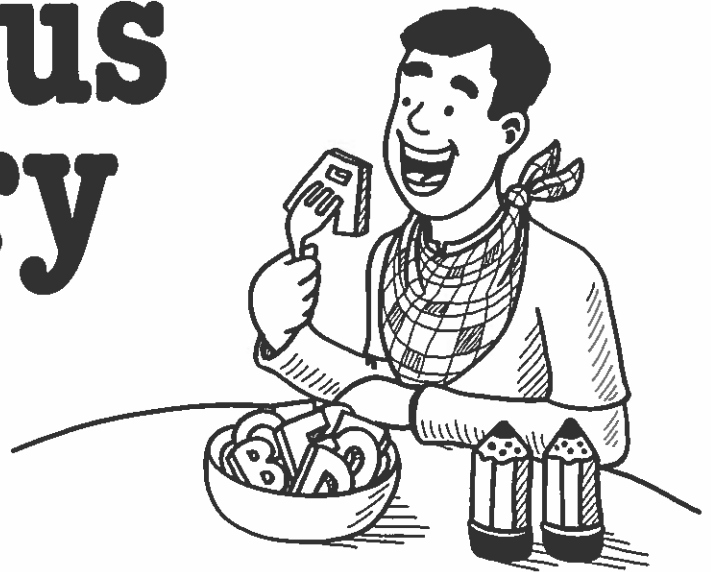


A Voracious Vocabulary

Use entertaining activities to foster an appetite for words, and your child will gobble them up. The result will be a strong vocabulary that he can use in—and out of—school. Here are ways to play with words together.



ACCUMULATION

(noun): a collection gathered little by little

Pass time in a waiting room by creating an *accumulation* of related words. Your youngster will have to think about each word's meaning to decide whether it fits into his collection.



Take turns choosing a category, such as travel, sports, or food. Then, each of you should pick up a magazine and race to see how many words you can find in 5 minutes that fit the category. If you're looking for words related to travel, your child might find *altitude*, *currency*, and *urban*, for example. Write your words on your paper. When time is up, read them aloud, and cross off any that the other person also chose.

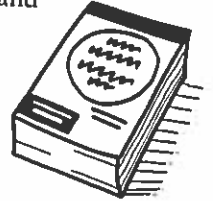
The person with the most words that no one else got selects the next category.

RECOLLECT

(verb): to remember

Your child needs a sharp memory to *recollect* where each pair of antonyms (words with opposite meanings) is hidden in this game. And learning a word's antonym gives him another way to understand and remember what the first word means.

Together, use a thesaurus to find pairs of antonyms like *gigantic* and *miniature* or *concave* and *convex*. Write each word on a separate index card along with its definition.



Mix up the cards, and place them facedown in rows. Take turns turning over two cards. If you find a pair of antonyms, keep it, and turn over two more cards. If the words aren't opposites, put the cards back, and it's the next player's turn. Collect the most pairs to win.

My words

Want to motivate your child to investigate and remember new words? Have her create a personal dictionary to use during word games.

In a notebook, she can add an entry each time she learns a new word. Suggest that she include the word, its definition, and any drawings, synonyms, or notes that will help her remember it.

Words are everywhere! Here is a list of ways she might find them.

1. Notice words that opponents play during games.



2. Look up the answers to crossword clues she doesn't know.

3. Get a word-a-day calendar or visit a website like wordcentral.com/buzzword/buzzword.php.

4. Read books for pleasure.

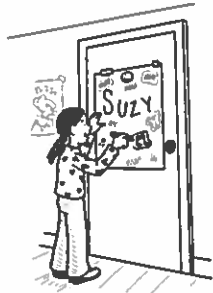
5. Use textbook glossaries to look up unfamiliar words.

6. Listen for new words during class discussions and dinner conversations.

continued

ATTRIBUTES

(noun): characteristics or features



When your youngster makes this word poster, she might list creative among her best attributes.

First, she should write a dozen or more words that describe her (*funny, upbeat, musical*). Then, she can look up each word in a thesaurus for a synonym that she likes better. She could

replace *funny* with *humorous* and *upbeat* with *optimistic*.
 Tip: If there are no synonyms, or if she prefers her original choice, she may keep the word she started with.

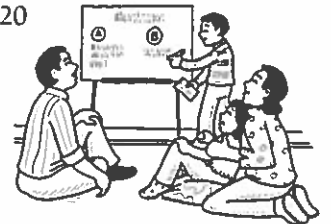
Next, your child should write her name in big fancy letters in the center of a sheet of paper or poster board and fill the space around it with the words from her list. Encourage her to decorate each word, too. For example, she could draw musical notes around *melodious*. Let your youngster hang the completed poster on her bedroom door to introduce exactly who she is!

HORSEFEATHERS

(noun): nonsense words

Is that a real definition, or is it *horsefeathers*? Players must get each other to believe fake definitions to win this game.

Have your youngster list 20 vocabulary words from his science or social studies



book. To play, he selects a word and writes two definitions for it—one that's real and one that he made up. Remind him to make his false definition as realistic as possible! For instance, his definitions for *velocity* might be "how fast something travels" (the real definition) and "extreme speed" (the false one). It's your job to figure out which is the actual definition. If you do, you score a point. If not, your child calls, "Horsefeathers!" and he scores a point.

Then, it's your turn to pick a word and give definitions. High score wins.

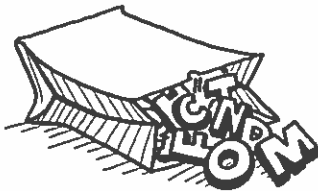
SCRUTINIZE

(verb): to look over carefully

You and your child will have to *scrutinize* letters to make words in this activity.

Have your youngster divide a set of magnetic letters into two bags, vowels in one bag and consonants in another. Then, each of you draws 1 vowel and 4 consonants so that you have 10 letters total to work with. Place all 10 letters on the table between you.

Ask your child to think of a word she can make using the letters and to give you a clue. She might say, "I see a six-letter word that means *graceful* and starts with N." You have one minute to find her word: "Is it *nimble*?" If you do, you score a point. If not, she tells you the word and gets the point. Next, you find a word and give her a clue. Take turns until no more words can be found.

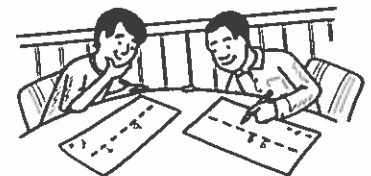


Return the letters to the bag, mix them up, and draw again. Play three rounds, and see who can score the most points.

DEDUCE

(verb): to reach an answer using evidence

The object of this two-player game is to *deduce* your opponent's mystery word—before he discovers yours!



To start, have your youngster pick a number between 4 and 10. Each person should secretly think of a word with that number of letters (say, 8) and draw a blank line for each letter on his paper. Then, take turns guessing a letter that you think might be in the other player's word. If you're correct, he writes the letter where it goes. If not, he writes it on the side (to keep track of letters that have been guessed). For example, if your word is *diameter* and he guesses *e*, fill in the blanks like this: _ _ _ _ e _ e _ .

The first one to figure out the other person's word wins. Write new words, and play again.

The Reading-Writing Link



How can your youngster become a strong, well-rounded writer? By being a strong, well-rounded reader! Experts agree: kids who read frequently—and enjoy a wide variety of materials—are better writers. Try these ideas for helping your child make the important connection between reading and writing.

Letters to the editor

This activity encourages your youngster to read magazine articles and write an opinion piece.

First, have him read a few letters to the editor to see what they include (the writer's views, facts from the article). Then, your child could write a response to an article that interests him. Adding supporting facts from the story will make his letter stronger. *Example:* "Your article stated that the average American drinks 21 gallons of bottled water per year. I think that more people should drink water from reusable bottles to help the environment."

When he's finished, he can proofread his letter for errors and send it off to the address listed in the magazine.



Fan fiction

Trending now: fans writing stories inspired by their favorite books. Is there a book your youngster loves? She could write a story with the same theme—but put her own twist on it.

For example, many books written for kids this age deal with growing up, relationships with parents and friends, or going to school. Her main character may be struggling with middle school friendships like the characters in the book she read, but perhaps she'll set her story in New York City instead of Alaska. Or if the main character is an only child, she can make the girl in her story a twin instead.

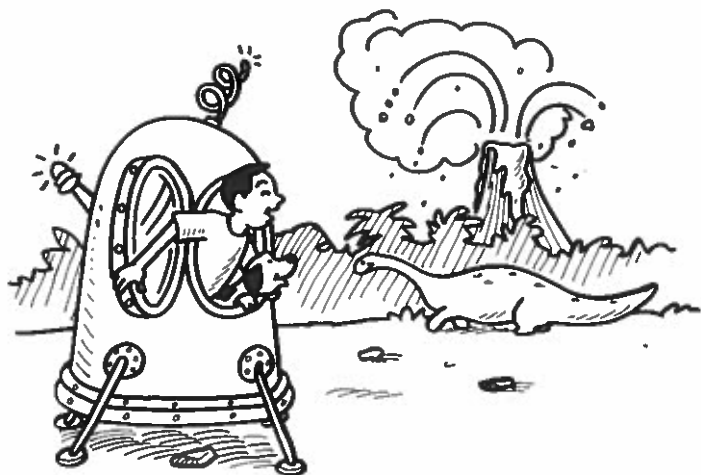
As she explores the original book and decides how to slant her version, her comprehension of the events will deepen. And she just might like her story better than the original one!



New genres

What kind of tales does your youngster usually write? Invite him to take a detour and try something different! For instance, if he normally writes realistic fiction, he could experiment with science fiction or mystery.

continued



To start, let him read a few books in the genre he chooses and think about what the plots have in common. Science fiction often revolves around futuristic science and technology, and it might be set in outer space or in another time. A mystery is centered around a puzzling event (often a crime) and a main character who spends most of the book solving the puzzle.

Once your child has figured out the key ingredients in a genre, he can outline a plot and try his hand at it. Exploring a new genre will give him more outlets for reading *and* writing.

Movie reviews

Reading and writing about movies can add to the enjoyment of watching them.

Suggest that your youngster read newspaper or online reviews of a movie she wants to watch. Encourage her to notice writing techniques like using an attention-grabbing introduction or including only certain details of the plot. Also, what adjectives does she see? Instead of saying a film was *good* or *bad*, the reviewer probably chooses more specific words like *memorable*, *realistic*, or *enthralling*.

Then, after seeing the movie, your child can write her own review. She may use the techniques she observed—or come up with her own. Finally, she could send her review to friends and relatives to help them decide whether to watch the movie.



Success with school papers

When your child has an essay or a report to write, he will first need to do research. Here are tips to help him read source material for the information he needs.

Read, then write. After reading a paragraph or section, have him close the book and write a summary. Using this method—instead of taking notes with the book open—can help him avoid copying word for word. Also, he will be more likely to understand his notes later if he uses his own words.

Stay on topic. Encourage your youngster to write the main idea of his report or essay in big letters on a piece of paper and keep it in sight as he does research. (*Example:* “There are pros and cons to the Electoral College.”) This will keep

him focused on information tied to his topic, since it’s easy to jump from link to link online and wind up in unrelated places. He should also check copyright dates in books and on websites to make sure the information is current.



Compare sources. Suggest that your child read several books or articles to cross-check information and write a factually accurate paper. He could write the “5 W” questions (who, what, when, where, why) down the left side of a sheet of paper and list his sources across the top. Then, he can draw a grid and fill in the boxes with the answers to the questions. Are the answers the same from multiple sources? If so, they’re more likely to be correct.

Word Attack!

Your child is cruising through a book when she suddenly comes to an unfamiliar word. It's like an obstacle in the road, causing her to slow down or stop. Use the ideas in this guide to give her a plan of attack for reading and understanding new words and getting back on track.



Read it aloud

Sometimes your youngster will know a word if he hears it in conversation, but he won't recognize it when he's reading a book silently. Saying the word aloud slowly might help him realize that he knows it after all. Suggest that he start by saying each syllable separately. Then, have him blend the sounds together to see if the word sounds familiar. ("Dis-in-fec-tant. Oh, disinfectant, like a cleaner!")

Use a similar word

Does the unfamiliar word remind your child of a word she knows? If she reads, "The doctor told Maya to *elevate* her broken foot," she might notice that *elevate* sounds similar to *elevator*. Because elevators go up and down, she might realize that *elevate* means "to raise."

Think about the topic

Your youngster's knowledge of a subject can help him unlock mystery words. For example, if he's reading about the solar system and gets stuck on a word

that begins with *a*, he might think of a words that have something to do with outer space (astronaut, astronomy, asteroid). Would one of them make sense in the sentence?

Find a definition

Instead of stopping when she sees a tricky word, encourage your child to read on and come back to it. Sometimes the author will state the definition directly, especially in a textbook or other nonfiction book. *Example*: "A tree's *circumference* can help scientists determine its age. They measure the distance around the trunk. For some trees, 1 inch equals 1 year." (*Circumference* means "distance around.")

continued



Taking words apart

Prefixes, suffixes, and roots can all provide clues to a word's meaning. Suggest that your child try these steps to break words into parts and discover their meanings:

1. When your youngster comes to a tricky word that has a prefix, have her write the word on paper and cover the prefix with a sticky note. (Common prefixes include *ir-*, *im-*, *il-*, *in-*, *re-*, *un-*, and *dis-*.) Then, she can write the meaning of the prefix on the note. For

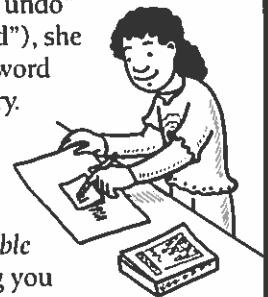
irreversible, she would cover up *ir* and write *not* on the sticky note.

2. If the word has a suffix, have your child cover it up, too. (Frequently used suffixes are *-ing*, *-es*, *-able*, *-ed*, *-ly*, and *-ful*.) For example, she could cover up *ible* in *irreversible* and write *able to* on the sticky note. *Note*: Some words, like *carefully*, have more than one suffix.

3. Once your child has covered the prefix and suffix, only the root (*reverse*)

will be visible. (*Note*: The last letter might be cut off). If she doesn't know the definition ("to undo" or "to go backward"), she can look the root word up in the dictionary.

4. Finally, your youngster can put all three parts together. (*Irreversible* means "something you are not able to undo.")





Try context clues

Your youngster can use clues in the sentence to figure out what a word means. Have him read the sentence, leaving out the unknown word. If he's stuck on *vicinity*, he would read, "Since Charlie lived in the _____ of the mall, we agreed to pick him up on our way." Next, have him try a word that would make sense in the blank: "Since Charlie lived in the *area* of the mall, we agreed to pick him up on our way." (*Vicinity* means "area.")

Search for other uses

Sometimes your child can skip ahead in a paragraph or chapter to see if the word appears again. For instance, the meaning of *migration* isn't clear from a sentence like, "Students tracked the butterflies' *migration*." But the next time the word is used, she might be able to figure it out: "The butterflies will fly thousands of miles during their *migration* from Canada to Mexico." (*Migration* means "journey.")

Go beyond words

Textbooks and novels sometimes include maps, drawings, charts, or photographs that can help your youngster sort out the meaning of a new word. If he gets stuck, suggest that he look through the page for clues to the word. For instance, he might wonder what a mine shaft is. He can use a diagram of a mine to learn that the shaft is a tunnel that miners travel through.

Look it up

Suppose that your child tries several strategies and still can't understand a section because she doesn't know a word. Have her look it up in a dictionary and reread the passage with understanding. If she can make sense of the section without knowing the word's meaning, she might put a sticky note on the word and look it up when she finishes reading. That way, she won't get frustrated by having to stop and start.



Vocabulary games

The more words your youngster recognizes at a glance, the fewer roadblocks he'll encounter when he reads. Try these activities to encourage him to learn new words.

Synonyms

Choose a word, such as *hungry*, and take turns saying synonyms for it (starving, famished, ravenous). Continue until no one can think of a new synonym. Then, check a thesaurus to see if you missed any before picking a new word to try.

Beginnings and endings

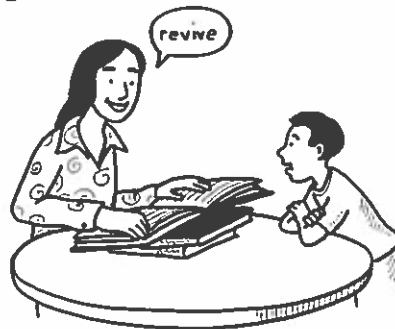
Call out any two letters (*j* and *t*). Ask your child to make a list of words that

begin with the first letter and end with the second. *Examples:* jet, judgment, jolt, jubilant. When he runs out of ideas, he can look in a dictionary for more.

Definitions

Open the dictionary to a random page and choose a word you think your

youngster won't know (*revive*). If he can tell you the definition (bring back to life), he gets to try to stump you. If he doesn't know what the word means, use the dictionary entry to give him clues until he guesses ("*Revive* includes the root word *vive*, which means *to live*").



Headlines

Have your child look through the newspaper for a word with five or more letters (*bicycle*). Encourage him to write his own headline in which each word starts with a letter, in order, from the chosen word ("*Baby Iguanas Can Yodel, Cries Leading Expert*").

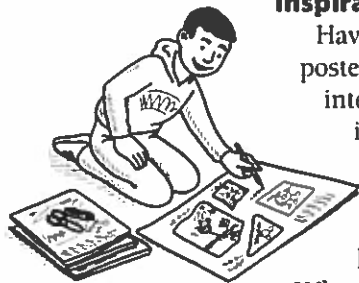
Six Secrets of Writing Success



Creating a top-notch story or report is easier if your youngster knows how to tackle each part of the writing process. Share these six secrets to help him become a better writer.

1 Pick an interesting topic

If your child likes his subject, his enthusiasm will shine through. Here are suggestions he can use to come up with topics that he'll look forward to writing about.



Inspiration poster

Have your youngster make a poster with pictures of things that interest him, such as skateboarding or cats. He can cut photos from old magazines or catalogs or print them from the Internet. Let him hang the poster near his desk.

When he needs a topic to write about, he'll have plenty of ideas to choose from. For example, he might write a story about inventing a new kind of skateboard. Or if he's assigned a report on an animal, he might write about different cat breeds.

Question journal

How does a touch screen work? Why do some people become vegetarians? The things that your child wonders about can make good writing topics. Encourage him to keep a list of his questions in a small notebook. When he has a writing assignment, one of the questions might provide an idea. He could write a report about smartphones or an essay on the pros and cons of eating meat, for instance.

2 Start with a plan

Strong writing flows smoothly from one idea to the next. Your youngster can do her best writing by organizing information before she gets started. Encourage her to try these tools.

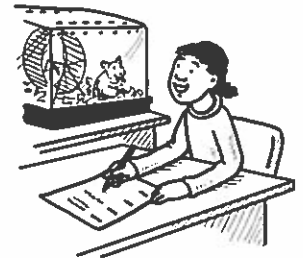
Color-coded facts

Let your child use highlighters to group related ideas. First, have her brainstorm facts about her topic and write them on paper, in any order, as she thinks of them. Then, she can highlight each type of fact in a different color. For instance, if she's

doing a report on butterflies, she might use pink to mark information about diet and green to highlight facts about metamorphosis. As she writes her paper, the colors will make it easy for her to spot which ideas belong together in a paragraph or section.

Story organizer

Your youngster can use transition words, or words that connect ideas, to put story events in a logical order. Before she writes a story, have her list "first," "next," "then," and "finally" down the left side of a sheet of paper. She can ask herself "What happened first?" and "What happened next?" Then, she can write the answer beside each word. ("First, I left my hamster's cage open. Then, I noticed he was missing.")



3 Add variety

Just as it takes blocks of various shapes and sizes to build interesting towers, it takes different lengths and types of sentences to make good paragraphs. Your child can vary his sentences with these tips.

Different beginnings

When your youngster is writing a paper, suggest that he start sentences with different letters of the alphabet. This will help him avoid beginning every sentence with a common word like *the* or *I*. For instance, if he has already used *T* ("There are seven continents"), he wouldn't write, "There are five oceans." Instead, he might write, "Earth also has five oceans."

Statements, questions, and more

Remind your child that there are four kinds of sentences: statements ("I need a break."); commands ("Take a break."); questions ("Can I have a break?"); and exclamations ("Give

continued



me a break!”). A combination of sentence types will add variety to his work. Can he think of ways to include all four in a story?

4 Choose words carefully

When your youngster uses a specific word (balmy) instead of a general one (warm), she creates a clear picture for her reader. Suggest these ideas for making careful word choices.

Precise nouns

Building and *bug* are vague nouns—neither gives a reader much information. Is the building a cabin or a skyscraper? Is the bug an ant or a praying mantis? Have your child reread her draft and try to replace general nouns with more precise ones.

Lively verbs

Interesting verbs help a reader imagine the action. When your youngster finishes writing a story, encourage her to find and circle all the forms of the verb *to be* (*is, am, are, was, were, be, being, been*). Then, she can rewrite the sentences using livelier words. For example, she might turn “Jill was tall” into “Jill towered over the other kids.”

5 Find your voice



Your child’s writing should sound natural—and it should sound like him. Encourage him to develop a writing voice, or style, that lets his personality and creativity show.

Personalized phrases

A cliché is an overused phrase like “once in a blue

moon” or “bright and early.” Together, come up with a list of clichés. Then, have your youngster think of a substitute for each. He might replace “like finding a needle in a haystack” with “like finding a paper clip in a junk drawer.” He can use his replacements instead of clichés when he writes.

Dialogue

Using realistic dialogue is one way for your child to develop his writer’s voice. When he writes dialogue in a story, encourage him to read it aloud. He should ask himself if it sounds like something a person would really say.

6 Proofread

Misspelled words, missing punctuation . . . mistakes happen. Careful proofreading gives a writer a chance to find and fix them before turning in her work. These habits can help your youngster make sure her writing is error-free.

Read and reread

Your child will catch more mistakes if she reads her draft several times, focusing on a different type of error each time. The first time through, she might look for missing words. Then, she can check for incomplete sentences on the second pass and incorrect verb tenses on the third.

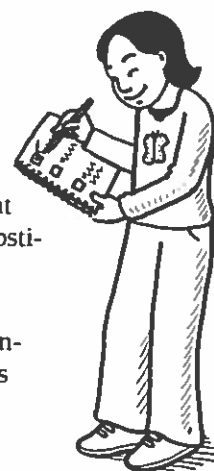
Start at the end

Reading a paper or story backward is a good way to spot spelling and punctuation errors. Have your youngster start at the last word and read until she gets to the first one. This will help her concentrate on one word at a time instead of getting distracted by what the story or report is about.

Use a checklist

Your child can make sure that she doesn’t forget anything with this handy list:

- Are the words spelled correctly? Use a dictionary to check. (When using a computer spell-checker, be sure to use the right word, because it might not catch substitutions such as *there* for *their*.)
- Do the subjects and verbs agree? Read the subject and verb of each sentence aloud. A singular subject needs a singular verb (*Jane scrubs*) while a plural subject needs a plural verb (*Jane and Michael scrub*).
- Is the punctuation correct? Scan to the end of each sentence to make sure there’s a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point. Also, check for correct use of commas, and make sure proper nouns are capitalized.



Keep Them Reading

Ben loved to read when he was in first and second grade. But he seemed to lose interest as he got older. Sports, music, computers, and friends all became more important.

Does this sound familiar? Don't worry—there are plenty of ways to keep your child interested in reading. Here are some ideas.



Look for a hook

Your youngster can enjoy her latest interests and read at the same time. Help her look for books and magazines about hobbies, movies, and more to find something she'll enjoy.

■ Connect reading with your child's activities. If she likes basketball, look for a nonfiction book like *Winning Basketball for Girls* by Faye Young Miller and Wayne Coffey, or a fictional story such as *The Basketball Mystery* by Gertrude Chandler Warner. By trying different genres, she's sure to find something that appeals to her tastes.

■ Comic books like *Scooby-Doo*, *Spiderman*, and *Batman* can be fun reading material for kids who enjoy humor, art, or adventure. You might also encourage your child to try graphic novels like *George's Secret Key to the Universe* by Lucy and Stephen Hawking or *Clan Apis* by Jay Hosler.

Tip: Visit a comic book shop or newsstand to spark his interest.



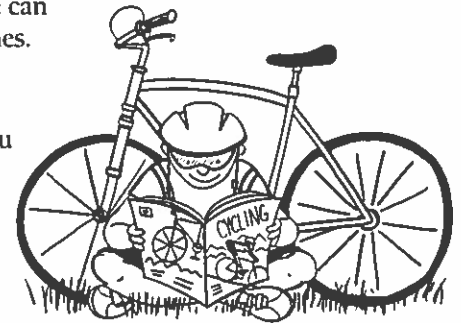
■ Suggest that your youngster read the book of a movie she has seen and loved, such as Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* or Gail Levine's *Ella Enchanted*. Then, introduce other books by the same author, such as Dahl's *Mathilda* or Levine's *The Princess Tales* series.

■ Subscribe to a kids' magazine—your youngster will love getting something with his name on it in the mailbox each month. Plus, magazines are fun and relaxing because they can

be read in bits and pieces. Does your youngster like to go bike riding? Try *Bicycling*. Would he enjoy reading about archaeology? Order *Dig*. Have him see if his friends subscribe to a magazine, and they can swap when they finish. Or visit the library each month so he can read his favorite magazines.

Read with family

Your child may tell you he is too old to be read to. But you can keep reading an important part of your family's life by trying new ways to share books.



■ Have your child read to a younger sibling or cousin. The little one's enthusiasm for books might rub off on him. And he will remember how much he loved favorite childhood stories. Reading aloud will also improve his expression and fluency.

■ Make a reading date with your child. You can spend an evening at the bookstore or an afternoon at the library. Select books and sit in comfortable chairs to read alongside each other. Stop occasionally to share something funny, sad, or interesting, and encourage her to do the same. Even though you're each reading your own book, your youngster will enjoy the company, and you'll set a good example by showing how much you like reading.

■ Form a traveling book club. Rent age-appropriate books on CD or cassette from the library, and listen to them when



■ Volumes of trivia can expand your child's knowledge, entertain him, and give him interesting things to discuss with others. Plus, the short snippets make it easy to fit reading in anytime. Keep a trivia book in the car or bathroom. Look for books with facts, sports details, or world records like *The Everything Kids' Presidents Book* by Brian Thornton or the *All-Star Sports Puzzles* series by Jesse Ross. *Idea:* Help your youngster make a trivia game based on a book. Write questions and answers on index cards, and use a board game from your closet.

■ Starting a collection will open the door to books and other research materials. Say your child collects bugs. Show her books like *Children of Summer: Henri Fabre's Insects* by Margaret J. Anderson and *Insect* by Laurence Mound. Or perhaps she wants to collect snow globes. Encourage her to learn about their history in *Celebrating Snow Globes* by Nina Chertoff or *Snowdomes* by Nancy McMichael.

Then, she can search the Web to find out how to make her own snow globe with small toys, water, vegetable oil, and glitter in an empty baby food jar.

■ Take your youngster to an art museum. Before going, check out library books about an artist whose works you will see. For example, try the Famous Artists series (Baron's Educational Series) to read about Henri Matisse, Claude Monet, or Vincent Van Gogh. On the way to the gallery, you can get your child excited by talking with him about the artist's life story.



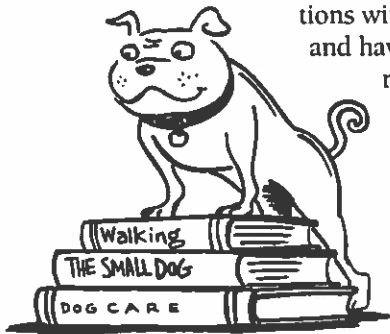
■ Let your youngster plan a theme party. Maybe she'll have a back-to-school party before summer ends, an "unbirthday" party, or a Hawaiian luau. She can choose a theme by reading a book like Amy Vangsgard's *Hit of the Party: The Complete Planner for Children's Theme Birthday Parties*. To come up with activities, she might check out game and craft books such as *Kids' Party Games and Activities* by Penny Warner and *Creative Crafts for Kids* by Gill Dickinson and Cheryl Owen. And she can scan recipes in books like *Kids' Party Cookbook!* by Penny Warner to find the perfect food for her party.

you're in the car. You might fit in one chapter on the way to piano lessons and another while driving to swim practice.

■ Host a story sleepover. As a family, camp out in the backyard and read by flashlight in a tent, or stretch out in sleeping bags on the family-room floor. You can also encourage your youngster to invite a friend over for a reading night. Her pal can bring a story, and they can take turns reading aloud to one another.

Make it practical

Can books help your child achieve goals, start conversations with friends, learn new things, and have fun? Of course! Choose reading materials carefully, and she'll find all sorts of new reasons to read.



■ Show your youngster how reading can help her do something that's important to her. For example, perhaps she wants a pet, and you're

considering the idea. Give her a book on pet care, such as *The Complete Dog Book for Kids* by the American Kennel Club or *How to Choose and Care for a Cat* by Laura Jeffrey. Ask her to tell you what she learns and what responsibilities she would have in living with an animal.