

# Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

January 2016

Keystone Oaks School District

## Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

### ■ *Winter Bees & Other Poems of the Cold* (Joyce Sidman)

How do animals like bees and swans survive the long, cold winter?

This collection of beautiful poems explains that even though we may not see some animals in winter, they are alive—and busy! Includes boxes with scientific facts and a glossary.



### ■ *The Adventures of Beekle: The Unimaginary Friend* (Dan Santat)

On a special island, imaginary friends are born and wait for children to imagine them into the real world. Beekle, an adorable marshmallow-like creature, gets tired of waiting. Read about his adventures as he swims to the real world and meets a little girl who is just right for him.



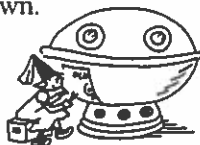
### ■ *Only One You* (Linda Kranz)

Although the characters in this story are made up, your child can use its advice in real life. A boy named Adri listens to his mother and father as they lovingly urge him not to follow the crowd, to look for beauty everywhere, and to make new friends. (Also available in Spanish.)

### ■ *Interstellar Cinderella* (Deborah Underwood)

In this space-age fairy tale, it's Cinderella who rescues the prince. Cinderella loves to repair broken appliances in her stepmother's castle, and her talent comes in handy when the royal spaceship breaks down.

What will happen when the prince asks for Cinderella's hand in marriage?



## Build vocabulary with books

A book is the perfect place to find new words. That's one reason children who love reading tend to have rich vocabularies. Here are ways to help your youngster learn words from books.

### A well-rounded reader

To expose your child to different words, choose different kinds of books to read. For example, in folktales and historical fiction, she may notice old-fashioned words (*alas*, *blacksmith*). In books about plants or animals, she'll see science terms (*sprout*, *nocturnal*). And stories set in other countries can teach her words from around the world (*crepe*, *sari*).

### Vocabulary-rich retellings

While you read to your youngster, help her jot down unfamiliar words. Talk about their meanings, or look them up in a dictionary together. Then, encourage her to retell the story to you—using the words on her list. (“The tortoise moved at a *steady* pace. The hare was too *boastful*.”) Saying the words in sentences of



her own will help her understand and remember them.

### Favorite words

Ask your child to pick out her favorite new word in a book, and have her be on the lookout for the same word in other books or in conversation. For instance, she might read about a “*precious* little kitten” and notice “*precious* gems” in a non-fiction book on minerals. Seeing and hearing a word in various settings can help her “get” all its meanings. *Idea:* Suggest that she draw pictures showing a word in several contexts. ♥

## Sentence “first aid”

An author's job isn't finished when he writes the last word—he still needs to edit! Encourage your child to practice editing by using fun first-aid supplies to fix sentences.

Start by having him put punctuation marks (periods, commas, quotes, question marks, exclamation points) on small bandages. Also, get cotton balls and a spray bottle of water.

Then, write a sentence on a dry-erase board or chalkboard, making a few mistakes for him to correct (uncapitalized name, missing punctuation). He can use wet cotton balls to clean up “boo-boos,” write his corrections, and add bandages to punctuate your sentence properly. Next, let him write a sentence for you to fix.

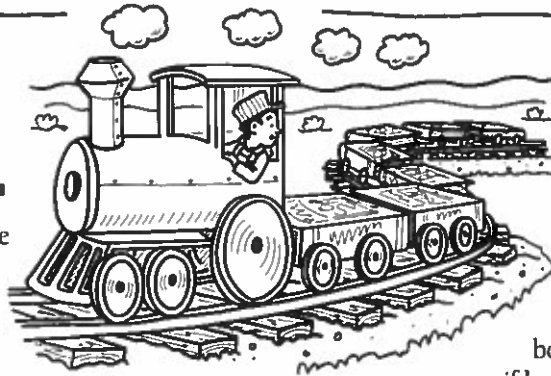
*Note:* Have him remove only half of the paper backing so bandages can be removed from the board more easily. ♥



# This book reminds me of...

Making connections between two or more books, or “text-to-text” connections, can boost your youngster’s reading comprehension. Try these ideas.

**Connection train.** Suggest that your child line up books that are connected into a “train.” For example, he might put *Beezus and Ramona* (Beverly Cleary) next to *Where the Wild Things Are* (Maurice Sendak) and say, “They both have kids with big imaginations.” Perhaps he’ll place *Franklin’s Baby Sister* (Paulette Bourgeois) next because it and



*Beezus* are both about getting along with younger siblings. How long can your youngster make his book connection train?

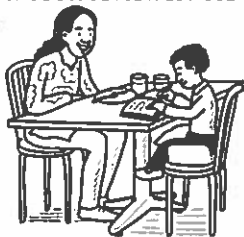
**Book pairs.** Let your child pick out a fiction book and a nonfiction book that are related. For instance, if he chooses a story with kangaroo or koala characters, he could find a nonfiction book on Australia or marsupials. Read both books together, and ask him to tell you how the fiction and facts are connected. (“Real koalas love to be around other koalas, just like the ones in the storybook.”)♥



## Q&A Be a reviewer

**Q** My son loves to write stories, but he’s not as excited about opinion writing—which his class is doing a lot of this year. How can I help him enjoy it more?

**A** Would your son like to be a food critic? How about a book reviewer? He can practice sharing his opinion by writing reviews.



First, suggest that he jot down notes while eating in a restaurant or reading a book. He might write, “Creamy cheese sauce, spiral pasta too chewy” or “Funny part on page 4.” Then, help him write his review, using his notes to back up his opinions. What kind of noodle would have been better with the sauce? Why did he think the book was funny?

Finally, let him mail or email the review to his friends or relatives. He could ask them to reply with their own opinions, and that may motivate him to write more opinions in the future.♥

### OUR PURPOSE

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

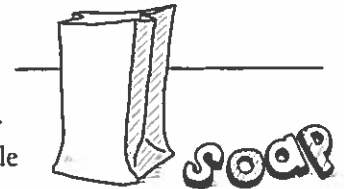
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## Play with letter patterns

Encourage your child to explore common letter patterns that can help her recognize words. Play this game together.

1. Get a set of magnetic letters or letter tiles. Have your youngster lay a, e, i, o, u, and y (the vowels) on the table and place the consonants in a paper bag.
2. Ask your child to pull two consonants from the bag and put them on the table.
3. She should combine those two letters with any two vowels to make a four-letter word. (A younger child can use one vowel to make a three-letter word.) If she draws s and p, for example, she could make soap. Help her say the word—she will hear that oa makes the long o sound.
4. Then, she puts the vowels back. Take turns using the same consonants and any two vowels to form new words (say, pose or pics).
5. When you can’t make any more words, return the consonants to the bag. Pick two new ones, and play again.♥



## Stellar speaking roles

Good oral language skills help lay the foundation for reading and writing. Suggest that your youngster take on these fun roles to practice speaking.

**Your guide.** Let your child take you on a tour of your neighborhood or town. She can point out landmarks, businesses, and tourist attractions. (“And here’s our legendary Pancake Palace.”)

**Auctioneer.** Have your youngster pretend she is auctioning off household items. Her job is to describe each

item, take bids, and announce, “Going once, going twice, sold!”

**Air traffic controller.** Ask your child to give you instructions for flying a toy or paper airplane. She’ll need to speak clearly and be specific about when you should take off, how high to fly, and where to land.

**Weather reporter.** Help your youngster check the weather forecast for tomorrow. In her own words, she can give a bedtime report so everyone can choose the right clothes for the next day.♥



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Working Together for Learning Success

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## Book Picks

### ■ *Mudville* (Kurtis Scaletta)

It has been raining for 22 years in Roy McGuire's hometown, interfering with the 12-year-old's dream of playing baseball. The rain suddenly stops when Roy's new foster brother arrives, ending what some called a curse. Sturgis isn't easy to get along with, but as Roy discovers when he puts together a team, the boy can throw a baseball.



### ■ *Fearless! Stunt People* (Jessica Cohn)

How do stunt performers survive death-defying tricks? This nonfiction book explains how they spend years training and learning safety precautions. Read about different fields in the stunt world and the history of the profession, too. (Also available in Spanish.)



### ■ *The Geography Book: Activities for Exploring, Mapping, and Enjoying Your World* (Caroline Arnold)

This collection of hands-on geography projects lets readers discover maps, landforms, water, and weather. Follow step-by-step instructions and use household items to make a balloon globe, salt crystals, a mini-greenhouse, and more.

### ■ *Words with Wings* (Nikki Grimes)

Gabby's daydreams help her escape from real life after her parents split up and she moves to another town. When her new teacher reaches out, Gabby discovers that her vivid daydreams can make her a good writer—and that writing gives her strength. A novel written as a series of poems from Gabby's point of view.



## Read-alouds for big kids

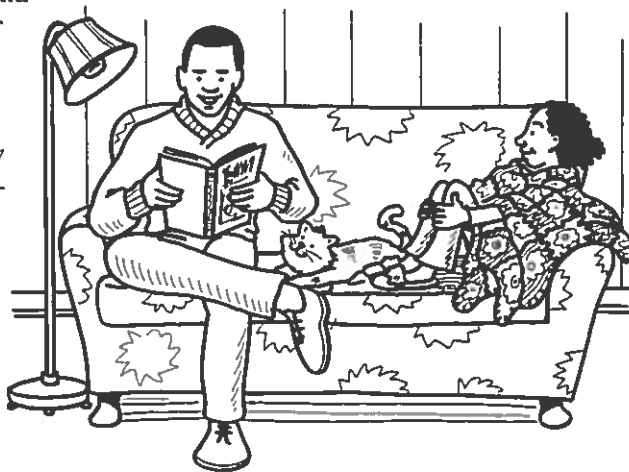
Reading aloud to your child is entertaining and helps her grow as a reader, no matter how old she is. Expose her to more complex plots and new vocabulary—and enjoy discussing books together—with these ideas.

### Choose challenging books

Sometimes, pick books that are a little above your youngster's reading ability (you can ask a librarian for advice). For example, understanding a plot that goes back and forth in time may be easier for her if you read it aloud. As her comprehension and vocabulary grow, she'll start to read more complex books by herself.

### Learn together

If you come to a word you don't know or a sentence or paragraph you don't understand, say so. Then, try to figure it out along with your child. You might look up the word in a dictionary or reread the passage, for instance. She'll see that there



are strategies she can try when she gets stumped while reading alone.

### Talk it over

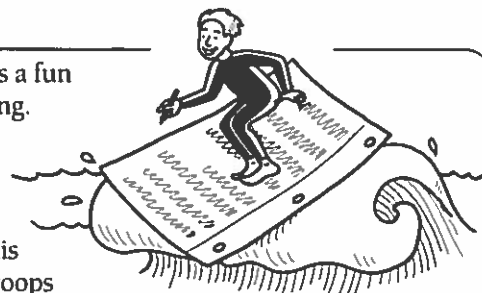
After you finish a book, discuss it. Which character would you like to trade places with? What do you imagine the story's setting looks like? Talking allows your youngster to think more deeply about the plot. *Tip:* For more ideas, look for reader's guides with discussion questions in the book or on the publisher's website. 📖

## An alternate ending

Making up a new ending for a book is a fun way for your youngster to practice writing. Here are two approaches he might take:

- Suggest that he change the ending completely. Maybe he is sad that the pet died, and he wants a happy ending. In his new chapter, perhaps the pet's owner swoops in at the last second to prevent an accident.

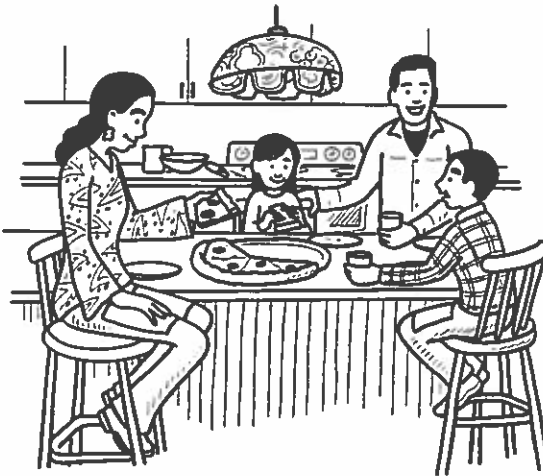
- Encourage him to write an additional chapter that continues the action and wraps it up. Based on what he knows about the characters, what does he think they will do next? A teenage character who loves surfing could become a professional surfer or an instructor as an adult, for instance. 📖




# Tips for family conversations

Everyday conversation develops your youngster's speaking, listening, and thinking skills. Use these strategies from other parents to keep family chats from fizzling out.

**Quiet space.** "Distractions were a big issue whenever I tried to start conversations with my son Jake. Now when we sit down to talk, anything with a screen—phones, computers, video games—is turned off and put away. That way we focus on each other."



**Interesting topics.** "Like many families, a lot of our discussions revolve around homework, chores, and who needs a ride to where. We agreed to set that stuff aside at dinner and talk about something different for a change. Now, we choose topics like current events, animals, or science. We learn from each other, and the kids really enjoy our discussions."

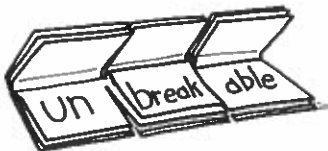
**On track.** "Our toughest problem was getting our youngest to stay on topic. To practice, we take turns talking and see how many turns we can go without changing the subject. Sometimes I ask questions to help him, such as 'What do you think about that idea?' or 'Could you explain that a little?' It lets him know I'm listening and keeps him focused." 


## Fun with Words Make a flip book

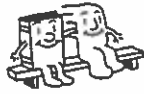
Breaking words into parts makes it easier for your child to *decode*, or figure out, their meanings. Suggest that she create this flip book to practice using prefixes, suffixes, and root words.

Ask your youngster to stack three sheets of paper, fold them in half horizontally, and staple along the fold. Keeping the pages folded, she should make two vertical cuts through all the layers (stopping just before the fold) to create three flaps.

On each flap on the left side, she can write a different prefix: *re*, *un*, *dis*, *de*, *in*, *pre*. Each flap on the right gets a suffix: *tion*, *able*, *ful*, *ed*, *ing*, *er*. On the center flaps, have her write root words that will go with the prefixes, suffixes, or both. For instance, *play* would go with *re* (*replay*) or *ful* (*playful*), and *break* will go with both *un* and *able* (*unbreakable*).




Can she use every prefix or suffix at least once? Let her flip through and write down each word to see all the ones she made. 



## Learning to synthesize

When a reader adjusts her thinking over the course of a book to include new ideas and information, she is *synthesizing*. This "ripple chart" can help your youngster if she is asked to synthesize for a school assignment.

After she reads the first chapter of a book, she could write her impression of what's going on in a small circle in the center of her paper. ("I think *The Giver* by Lois Lowry is about a perfect world because no one feels pain.") Each time her thinking changes, have her draw a larger ring around the circle and write her revised thoughts. ("It appears perfect on the surface, but it's disturbing that citizens can't choose their own careers.")

Her completed chart will show how her thinking developed and changed as she read. 




## Q&A Books for life's challenges

**Q** My son seems drawn to books with heavy topics like kids getting cancer or becoming orphans. Should I be concerned?

**A** It's common for children to use books as a safe way to explore sad or frightening issues. And indeed, many popular books for young readers address these topics.

If you see your son reading a book on a tough subject, invite him to tell you about it. He might be

worried that something similar will happen to him. Sharing his feelings could help relieve anxiety and clear up any misconceptions he may have.

Also, encourage him to focus on the strength that characters showed and on ways they handled the obstacles they faced. For example, a character may have formed a relationship with another child going through the same thing. Your son will learn life lessons through the books he's choosing. 



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