

Children need reading and writing skills to succeed in school, but learning these skills does not stop in the classroom. Becoming a good reader and writer takes practice, and parents can help their children by providing opportunities for practice at home.

1 Read with your child every day.

Create a habit of reading by reading aloud to your child, or listening to your child read out loud, on a daily basis. If you have multiple children, encourage your children to read aloud to each other.

- **Don't stop reading aloud once your child can read on their own.** Instead, move on to more difficult books.
- **Use audiobooks or podcasts.** Listening to audiobooks throughout the day (for example, during car rides) can provide more opportunities for children to learn new words and ideas. It can also build "stamina," or the ability to pay attention without being distracted.



2 Make reading fun!

Learning to read should be enjoyable, not a chore! You can make reading an pleasant experience for your child by:

- **Creating a special reading spot** or cozy reading nook in your home.
- **Varying your reading selections.** Provide your child with stories, comics, biographies, history books, or books on other topics your child is interested in. No child is too old for books with pictures — interesting visuals can make reading more engaging and enjoyable!



3 Ask questions about what your child reads.

Having conversations with your child about what they are reading can improve their comprehension and help to develop critical thinking and language skills. You can ask your child open-ended questions such as:

Non-Fiction Books

- What do you notice on this page?
- Why do you think this topic is important?
- What new things did you learn from this book?

Fiction Books

- What do you think the character is going to do?
- Why did the character do what she did?
- If you were in this story, what would you have done?



4 Reinforce what your child is learning in school.

Ask your child's teacher what they are learning in school and talk about ways to reinforce these skills at home. For young children, this may mean learning letter names and their associated sounds. For older children, this may mean discussing word meanings and practicing reading aloud for accuracy.



PARENT'S GUIDE - READING AND WRITING AT HOME

5 **Make reading and writing a part of your everyday activities.** There are a lot of different ways to integrate reading and writing skills in your day-to-day life! For example:

Reading Activities



Visit the library. Make family visits to the local library part of your routine. At the library, help your child find books or digital resources on topics that interest them, and ask a librarian for help if you can't find what you need.



Build a home library. Create a home collection of reading materials for your child to use. You don't need to purchase new books — you can borrow books from the library; start a book swap with friends or other parents; buy books inexpensively from thrift stores, used bookstores, or library sales; or ask for books for your child's birthday or other holidays.



Don't leave home without a book. Bring a book with you everywhere, and read it with your child when you are waiting somewhere (e.g., at the doctor's office or bus stop).



Point out and read aloud written words in your environment like signs, labels, and words on websites or apps

Writing Activities



Talk with your child regularly and ask a lot of questions. Conversations help develop skills like choosing words, expressing ideas, and reflecting on experiences. Instead of yes-no questions (like "Did you have a good day at school today?"), ask open-ended questions (like "What was the most interesting thing you learned today?").



Provide writing materials. Make sure your child has access to paper and pencils, crayons, markers, pens, or other writing instruments at home.



Encourage your child to write for fun. Leave notes for your child around the house or in a lunch box and ask them to write you back. Have your child write cards or letters to loved ones. Ask your child to make up a story, write it down, and read it to you (or write down your child's story yourself if they are still learning to write).



Ask your child for help with daily writing tasks. Ask your child to help you write grocery/shopping lists, to-do lists, or text messages or emails to family or friends.

TIPS | for parents of Kindergartners

Play with letters, words, and sounds! Having fun with language helps your child learn to crack the code of reading. The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader.

Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

■ **Talk to your child.**

Ask your child to talk about his day at school. Encourage him to explain something they did, or a game he played during recess.

■ **Say silly tongue twisters.**

Sing songs, read rhyming books, and say silly tongue twisters. These help kids become sensitive to the sounds in words.

■ **Read it and experience it.**

Connect what your child reads with what happens in life. If reading a book about animals, relate it to your last trip to the zoo.

■ **Use your child's name.**

Point out the link between letters and sounds. Say, "John, the word *jump* begins with the same sound as your name. *John, jump*. And they both begin with the same letter, J."

■ **Play with puppets.**

Play language games with puppets. Have the puppet say, "My name is *Mark*. I like words that rhyme with my name. Does *park* rhyme with *Mark*? Does *ball* rhyme with *Mark*?"

■ **Trace and say letters.**

Have your child use a finger to trace a letter while saying the letter's sound. Do this on paper, in sand, or on a plate of sugar.

■ **Write it down.**

Have paper and pencils available for your child to use for writing. Working together, write a sentence or two about something special. Encourage your child to use the letters and sounds he or she is learning about in school.

■ **Play sound games.**

Practice blending sounds into words. Ask "Can you guess what this word is? *m - o - p*." Hold each sound longer than normal.

■ **Read it again and again.**

Go ahead and read your child's favorite book for the 100th time! As you read, pause and ask your child about what is going on in the book.

■ **Talk about letters and sounds.**

Help your child learn the names of the letters and the sounds the letters make. Turn it into a game! "I'm thinking of a letter and it makes the sound mmmmmm."

Visit www.ReadingRockets.org for more information on how you can launch a child into a bright future through reading.

TIPS | for parents of First Graders

Give your child lots of opportunities to read aloud. Inspire your young reader to practice every day! The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

■ **Don't leave home without it.**

Bring along a book or magazine any time your child has to wait, such as at a doctor's office. Always try to fit in reading!

■ **Once is not enough.**

Encourage your child to re-read favorite books and poems. Re-reading helps kids read more quickly and accurately.

■ **Dig deeper into the story.**

Ask your child questions about the story you've just read. Say something like, "Why do you think Clifford did that?"

■ **Take control of the television.**

It's difficult for reading to compete with TV and video games. Encourage reading as a free-time activity.

■ **Be patient.**

When your child is trying to sound out an unfamiliar word, give him or her time to do so. Remind your child to look closely at the first letter or letters of the word.

■ **Pick books that are at the right level.**

Help your child pick books that are not too difficult. The aim is to give your child lots of successful reading experiences.

■ **Play word games.**

Have your child sound out the word as you change it from *mat* to *fat* to *sat*; from *sat* to *sag* to *sap*; and from *sap* to *sip*.

■ **I read to you, you read to me.**

Take turns reading aloud at bedtime. Kids enjoy this special time with their parents.

■ **Gently correct your young reader.**

When your child makes a mistake, gently point out the letters he or she overlooked or read incorrectly. Many beginning readers will guess wildly at a word based on its first letter.

■ **Talk, talk, talk!**

Talk with your child every day about school and things going on around the house. Sprinkle some interesting words into the conversation, and build on words you've talked about in the past.

■ **Write, write, write!**

Ask your child to help you write out the grocery list, a thank you note to Grandma, or to keep a journal of special things that happen at home. When writing, encourage your child to use the letter and sound patterns he or she is learning at school.

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TIPS | for parents of Second Graders

Find ways to read, write, and tell stories together with your child. Always applaud your young reader and beginning story writer! The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

■ **Tell family tales.**

Children love to hear stories about their family. Talk about a funny thing that happened when you were young.

■ **Create a writing toolbox.**

Fill a box with drawing and writing materials. Find opportunities for your child to write, such as the shopping list, thank you notes, or birthday cards.

■ **Be your child's #1 fan.**

Ask your child to read aloud what he or she has written for school. Be an enthusiastic listener.

■ **One more time with feeling.**

When your child has sounded out an unfamiliar word, have him or her re-read that sentence. Often kids are so busy figuring out a word they lose the meaning of what they've just read.

■ **Invite an author to class.**

Ask an author to talk to your child's class about the writing process. Young children often think they aren't smart enough if they can't sit down and write a perfect story on the first try.

■ **Create a book together.**

Fold pieces of paper in half and staple them to make a book. Ask your child to write sentences on each page and add his or her own illustrations.

■ **Do storytelling on the go.**

Take turns adding to a story the two of you make up while riding in a car or bus. Try making the story funny or spooky.

■ **Point out the relationship between words.**

Explain how related words have similar spellings and meanings. Show how a word like *knowledge*, for example, relates to a word like *know*.

■ **Use a writing checklist.**

Have your child create a writing checklist with reminders such as, "Do all of my sentences start with a capital? Yes/No."

■ **Quick, quick.**

Use new words your child has learned in lively flash card or computer drills. Sometimes these help kids automatically recognize and read words, especially those that are used frequently.

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TIPS | for parents of Third Graders

Read about it, talk about it, and think about it! Find ways for your child to build understanding, the ultimate goal of learning how to read. The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

■ **Make books special.**

Turn reading into something special. Take your kids to the library, help them get their own library card, read with them, and buy them books as gifts. Have a favorite place for books in your home or, even better, put books everywhere.

■ **Get them to read another one.**

Find ways to encourage your child to pick up another book. Introduce him or her to a series like *The Boxcar Children* or *The Magic Tree House* or to a second book by a favorite author, or ask the librarian for additional suggestions.

■ **Crack open the dictionary.**

Let your child see you use a dictionary. Say, "Hm, I'm not sure what that word means... I think I'll look it up."

■ **Talk about what you see and do.**

Talk about everyday activities to build your child's background knowledge, which is crucial to listening and reading comprehension. Keep up a running patter, for example, while cooking together, visiting somewhere new, or after watching a TV show.

■ **First drafts are rough.**

Encourage your child when writing. Remind him or her that writing involves several steps. No one does it perfectly the first time.

■ **Different strokes for different folks.**

Read different types of books to expose your child to different types of writing. Some kids, especially boys, prefer nonfiction books.

■ **Teach your child some "mind tricks".**

Show your child how to summarize a story in a few sentences or how to make predictions about what might happen next. Both strategies help a child comprehend and remember.

■ **"Are we there yet?"**

Use the time spent in the car or bus for wordplay. Talk about how jam means something you put on toast as well as cars stuck in traffic. How many other homonyms can your child think of? When kids are highly familiar with the meaning of a word, they have less difficulty reading it.

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