

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Valdosta City Schools
Parent Engagement Newsletter

Build your child's vocabulary to enhance reading comprehension

A strong vocabulary helps children understand what they read. It reduces how often they have to stop reading and ask, "What does this word mean?"

To strengthen your child's vocabulary, read aloud often and use new words in conversation. You should also:

- **Make definitions** easy to understand. When defining the word *curious*, for instance, you might say, "A *curious* person is eager to learn more."
- **Give relatable examples.** "When the box arrived from Grandma, you were *curious* about what was inside."
- **Ask your child** to give examples. "Can you think of someone who was *curious*?" "Fernando was *curious* about how Amy's book ended."
- **Keep using the new word.** "I'm *curious* about countries in Africa. Let's do some research together."



Three strategies can help your child overcome reading challenges

Reading is an important part of many home and school activities, so when a child struggles, every part of life is affected. If your child is having difficulty with reading, you should:

1. **Consult his teacher.** Ask about realistic expectations. Is your child reading at grade level? If not, what help is available?
2. **Use reading materials at home** that minimize frustration. Choose books that are easy to read and understand. This will help him gain confidence.
3. **Stay positive** about your child's learning. Focus on how his strengths can help him overcome challenges.

Connect to the past by reading history books

Reading helps children in every school subject, and history is no exception! The next time you're at the library, browse the shelves for some:

- **Biographies** and autobiographies.
- **Books** about historic events.
- **Fictional stories** that are set during fascinating periods in time.



Have fun with acrostic poems

Encourage your child to write an acrostic poem. Have her pick a word or a name and write it in a vertical line. Then, she should brainstorm words that describe that topic. The catch is that each word has to start with a letter of the original word!



Bookmarks make reading special

Making bookmarks for friends and family can get your child excited about reading—and they make great gifts! You'll need:

- **Construction paper**, cut into strips 6" long and 2" wide.
- **Colored pencils**, markers or crayons.
- **Small photos** of your child.
- **Glue** and clear tape.

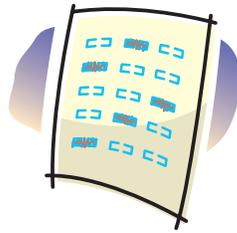


Have your child decorate the bookmarks with photos and drawings. He can personalize each one with a name and a short message. Then, cover them with clear tape.

Read for success on standardized tests

When children read well, they do better on tests. And certain reading skills are especially useful when taking standardized tests. Help your child work on:

- **Comprehension.** Standardized tests often ask students to find the “main idea.” Practice this by reading news articles with your child. For each article, summarize the main idea together.
- **Speed.** Standardized tests are usually timed, so it’s important for kids to read at a reasonable pace. Reading speed improves naturally when children practice every day. Reading silently boosts speed, too, since whispering or mouthing words slows reading.
- **Vocabulary.** When kids recognize a lot of words, it’s easier for them to understand test questions. Introduce your child to new words daily. Look them up together and use them repeatedly to increase memory.



Play games to improve decoding skills

To read, children must first learn the sounds that letters make. (For example, the letter *m* makes an *mm* sound.)

The next step in learning to read is to *decode* written words. Children decode a word by sounding out each of its letters, then blending the sounds together.

To help your child improve this skill:

- **Write words** on index cards. Take turns selecting a card and sounding out the word.
- **Place packaged foods** on your table. See if your child can sound out words on the labels.
- **Have a treasure hunt.** Hide words written on slips of paper throughout your house. Have your child find the slips and sound out the words.



Q: Part of my child’s homework is to read every day, but she often refuses to do it. How should I handle this?

A: This is a concern to discuss with your child’s teacher. Share your ideas about possible reasons for your child’s refusal. The teacher will have suggestions that might make reading time easier,

such as taking turns reading aloud. Work together and you’ll find a strategy that will help your child.

Try graphic organizers

Graphic organizers are diagrams that help kids think about what they read. Try drawing a large star with five points. Your child can put the title of the story or an article she has read in the center. Then use the points to write or talk about *who, what, when, where* and *why*. She’ll have a clearer picture of what she’s read in no time!



For lower elementary readers:

- ***The Cloud Spinner*** by Michael Catchpool. A boy weaves beautiful fabric from the clouds. But there are consequences when a king demands too much clothing.



- ***The Day the Crayons Came Home*** by Drew Daywalt. A new bunch of crayons have a bone to pick with Duncan. Your child will delight in these crayons’ gripes!

For upper elementary readers:

- ***Romeo and Drooliet*** by Nina Laden. This clever adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* features a cat and dog as the star-crossed lovers.
- ***The Spaghetti Detectives*** by Andreas Steinhöfel. Rico and Oscar are an interesting pair who take on a number of mysteries to solve.

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