder for them to understand what a story is about.

If you help your child read more accurately and more fluently, reading will become much simpler and a lot more fun. To be a reading fluency buddy for your child:

- 1. Look for a short passage** that your child would find interesting that contains mostly familiar words.
- 2. Read the text aloud** while your child listens and follows along.
- 3. Have your child read** the text aloud. If it's too difficult, read the text again. Then, have your child read it after you.
- 4. Ask each other questions** about what you read. What was the biggest challenge characters faced? Discuss your favorite characters or the most entertaining part. This will help build your child's comprehension skills.



Expand your child's vocabulary by making words meaningful

To help your elementary schooler learn the meaning of new words, demonstrate how to make them memorable.

Encourage your child to:

- **Draw pictures** that represent new words.
- **Use new words** in a short, silly story.
- **Make up a song**, chant or rhyme about the word.



Broaden your child's horizons with all types of reading

Encourage your child to explore all kinds of books on a wide variety of subjects. It's OK if a book isn't a perfect fit and your child doesn't finish it. The goal is to let your child sample different topics and types of writing. Reading broadly will help your child discover new interests and unlock a world of knowledge.



Three ways to tackle reading challenges

Reading is a large part of so many home and school activities. If your child struggles with it, it can feel as if it affects everything. Here's how you can help:

- 1. Use reading materials at home** that minimize frustration. Choose books that are easy for your child to read and understand. This builds confidence while reading.
- 2. Explore online resources** and educational apps. Many websites and applications offer engaging and interactive ways to practice reading skills. Ask your child's teacher for recommendations on specific ones to try.
- 3. Stay positive about learning.** Focus on how your child can use and build on strengths. Remember to notice progress and praise your child for effort.

Engage your child in thoughtful reading discussions

To show your support and interest in reading, ask questions about what your child is reading. You might ask:

- **What is the setting?**
- **Who's the main character?**
- **How did you pick the book?**
- **Are you enjoying it?**
- **Do you understand the book?**
- **Would you recommend it** to friends? Why or why not?
- **Does the book remind you** of anything you've read before?



Partner with the teacher for reading progress

Team up with your child's teacher to set clear and effective reading goals. Being on the same page ensures your child gets consistent support to make progress in reading. When you talk with the teacher, ask questions such as:

- **Is my child reading at grade level?** What does that mean my child should be able to do at this point in the year?
- **Does my child seem to enjoy reading** at school?
- **What assessments do you use** to measure reading progress? Can you explain what they mean?
- **What are my child's biggest strengths** as a reader right now?
- **What are the main areas** where my child needs to improve?
- **What can I do at home** to support my child's reading?



Use a pumpkin to inspire word play

It's October, and pumpkins are everywhere! It's the perfect time to play some pumpkin-related word games. Have fun playing these two games as a family—and build important language skills at the same time!

1. **Describe a pumpkin.** Have family members examine a real pumpkin. Who can create the longest list of words or phrases that describe it? (*round, lumpy, orange, future pie*, etc.)
2. **Pumpkin word scramble.** Write the word *pumpkin* on a large sheet of paper. How many smaller words can each person make from the letters in it? (*pump, pin, pink, nip, up*, etc.)

The person with the most words in either activity wins!



Q: Our family is so busy. We don't have a lot of time to read together. What should we do?

A: Life gets busy, but making time for family reading can be easier than you think! The trick is to weave it into your existing routine, even if it's just once a week.

Consider scheduling a "reading dinner" where everyone reads quietly during the meal, or surprise your family with a "Drop Everything and Read" (DEAR) time during Saturday chores. The goal is to make reading a fun and natural part of your family's rhythm.

Ask your child to tell you a story for a change

The next time your child asks for a story, trade places. Have your child make up a story and tell it to you. Afterwards, suggest your child write it down and add illustrations. Your child will be the author of a tale you can read together anytime!



For lower elementary readers:

- ***The Promise*** by Nicola Davies. A young girl makes a promise to an old woman to plant a sack of acorns. As she plants them around the city, the girl's entire world changes.
- ***Rubia and the Three Osos*** by Susan Middleton Elya. This take on *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* introduces Spanish vocabulary—and has a surprising twist at the end!



For upper elementary readers:

- ***Grandma Chickenlegs*** by Geraldine McCaughrean. In this retelling of the classic Baba Yaga story, Tatia is sent to get a needle from an evil woman who traps the girl in her cottage.
- ***Jake the Fake Keeps It Real*** by Craig Robinson and Adam Mansbach. Jake is enrolling in the Music and Art Academy with a big secret—he is neither a musician nor an artist.

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