

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

April 2017

Keystone Oaks School District

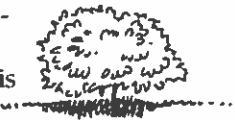


Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ *Rosario's Fig Tree* (Charis Wahl)

A little girl believes her neighbor, Rosario, is a magician because he grows things in his garden. Rosario knows just when and how to plant seeds that give him eggplants, tomatoes, and even figs. When the girl becomes Rosario's helper, she discovers she can do magic, too.



■ *I am Jim Henson* (Brad Meltzer)

As a child, Jim loved to laugh, act out movies he saw at the theater, and draw happy monsters and birds. This picture book biography introduces little readers to the boy who grew up to create *Sesame Street* and *The Muppet Show*.

■ *Armadillo Rodeo* (Jan Brett)

Bo the armadillo is in for an adventure when he wanders off from his mother and follows a new "friend" to a Texas rodeo. The "friend" turns out to be a child's red cowboy boot that Bo mistook for another armadillo! By the time his mom finds him, Bo has had a great time riding a horse and going to a barn dance at the rodeo. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *The Earth Book* (Todd Parr)

This nonfiction book explains simple ways to help take care of the earth. Read it together, and then celebrate Earth Day (April 22) by starting a new tradition inspired by the book. For example, ride bikes to the store instead of driving, or reduce food waste by enjoying a weekly leftovers dinner.



Keys to better conversations

If discussions with your child mostly involve things like "What should we have for lunch?" or "Please put on your shoes," you're not alone. Here are ways to enjoy rich conversations and help your youngster build speaking and listening skills.



Make a "spark" jar

Fill a jar with questions that will spark fun discussions. Family members can write conversation starters on slips of paper. Then, pull a "spark" out of the jar before you sit down to dinner or get in the car, and you'll have something interesting to talk about. *Example:* "What's the first thing our hamster would say if she could talk?"

Play "piggyback"

Encourage your child to listen closely to what others say and piggyback on their ideas with lines like "That reminds me of..." or "Good idea. What if we also..." Maybe someone suggests that

you celebrate the 100th day of 2017 on April 10. Your youngster might add, "That reminds me of the 100th Day of School party. We could make a 100-link paper chain like we did at school."

Expand your range

Give your child chances to talk to a variety of people. Their different experiences and perspectives will provide new topics to discuss. She might speak with guests at your home or call or video-chat with relatives. Ahead of time, help her think of what to say. ("Aunt Terry works as a nurse, and she lives in Minnesota where it's still cold. What could you ask her?")♥

Let's read the mail

What's in the mail? Opportunities for your youngster to read and write! Try these activities:

- Little ones love to get mail addressed to them. Encourage relatives to send your child letters, cards, and postcards. Read them together, letting him read the words he recognizes. Then, help him write back to each sender.
- Give your youngster catalogs and circulars that come in the mail. He could pick a category, such as clothes or food. Next, he can cut out pictures, glue them on a sheet of paper, and practice writing by labeling each item ("Pajamas," "Socks").♥



Read-alouds boost imagination

Reading to your child can exercise his imagination and sharpen his comprehension. Consider these ideas.

Picture the scene. While you read a story, ask your youngster to close his eyes and imagine what the illustrations look like. He'll practice visualizing the characters, setting, and plot. After you



finish reading, suggest that he draw some of the pictures he "saw." Then, let him look at the real illustrations to see what they have in common with his.

Create an ending. How would your child like the story to end? About halfway through, close the book. Have him use his imagination to make up the

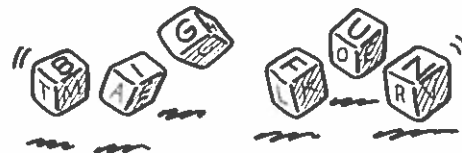
rest—just like when he writes his own stories. Now open the book, and finish reading. Which version does he prefer?

Think deeply. Pose questions that stretch your youngster's imagination as you read. You might ask what he thinks of a character's decision or how the story would be different if it took place in a city rather than in the country.♥

Fun with Words Roll and spell

How many words can you and your youngster make from six letters? Play this spelling game to find out.

Materials: six dice, masking tape, pen, timer, paper, pencil



1. Cover the dice with bits of masking tape.
2. Use two dice for vowels (A, E, I, O, U, Y), writing one set on each. The remaining dice are for consonants. Your child should write a different one on each side of a die, leaving one side blank on each die.
3. Let your youngster roll all the dice at once. Set a timer for five minutes.
4. Work together to spell as many words as possible. (A blank can stand for any letter.) Say your child rolls I, O, C, B, L, and X. She might move the letters around to spell *cob*, *boil*, *oil*, *ox*, *box*, and *lox*. Help her write down each word you spell.
5. Roll the dice again, and play with the new letters.♥



Family writing games

Write a sentence—and pass it on. These games encourage your child to practice creative writing as you build stories together, one line at a time:

- Help your youngster write one sentence of a story on a sheet of paper, and hand it to the next player. That person reads the line silently, adds a sentence, and folds the paper so the first line is hidden. Keep passing the paper around, each time adding a line and folding the paper so only the new sentence shows. When the paper is full, let your child unfold the story and read it.
- Have your youngster pick two unrelated objects, such as a shoe and a carrot. Then, she starts a story about one of the items ("Last week, I got a new pair of shoes"), and gives the paper to the person beside her. The goal is to tell a story that makes sense and ends with a line using the second item. Your story might continue: "I put them on and went for a walk. I saw a vegetable garden. There was a cute bunny eating a carrot."♥



Parent to Parent

Our growing home library

I want my son Jason to have his own library of books at home, but we can't afford bookstore prices. When I mentioned this to a friend, she said her family had built a nice collection of books by shopping at yard sales.

So Jason and I started scanning yard sale ads for mentions of children's books. Our new Saturday morning ritual is going to these sales and browsing

through the books together. Jason loves picking out his favorites. And I love that we can sometimes get a bag of books for a dollar!

At one yard sale, another shopper gave me a great tip. She said you can get good books for really low prices at library and church yard sales. Now we're shopping at those, too. Soon our problem won't be that we need more books—it will be needing more bookshelves!♥



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote their children's reading, writing, and language skills.

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INTERMEDIATE EDITION

Working Together for Learning Success

April 2017

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Book Picks

■ *Phoebe and Her Unicorn* (Dana Simpson)

Phoebe dreams of being special. When she befriends a unicorn, she thinks she's found her chance. But she soon discovers that being friends with the magical creature is tougher than it looks. The first book in the graphic novel series, *Phoebe and Her Unicorn*.



■ *Looking Back: A Book of Memories* (Lois Lowry)

The Newbery Medal-winning author of *The Giver* and *Number the Stars* describes her memoir as a book "about things that happened, which caused other things to happen." Lowry shares personal stories and family photos, and she describes what inspired her to write novels.

■ *Flying Lessons & Other Stories* (Edited by Ellen Oh)

This book of short stories pulls readers into the lives of diverse characters.

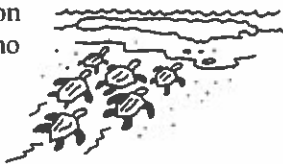


From the basketball player with a disability to the poor girl trying to fit in among wealthy kids,

readers learn that although we are each different, we are also the same.

■ *Tortuga Squad: Kids Saving Sea Turtles in Costa Rica* (Cathleen Burnham)

Here's nonfiction for children who are concerned about endangered wildlife. The book follows a group of youngsters dedicated to rescuing sea turtles. Each hatching season, the young volunteers protect turtle eggs and help baby turtles reach the ocean safely.



Which book to choose?

Fiona walks into the library looking for a new book to read. But surrounded by rows of books and thousands of titles, she isn't sure how to find one she will like. Sound familiar? Use tips like these to help your child locate her next great read.



Narrow the field

Have your youngster make her own "book search" bookmark. On a strip of sturdy paper, she can write her favorite topics, types of books, and authors. For example, her list may include soccer, animals, mysteries, and authors Shannon Hale and R. L. Stine. Then, your child could browse the library shelves, bookmark in hand, for books that match her list.

Sample the new arrivals

Uh-oh. That book your youngster planned to read is checked out. Now what? Invite her to "taste test" books on the new-arrivals display. She might pull one out that catches her eye and read the front flap, the back flap, and the first few pages. If it snags her interest, she can check it out.

Get recommendations

When your child knows what she likes and wants to find something similar, encourage her to ask a librarian for help. If your youngster mentions a few books she enjoyed, the librarian will guide her toward similar titles. *Tip:* Librarians often feature their personal favorites in a "recommended reads" section—another good place to look for books to take home. 📖

Beyond the books

Books may be what libraries are known for, but they have so much more to offer! Your youngster could consider free options like these:



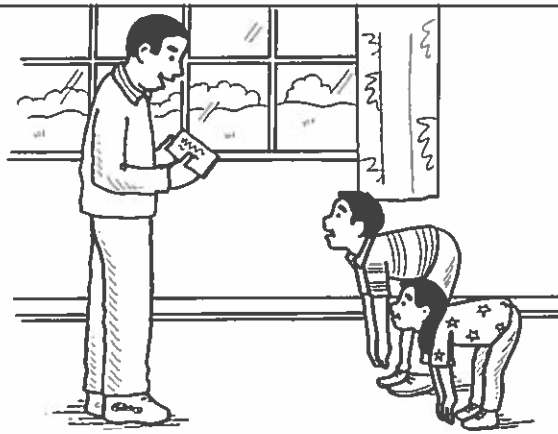
- Join a young writers group.
- Sign up for a theater club, and put on plays and skits.
- Share in a family mystery night.
- Take a workshop to learn Internet search techniques.
- Attend a "meet the author" event.
- Watch a film series based on books.
- Take part in a foreign-language conversation class.
- Drop in for homework help.
- Participate in arts and crafts classes.

Tip: If you live in an area with more than one library branch, check them all out. 📖

Listen “actively”

Children who are *active listeners* absorb more of what’s said—an important skill for understanding lessons, taking notes, and following spoken directions. To listen actively, your youngster needs to concentrate fully on the speaker so he can remember and respond. Try these fun ways to practice.

Outrageous declarations. Start by making three silly claims. “My dog is green. I eat spaghetti with a straw. I’ve got furry purple feet.” Your child repeats



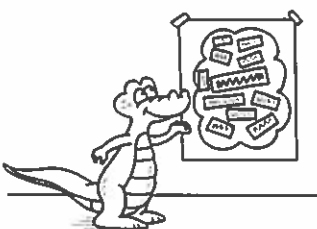
them and adds three of his own. “Your dog is green, you eat spaghetti with a straw, and your feet are furry and purple. I like polka dot asparagus. I’ve been to the moon twice. I have night vision.” Take turns repeating the last three claims and trying to top them with three new ones.

Crazy directions. Together, write 20 random instructions on separate index cards. (“Take two steps left.” “Touch your toes.” “Wink your right eye.”) Shuffle the cards. Draw five cards, and read them aloud to your youngster. He waits until all the directions are read, counts to 10, and acts them out in order. If he succeeds, he scores a point. If not, you score the point. Trade roles, and play again. The winner is the first person with 10 points. 📌

Fun with Words Cloudy with a chance of words

Let your child channel her inner artist with a vocabulary-building “word cloud.” With this fun project, she’ll think of words that are connected in some way and then display them in a colorful cloud-shaped image.

First, she’ll need a subject (friendship, a famous person). Have her brainstorm words related to her choice. Words for *friendship* might include *laughter*, *loyalty*, *confide*, and *understanding*.



Next, she’ll write the words in various sizes, colors, and styles (or type them

in different fonts) to indicate their importance. She might use large letters and a bright color for *loyalty* and smaller letters and a pale color for *laughter* to show she thinks *loyalty* is more important.

Finally, she can cut out the words and glue them into a big cloud on a sheet of paper. She may want to decorate her room with a wall of word clouds! 📌



Use a proofreading checklist

Encourage your child to proofread writing assignments carefully before she turns them in. This checklist will help.



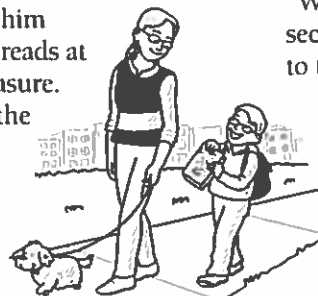
- I capitalized...** the first word in every sentence and the first letter in proper nouns.
- I punctuated...** every sentence with a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point. I checked commas, apostrophes, and quotation marks, too.
- I checked for misused words...** like *its/it’s*, *there/their*, and *you’re/your*. And I double-checked words I often misspell.
- I examined my sentences...** each one has a subject and a verb. There are no missing words.
- I looked for confusing passages...** and made sure that what I wrote makes sense and is easy to understand.

Hint: Suggest that your child take a break (20 minutes or more) between writing and proofreading so she can see her work with fresh eyes. 📌

Q&A Supporting independent readers

Q When my son was starting to read, helping him was easy. How can I support him now that he reads on his own?

A One way is just to talk about what he’s reading. Have him describe books he reads at school and for pleasure. Telling you about the plots in a novel or the facts in a nonfiction book gives him an opportunity to



think more deeply about their content—and lets you gauge his understanding.

You could also look through his textbooks and library books and ask a question or two. For instance, you might say, “What’s the most important part in this section on fossils?” or “What happened to the knight in this chapter?”

Also, occasionally touch base with your son’s teacher about his reading progress. The teacher can share strengths and weaknesses and offer suggestions for supporting your child at home. 📌

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