

How to Help Your Child Become a Better Reader



A Parent Guide



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Become a Better Reader



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Sources:

Leila Sackfield, Parent Involvement School Improvement Specialist EUSD, Escondido Union School District, Escondido, CA.

J. Eby, C. Perkins, and J. Kirkland, (1977). Rolling Reader: Everyone a Reader Volunteer Tutoring Program, Rolling Readers, San Diego, CA.

Nancy Kraft and Jill Conrad (1997), Becoming a Reading Buddy: A Guide for Peer Tutors, RMC Research Corporation, Denver, CO.

Illustrations by Phillip Holman Hebert



Introduction and Overview

Your role as a parent is to help your child experience joy in reading and to help her begin to view reading as a pleasurable experience. You can also help your child become an independent reader through the praise and encouragement you provide while he is reading. It is critical that your child realizes success while reading. This booklet will help you to help your child become a better reader through offering guidance and giving you tips on how to encourage and support your child's reading.

Helping your child to become a better reader means that you might have to prompt (provide cues or encourage) her in specific ways so that she becomes better and better at using reading strategies. Make sure that you focus on your child's strengths and encourage your child to take reading risks. Also remember that your child will learn to be a better reader by practicing reading.





Things to Know About Reading and Literacy

Literacy involves more than reading – it is about reading, writing, speaking and listening.

The National Reading Panel has identified five areas that children need to be skillful in to become good readers:

Phonemic Awareness

The ability to focus on and use phonemes (the smallest units of spoken language) in spoken words. The English language has 41 phonemes which combine to form syllables and words. Some words have only one phoneme (a or oh). Most words consist of a blend of phonemes, such as go with two (g and o), or check with three phonemes (ch e ck).



Phonics

Learning the alphabetic system or letter-sound relations and spelling patterns.



Fluency

Reading text with speed, accuracy, and proper expression.



Comprehension

The goal of reading, that integrates the skills involved with reading and understanding what is being read.

Vocabulary

Knowing and understanding the words one is reading.



Good Readers:

- are reactive and responsive to the text
- are not speed readers nor read word.....for.....word
- predict what will happen – connect reading to what they already know
- form a mental image while they read
- “self-question” while they read
- check their understanding and make sure it is clear, through re-reading, when they are confused
- summarize, interpret and think about what they are reading



Things families can do to promote children's literacy development include:

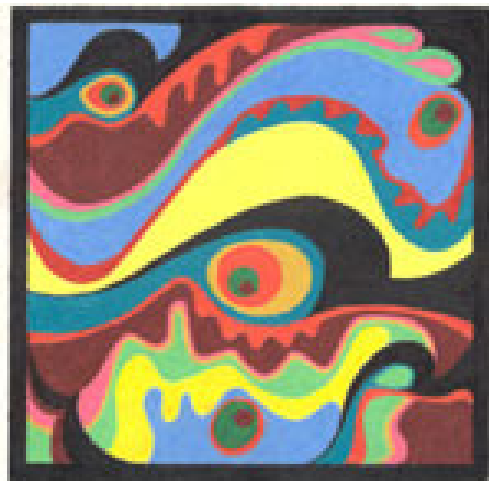


1. Providing opportunities for learning. Expose your child to literacy resources. Get books from the public and school libraries, through book swaps, make your own books, or buy inexpensive books at garage sales.

2. Recognizing your child's efforts and providing encouragement. Sometimes the best support you can give is to compliment your child's efforts as this will boost her self-confidence in trying to become a better reader.

3. Offering support and involving your child in real literacy tasks such as writing grocery lists, reading labels on food or clothing items, writing and reading letters, watching TV with closed captioning and reading the *TV Guide*, using recipes, clipping coupons, reading a menu, writing your bills, looking at catalogs and advertisements, looking up numbers in the telephone directory, reading your Bible, reading the comics, reading instructions, etc.

4. Modeling. Let your children see you reading and see you as a learner. Read aloud to your children.



Tips on Reading Aloud to Your Child

(even for older children)



Love the book yourself before you read it to your child. Read it completely before introducing it.

Choose a book that is good to read out loud. Folktales, funny or spooky stories, stories with surprise endings, and stories in which children can join in are always fun. Books with lots of dialogue are tricky.

Have high expectations. Make it clear that you expect your child to look, listen, and pay attention while you are sharing a book.

Make read aloud time special. Gather around. Turn off the lights, turn on a cozy lamp or light a candle. Flop on pillows. Be comfortable.

Vary your approach. You read to your child. Or you read to him while he reads along with you. Or you read a page, then she reads a page.



Introduce the artists. Always say the name of the author and illustrator before you begin reading, so your child can make the connection that books are written by real people.

Show the pictures while you read. If you are sharing a picture book, hold the book in one hand with your arm extended with the pages facing your child so you are looking sideways as you read. If you are reading to several children, slowly rotate the book as you are reading so everyone can see.

Read with expression. Listen to yourself. Can your presentation be improved with dramatic pauses? Louder or softer speech? Funny voices? Don't be shy. They won't remember that you sounded silly. They'll remember an interesting book.

Don't over evaluate. The more you formally test and check, the more you kill the affective gain.



Read aloud every single day. You and your child both deserve it. The more regularly you read aloud the greater the results will be.

Leave your child asking for more. Leave them groaning at a cliffhanger, laughing at a joke, crying along. Then say, "More tomorrow." And then deliver!

Applause, applause. Especially if you are reading to more than one child, clap when the reading is done as a way of sending thanks to the artists, wherever they may be, and to encourage you, the reader!



Warming Up for Reading



If you have time, you might read the book yourself before asking your child to read it. This will help you to become familiar with the book and any difficult words. If you don't have time to do this you can start by looking at the cover of the book and talking about it with your child. Talk about the:



Title
Author
Illustrator



Take a picture walk through the book. Talk about what is happening in each picture.

Look for words that may be “tricky” or difficult.

Talk about:

The setting (where the story takes place).

The characters (who is in the story).

Tell your child the character's names (they can be difficult).

Ask your child questions about the picture walk.

What do you think the story will be about?

What do you think will happen to?

Have you ever?

Can you find the word _____?

Wait, Look and Listen!

If your child gets stuck, what should you do?



Wait

Give your child some think time so that he can work it out by himself. (Teachers call this wait time.) In giving wait time you are helping your child to become more independent. If you tell her the answer immediately you are sending this message, “*You cannot read that word without my help.*” If a child believes she can only succeed with help, she will not be a risk-taker.

If your child stops or hesitates, pause before helping. Wait for five seconds.

1.....2.....3.....4.....5





Look...

Watch your child to see if he is:

- Looking at the picture to find a clue
- Going back to the beginning to try again
- Fixing it himself
- Looking up at the ceiling, and/or
- Looking at you and waiting for you to give him the answer.



Listen...

While waiting and watching, listen to your child to see if she is:

- Trying to sound out the word
- Fixing it herself
- Saying or getting ready to say the first sound in the word
- Saying a chunk of the word like: sh, th, ch, wh, at, ing, ly, and/or Reading past the word she doesn't know.

Working It Out

Decide what kind of help your child needs in order to help him work things out for himself. You might ask three questions to help your child decide what the correct word is. You can ask:

- Did that make sense?
- Does that look right?
- Does that sound right?

1. Sometimes you just need to encourage her to try. You might say:

You can do it!

Take a close look at the word.

How can you get your mouth ready to say that word?

2. Sometimes your child gets stuck on one word, loses his place, or has trouble following along with the words. You can help by:

Pointing to the word he is having trouble with.

Have him use his finger to point to the words.

Cover up part of the word.

3. Sometimes things don't look right:

Example: Your child says, "*He jumped over the fence.*"

The book says, "*He jumped over the gate.*"

If your child says something that isn't on the page or there is something on the page like a picture that might help ... you can say:

Look at the picture.

Point to the word.

Does that look right?

What sound or letter does that begin with?

What would you expect to see at the beginning, middle or end of the word.....?

Where did you start reading?

Did that match?

Can you find the word.....?



4. Sometimes your child will say things that don't make sense:

Example: Your child says, "*The horse has four bedrooms.*"
The page says, "*The house has four bedrooms.*"

If things don't make sense, you can say:

- Did that make sense?
- Look at the picture.
- Can you read that again?
- What happened in the story when....?
- What do you think that might be?
- Take a closer look at
- Were you right?
- Read that sentence again.

5. Sometimes we say words that don't follow the rules of our language:

Example: Your child says, "*The goat eated four shoes.*"
The book says, "*The goat ate four shoes.*"

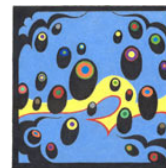
Ask your child to

- Read it again.
- Tell her the correct word and then read the sentence again together.

6. After you have finished reading the story ask:

- Tell me what happened in the story in your own words.
- What happened after?
- What would you do if you were?
- What happened first, second, etc.
- How did _____ solve the problem?

If your child is making many mistakes, check the level of the book. It may be too hard for her to be practicing reading. With your child's teacher, select a book that is one level below the difficult one.



What Do They Know?

It is important that you use questions to find out if your child understands what he has read.



1. You will need to ask questions about the story:

- Before he reads the book.
- While you are reading the book.
- After you read the story together.



2. Before you read the story ask:

- What do you think this story is about?
- Have you ever?
- What words might you expect to find in the story?



3. During the story ask:

- What do you think will happen next?
- Why did _____ do _____?
- How do you think _____ feels about _____?

Words of Encouragement

Remember, your job is to help your child become a better reader. Everybody likes to be recognized for doing a good job. Here are some ways that you can help your child become a better reader and recognize her hard work. Think about what your child did to figure things out.



1. If she used the pictures then say

- I liked the way you used the pictures to help you figure that out.



2. If he was sounding out words then say

- I liked the way you used the sounds at the beginning of the word or at the end of the word to help you.



3. If your child fixed something all by herself then you might say:

- Super job, you fixed that all by yourself?
- You knew that wasn't quite right so you:
 - used the pictures to help.
 - you went back and read it again.
 - read past the word you didn't know then went back.



4. Even if your child makes a mistake, there are still things you can say to help.

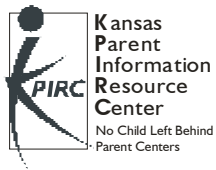
- That was a good try. It does begin like that, but ...
- You made a good guess. That would make sense, but the word is ...
- You almost worked it out all by yourself.
- Let me help you.

Praise gives your child confidence!!

What Do I Do If.....?

If the child	Try These Strategies
Doesn't want to read	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read a page or a line and then have the child read. • Select a funny book or one with a surprise at the end. • Let the child select a book.
Says the book is too easy (a "baby" book)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the child to read it with "expression" so he can read it to a younger child.
Says the book is too hard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose a different book. • Go down a level to an easier book. • Read a short passage and have the child reread that passage. • Read the beginning and have the child fill in some of the words, then gradually let her take over.
Comes to an unknown word and stops	<p>Pause to give the child time to think, then say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read to the end and then come back to this word. • What sound does the word begin with? • What sound comes next? • What would make sense here? • Do you see a pattern or small word? (Frame it with your fingers.) For example: kick(ing) or become (be)(come).
Gets restless or squirmy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose another book. • Stand up and stretch with your child. • Finish reading the book to your child. • Ask if the child needs to go the bathroom.





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