

# Let's Play

It takes all kinds of words—big and small—to build a strong vocabulary. Enjoy these games and activities together as you help your youngster learn sight words, opposites, and more!



## Sight-word hunt

Send your child on a scavenger hunt through picture books to grow his sight-word vocabulary. (Note: Sight words are ones that appear frequently like *a*, *for*, *now*, or *and*. For a list, look online or ask your youngster's teacher.)

You'll need six sticky notes per player and several picture books to share. Write a different sight word on each note. Then, divide the notes evenly among players. Each player tries to match the words on his notes with words in a book. Stick the notes on the pages, and the first person to get rid of all his notes wins—and reads the words aloud. Make more notes, and play again.



## Antonyms and synonyms

It's easier for your youngster to understand the meaning of a new word if she can relate it to a word she already knows. Play with *antonyms* (opposites) and *synonyms* (words with the same or similar meanings) to expand her vocabulary.

Think of a word your child uses often, such as *huge*. Then, take turns rolling a die. If you roll an even number (2, 4, 6), say an antonym for the word (*tiny*, *minuscule*, *small*). If you roll an odd number (1, 3, 5), say a synonym (*gigantic*, *enormous*, *big*). How many times can you go back and forth before you run out of words?

## Alliteration alley

"Josh and Jamie did jumping jacks in the jungle!" Sentences with *alliteration*—or words that start with the same sound—

are fun to say and let your child use letter sounds to think of new words.

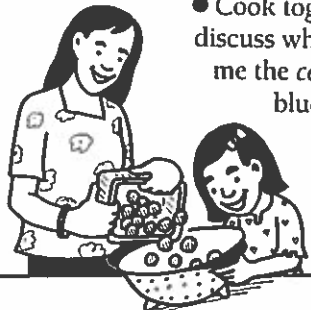
Have your youngster choose a letter (say, P). The first player gives a word beginning with the letter (*purple*). The second person adds a word that starts with the same sound (*purple pancakes*).

The next player adds another word (*peculiar purple pancakes*), and so on. A player is out when he cannot think of a new word or remember all the old ones. Words may be added in any order—at the beginning or end of the sequence or anywhere in the middle. The last person in the round gets to turn the words into a sentence. ("Purple pancakes are peculiar for penguins to prepare.")

## Weave in words

The best way for your youngster to remember what new words mean is to hear them used in context. Everyday conversations offer an easy way to make this happen:

- In the car, talk about things you see, such as budding trees or tall buildings. ("Wow, look at the *buds*! It seems like just yesterday the trees were *bare*.")
- Cook together, and use new words to discuss what you're doing. ("Please hand me the *colander* so I can rinse the *blueberries*.")



- At bedtime, ask about your child's day and tell what happened during yours. ("I had a busy day at work—the store was *bustling* with customers. What was your day like?")

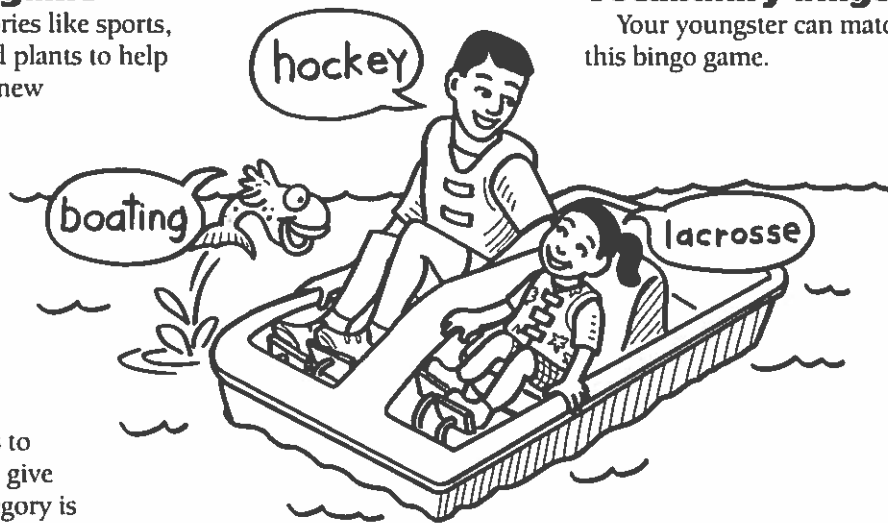
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## The category game

Use familiar categories like sports, clothing, vehicles, and plants to help your youngster learn new words. Let her pick the categories, and then take turns calling out items that belong.

For example, sports words might include *baseball*, *hockey*, *lacrosse*, and *football*. If your child struggles to come up with a word, give her hints. Say the category is plants. You could ask, "What's the name of the flower Grandma showed you in her yard last week?" The last person to come up with a word that fits picks the next category.

*Idea:* For a bigger challenge, make the categories more specific (sports that don't use a ball, plants we eat).



## Vocabulary bingo

Your youngster can match words and definitions in this bingo game.

Have each player make a bingo card with four rows of four boxes each. Use your child's spelling or vocabulary lists, and write each word in any box on your card.

Let one person be the "caller." He uses a dictionary and reads the definitions of the words, one at a time, without revealing the words. Players

cover the correct word on their cards with a bingo chip or another marker (jelly bean, marshmallow). Be the first to fill four boxes across, down, or diagonally, and yell, "Word bingo!" Then, read your winning words aloud and say what they mean.

## Pickup words

Your child uses a *faucet* every day—but does she know that's what it's called? This version of pickup sticks can teach her new terms.



You'll need 24 craft sticks and a marker or pen. On each stick, write the name of a household object that your youngster might not know. *Examples:* *grater*, *ottoman*, *duvet*. To play, drop the sticks into a heap. The first player tries to pick up one stick without moving any of the others. If she succeeds, help her read the word, and give hints for where to find the item. ("We put our feet on it when we sit on the couch.") Seeing the object after learning what it's called is a good way for her to remember the word.

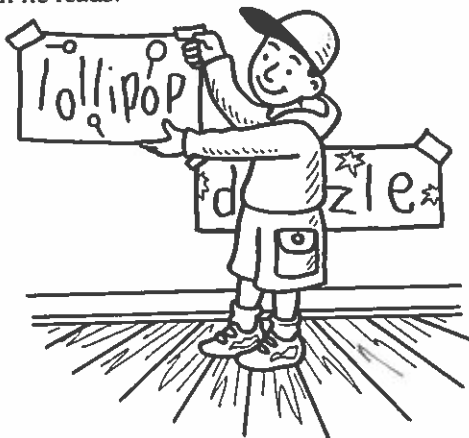
If a player moves another stick, her turn is over. Keep playing until all the sticks are gone. The player with the most sticks wins. *Note:* When no one can pick up a stick without disturbing the other ones, scatter them again.

## My word wall

Stimulate your child's vocabulary *and* his creativity by creating a wall of words.

Together, look through a dictionary, and let him list words he likes. *Examples:* *dazzle*, *lollipop*, *whirl*. Read each definition together, and have him write the words in large letters on poster board. Then, suggest that he draw pictures or use stickers to illustrate the words' meanings. He might draw himself on a carnival ride and add arrows to show *whirl*. Hang the posters around his room. He will have eye-catching words to learn and enjoy!

*Tip:* Encourage your youngster to add new words to his wall when he reads.



# Be a Reading Star

## 2016 EDITION

Ready, set, read! Challenge your child to be a reading star. Simply begin with this great list of fiction and non-fiction books, have her choose one, and she's on her way. She can use the log on the back to keep track.



### **Waiting** (Kevin Henkes)

Every day, five friends (who happen to be toys) sit in the window and wait. See what the puppy, bear, pig, owl, and rabbit each wait for and what happens when visitors appear. This sweet story teaches lessons about waiting and patience.

### **What if You Had Animal Teeth?** (Sandra Markle)

Discover why animals have different types of teeth—then imagine those teeth on a human! Combining facts with fictional scenarios, this book teaches your youngster about teeth of animals like narwhals and rattlesnakes. And he'll get pointers on taking care of his own teeth, too.

### **Art from Her Heart** (Kathy Whitehead)

Clementine Hunter taught herself how to paint and make art from whatever materials she could find. When her artwork finally made it into a museum, she wasn't allowed in because of the color of her skin. Learn about the life and work of the American folk artist through this beautifully illustrated biography.



### **Squeak, Rumble, Whomp! Whomp!** (Wynton Marsalis)

Go on this "sonic adventure" with a little boy from New Orleans as he listens for all the sounds around him. Your child will enjoy the "Bum! Brrrum BRRRUMBLE!" of the big bass drum and the "jurr jurr" of the barber's clippers in this onomatopoeia-filled book by a famous trumpeter.

### **If You Lived Here: Houses of the World** (Giles Laroche)

Does your youngster wonder what houses look like around the world? In this nonfiction book, she'll see chalets in the mountains of Switzerland and visit a yurt in Mongolia. Filled with facts about the names of homes, materials used to build them, when they were first built, and more.

### **Maple** (Lori Nichols)



Maple is named after the tree her parents planted when she was a baby. As Maple grows, so does her tree. She sings to it and sometimes even pretends to be a tree. Then one day, Maple's parents surprise her with a new tree—and a new little sister. The first book in the Maple and Willow series. (Also available in Spanish.)

### **Ralph Tells a Story** (Abby Hanlon)

Ralph needs to write a story for school, but unlike all of his classmates, he can't come up with an idea. Then, everything changes the day he hides under his desk to avoid writing—and inspiration hits in the form of an inchworm. Includes "Writing Tips from Ralph" at the end of the story.

### **Rocks: Hard, Soft, Smooth, and Rough**

(Natalie M. Rosinsky)

Your child can read all about rocks in this nonfiction book that's part of the Amazing Science series. She'll see pictures of different kinds of rocks and learn to identify them. Contains a glossary and fun activities. (Also available in Spanish.)



### **The Popcorn Astronauts and Other Biteable Rhymes** (Deborah Ruddell)

Reading these poems might make you and your youngster hungry since they are all about food! Enjoy imaginative poems with lip-smacking titles like "Only Guacamole!" and "Voyage of the Great Baked Potato Canoes." The rhyming poems are organized by season.




# My Reading Log



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	Title	Author
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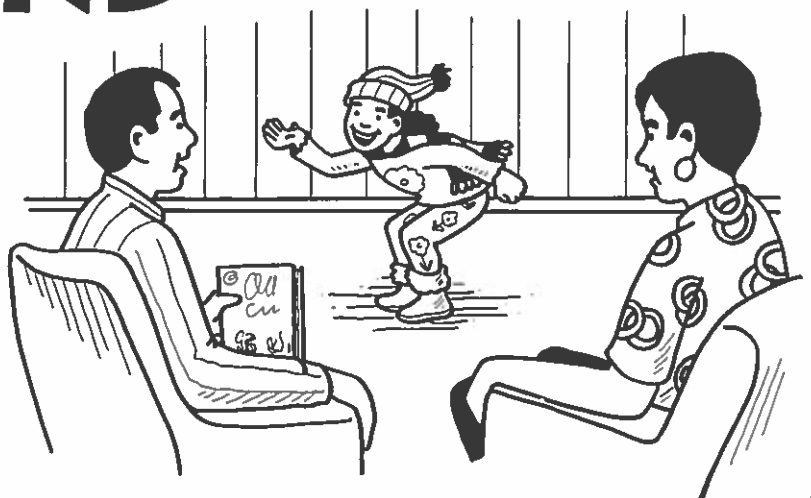
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# TELLING AND WRITING STORIES

Get your child's story wheels spinning! With these ideas for telling and writing stories, you will spark her imagination as she builds oral language, fluency, and creative writing skills.



## TALES TO TELL

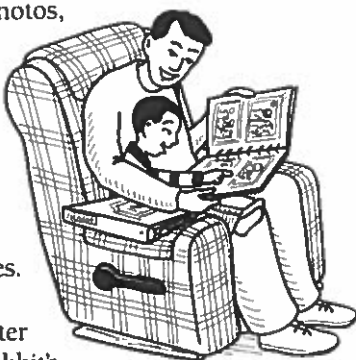
### PICTURE-BOOK THEATER

Let your youngster warm up her storytelling muscles by acting out a favorite book. Start by reading the book aloud a few times. Then, have her ham it up! What voices, facial expressions, and gestures will she use to bring the characters to life? If she's reading *Go, Dog. Go!* (P. D. Eastman), she may pretend to be the skiing dog and say, "Do you like my hat?" *Idea:* Film her so she can watch and see parts she might want to change. When she's ready, she could tell her story to family members.

### STORIES ALL AROUND

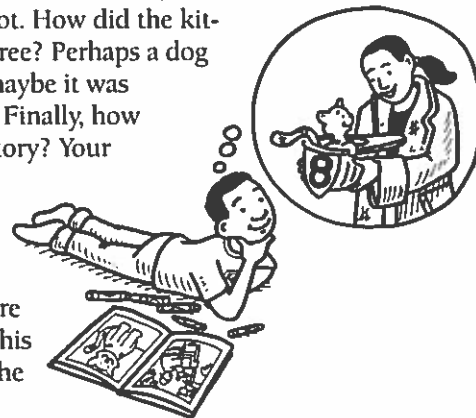
Storytelling can happen anytime, anywhere. Here are four opportunities.

1. While playing, ask your youngster to make up an adventure at his toy construction site or Lego fortress.
2. Snuggle up with family photos, and share stories about the memories they trigger.
3. Attend puppet shows, plays, or ballets, and let your child retell the story afterward.
4. Invent silly bedtime stories. Yours might feature a flying umbrella, while your youngster could tell about his stuffed rabbit's escapades in the forest.



### COLORING-BOOK PROMPTS

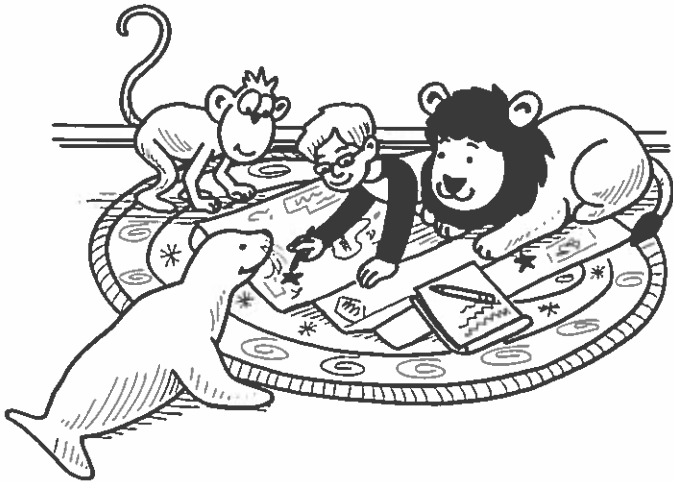
Relax together by coloring in coloring books. Then, use your pictures as story prompts. Say your child colors a picture of a firefighter saving a kitten stuck high in a tree. Whose point of view does he want to tell the story from—the firefighter's or the kitten's? How would his story change depending on which way he tells it? Next, he should imagine a plot. How did the kitten wind up in the tree? Perhaps a dog chased it there, or maybe it was looking for a home. Finally, how will he resolve his story? Your youngster may come up with a happy ending like "The kitten went to live at the fire station." As he tells his story, he can show the picture he colored.



### ABC STORY

For this family storytelling activity, let your child print each letter of the alphabet on a separate index card. Shuffle the cards, and stack them facedown. The first person takes one and begins a story based on that letter. For X, she might say, "One day, a boy discovered a magical xylophone." Lay the card faceup on the table. The next person draws a new letter, places it beside the first, and continues the story. For H, she could add, "The boy got on his horse to carry the xylophone to town." Keep going until you've used 10 cards. The last person wraps up the tale. Then, choose a new letter, and start another story.

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## STORIES TO WRITE

### MAP ADVENTURES

Save maps from places you visit like the zoo, a state park, or a museum. When you get home, your youngster can write a story about his trip and use the map to keep it in sequence. First, have him trace his route with a crayon and add a star for each place you stopped. On a zoo map, he may star the petting zoo, the giraffe exhibit, and the lion's den. Next, ask your child to dictate or write a sentence or two about each stop. Remind him to use sequence words (*first, then, next, last*) to make his story flow well. "First, we stopped at the petting zoo. The goats smelled funny, and their coats were scratchy." Help him read his story aloud, pointing to the map for reference.

### CHARACTER COMBOS

Suggest that your youngster write a "mash-up" story—combining characters from two different books. For instance,

she might have Amelia Bedelia throw a birthday party for Fancy Nancy. When your child has a rough draft, she can draw pictures to go with it. Encourage her to look at her drawings for details she could add to improve her tale. Perhaps she'll change "Amelia put icing on the cake" to be more descriptive: "Amelia put swirly pink icing on the three-layer cake." After she reworks her story, staple her pages and illustrations together to make a book.

### MISSING PIECES

Laugh out loud—and help your youngster practice using parts of speech—with this silly Mad Libs-style game. Let him think of a story idea (an underwater adventure, a cookie theft). Then, each of you write your own fill-in-the-blank story on the topic, replacing each noun with a blank labeled *person, place, or thing*. Example: "One morning, \_\_\_\_\_ (*person*) woke up and got ready for his trip to \_\_\_\_\_ (*place*). When he arrived, he saw purple \_\_\_\_\_ (*things*) glowing in the water." Without giving away your stories, ask the other person to supply a noun for each blank ("I need a person's name, now a place," and so on). Trade papers, and read the funny tales aloud. *Idea:* Write new stories, leaving the verbs (action words) or the adjectives (describing words) blank.



## FINDING INSPIRATION

Spark your youngster's imagination with these ideas for starting stories:

- Together, write 10–20 "what if" questions on slips of paper. Examples: "What if trees talked?" "What if butterflies were as big as cars?" Store the slips in a clean plastic jar. Your child can choose one when she wants to write.
- On walks, take turns dreaming up tales about things you see along the way. Maybe an invisible elephant dented that mailbox on the corner, for example. Help your youngster write the stories down when you get home.



- Mix up the cards from a Memory game. Have your child pick three at random—say a fish, an ice-cream cone, and a tricycle—and weave them into a story.

- List and number six problems that could make a good story. Examples:

1. Mysterious noise
2. Lost key
3. The grass turns blue

Let your youngster roll a die and write a tale matching the number she rolled (roll a 1, and write about a mysterious noise).

# How to Navigate Nonfiction

Exploring a nonfiction book is like going on an expedition. There are places to visit, sights to see, and fascinating things to learn. Before your youngster embarks on her next nonfiction journey, suggest she chart her course with these tips and ideas.



## Choose a destination

With fiction, your child starts at the beginning and reads to the end. But for nonfiction, he might jump around to look for specific information. Browsing through the table of contents will help him decide where to look. For example, if he's researching tornadoes in a book on extreme weather, the table of contents may steer him to a chapter titled "Mighty Twisters."

*Idea:* Before your youngster picks out a book, encourage him to jot down notes about what he wants to know. He could write, "Everyday life on a submarine," and then compare the tables of contents in various books to find the best fit.

## Take a shortcut

Sometimes all your child wants is one specific fact. For a STEM research paper, perhaps she needs to know about the design of the sails used on Viking ships. A book's index will guide her to that information fast. It lists topics in alphabetical order, along with their page numbers. Your youngster



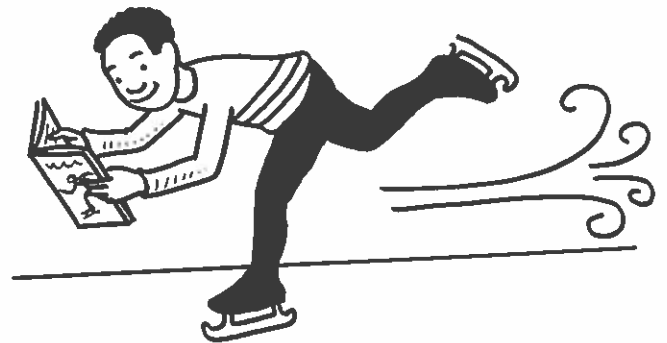
would flip to the index of a book about Vikings, skim down the entries to find *ships*, then to the sub-listing *sails*, and turn to the pages listed.

*Idea:* Practice using an index together by going on fact-finding missions. Browse a nonfiction book with an index, and name a fact covered. For instance,

you could ask her to find information on solar flares in a book about the sun. It's your child's mission to use the index and locate the fact. Then, let her send you on a fact-finding mission.

## Follow an itinerary

Authors use headings and subheads (often a word or a short phrase) like signposts to guide readers to the text they want to find. Your youngster can read them first and jump to



the sections that interest him. If he wants to learn how to become a competitive speed skater, he might skim a biography of his skating hero to find headings and subheads about how that skater trained.

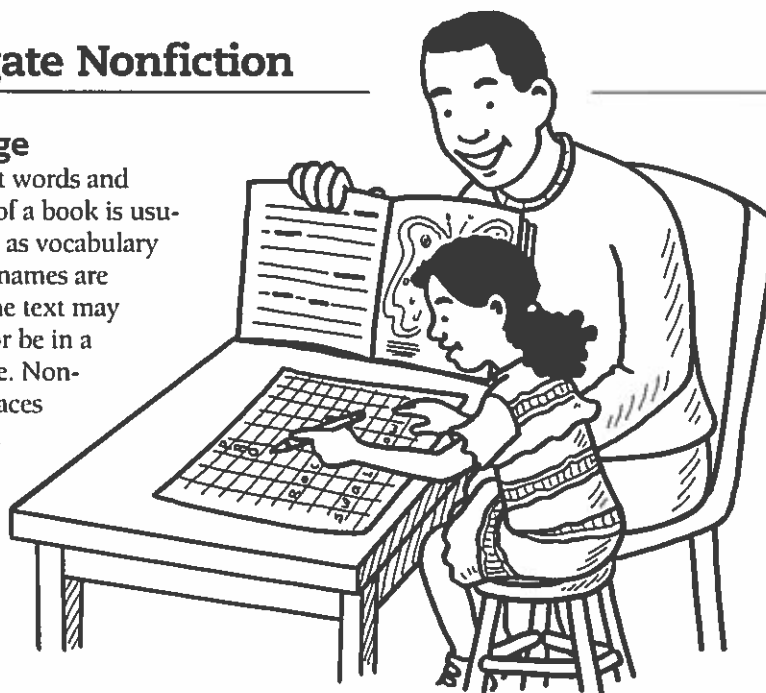
*Idea:* Recommend that your child make fact cards using headings and subheads. He could rewrite them as *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, or *why* questions on separate index cards. Then, have him answer with the facts he learns as he reads. For a report on Florence Nightingale, he may turn a "School days" subhead into "Where did Florence Nightingale go to school?"

*continued*

## Learn the language

Spotting the important words and phrases within a section of a book is usually easy. Keywords, such as vocabulary terms, dates, places, and names are designed to stand out. The text may appear in **bold** or *italic*, or be in a different color or font size. Nonfiction uses various typefaces as a way of saying, “Look at me! I’m important!” For instance, if your youngster is reading about the International Space Station, she could look for the keyword *orbit* to learn the path the station travels.

*Idea:* Turn keywords into crossword puzzles for each other to solve. Arrange the words into a hand-drawn grid on graph paper, or make one online at [abcya.com/crossword\\_puzzle\\_maker.htm](http://abcya.com/crossword_puzzle_maker.htm). Then, use facts from the text as clues. If a keyword is *proboscis*, your child might consult the book and write “the long, thin tube that forms part of a butterfly’s mouth” as the clue. When your puzzles are complete, create blank versions, swap, and solve.



subject he enjoys like karate or cooking. Have him hunt for graphics—how many kinds can he find?

## View the exhibits

Encourage your youngster to look closely at illustrations in nonfiction books and also to read their captions. Together, they provide explanations that will improve her understanding of the material. For example, a photo may illustrate how gears work, while the caption explains the different parts shown.

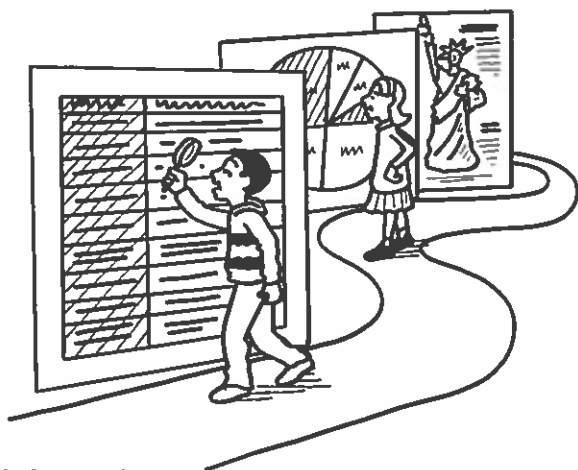
*Idea:* Organizing family photos gives your child a chance to think

about captions. Gather photos, and collaborate on writing captions that explain the pictures, adding names and facts that will bring them to life.

## Take a side trip

Sidebar are mini-articles related to the main text. They hold fascinating facts, anecdotes, or activities. In a book on magnets, your youngster may find a sidebar with instructions for a magnetic-poles experiment to try at home.

*Idea:* When your child reads nonfiction about a favorite subject, challenge him to create sidebars that could be in the book but aren’t. For a book about writing fiction, he might dream up a sidebar of fun writing prompts or one with clever ways to remember grammar rules.



## Go sightseeing

Diagrams, maps, graphs, charts, and time lines are graphics that make up the “scenery” in a nonfiction text. They’re not only interesting to look at, they pack a large amount of information into a small space. For instance, your youngster may interpret data in a sports almanac graph to compare the popularity of baseball in various countries. Or he could examine a diagram of the Statue of Liberty to understand how the pieces were assembled.

*Idea:* Let your child explore how graphics are used in nonfiction with a treasure hunt. Start with library books about a

## Extra! Extra! Read more about it!

Nonfiction books may ignite your child’s passion for a topic. Encourage her to check the back pages for these “extra” features that offer ideas for additional things to read.

● **Source list.** Articles, books, and papers the author cited.

● **Bibliography.** Books the author used for research.

● **Further reading.** A recommended list of books, magazines, and websites about the same subject.

● **Author’s biography.** Titles of the author’s other books might be found here (or in a list at the front of the book).





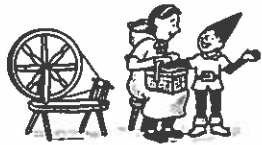
# Be a Reading Star

## 2016 Edition

Want your child to be a reading star? Easy. Have him pick books from our list, read them, and log the titles and authors on page 2. He's sure to love this terrific assortment of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry.



### **Rump: The True Story of Rumpelstiltskin** (Liesl Shurtliff)



Enter a fantasy world where fairy tale favorites come together and we learn the backstory of Rumpelstiltskin. Follow Rump (as he's known in his younger years) while

he tries to find out about his mom and where his name comes from. With the help of his only friend, Red (Riding Hood), Rump takes on villains and discovers his secret gift.

### **Joelito's Big Decision/La Gran Decisión de Joelito** (Ann Berlak)

When Joelito and his family show up at Sam McMann's—their favorite Friday night burger spot—they are surprised to see the workers protesting. Joelito learns that his friend Brandon's parents work there and don't make fair wages. He must decide if he will stand with his friend and the workers or ignore them and have his usual burger. This story is told in English and Spanish.

### **The 50 States: Explore the U.S.A. with 50 Fact-Filled Maps** (Gabrielle Balkan)

Your youngster will get to know the states with this colorful book. She can explore each state and learn interesting facts like the official neckwear of Arizona (the bola tie) and that Tongass National Forest in Alaska is as big as West Virginia. Also includes pictures of all the state flags.



### **Lemonade and Other Poems Squeezed from a Single Word** (Bob Raczka)

The poems in this book are more than just poems—they're puzzles! Each poem has words that use the letters from one word, and the reader must guess what the word is (answers can be found on the back page). When your child finishes reading, he can get creative and write his own puzzle poem.

### **The Day-Glo Brothers** (Chris Barton)

Has your youngster ever wondered where fluorescent colors came from? Joe and Bob Switzer were two brothers who had different plans for themselves but ended up inventing the day-glo colors we see so often today. This nonfiction book tells the story of their lives and the invention that brightened up the world.

### **Jokelopedia: The Biggest, Best, Silliest, Dumbest Joke Book Ever!** (Eva Blank)

This jam-packed joke book is sure to have you and your child laughing! You won't find your ordinary jokes here, but instead "Tall Tails" about animals with attitude, "Classy Jokes," and "Monster-osities," to name a few. A great way to explore puns and wordplay.



### **Wangari Maathai: The Woman Who Planted Millions of Trees** (Franck Prévot)

Learn about the fascinating life of a Kenyan woman named Wangari Maathai. Wangari had the idea to plant trees to address political and environmental issues facing her country. This beautifully illustrated nonfiction book follows her life from being a little girl who wasn't allowed to go to school to winning the Nobel Peace Prize for helping the environment.

### **El Deafo** (Cece Bell)

In this graphic novel, the author tells the true story of how she lost her hearing after an illness at just four years of age. Cece had to wear a very obvious hearing aid called the Phonic Ear. While it made her feel even more different than her classmates, it also gave her a "superpower." This humorously told autobiography takes on the serious issues Cece had to deal with growing up.

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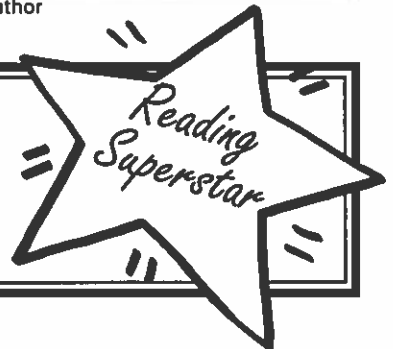


# My Reading Log



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★ 5	Title	Author
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★ 10	Title	Author
11	Title	Author
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★ 15	Title	Author
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19	Title	Author
★ 20	Title	Author

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**Name**



# Get the Punctuation Right!

Should you use “it’s” or “its”? A semicolon or a colon? Punctuation can be tricky. This guide will help your children remember basic rules they’ll need for writing.

## Periods, exclamation points, and question marks

- Put a period at the end of most sentences:  
*This summer is supposed to be extremely hot.*
- Periods are used with abbreviations, such as *Mrs.* and *Tues.*
- An exclamation point shows excitement:  
*We’re going out for ice cream!*
- Use a question mark after a question (*Did you do your homework?*), but not with an indirect question: *Mom asked if I did my homework.*

## Semicolons and colons

- A semicolon can be used instead of a period or conjunction (*and*, *or*, *but*) between two complete sentences: *My favorite subject is math; he prefers science.*
- Use semicolons in a list that already has commas: *She visited Boise, Idaho; Las Vegas, Nevada; and Seattle, Washington.*
- A colon introduces a list. *You’ll need these items for the party: balloons, streamers, and cake.*

## Quotation marks and hyphens

- Quotation marks surround a person’s exact words: *My dad said, “Come home after school.”* Quotation marks aren’t needed here: *My dad said to come home after school.*
- Use quotation marks around titles of articles, stories, and poems. *Note:* Titles of books, magazines, newspapers, and movies are generally italicized.
- Hyphens are used when talking about age: *A six-year-old child.* Do not hyphenate when you say “I’m seven years old.”

- Use a hyphen when writing out fractions:  
*He ate one-quarter of the pizza.*

## Commas

- Use a comma between two adjectives: *He’s an organized, diligent student.*
- A comma is used before a conjunction (*and*, *or*, *but*) to join two complete sentences: *He wanted to go to the game, but he was sick.*
- Dates have commas between the day and year (*May 1, 2016*). In the middle of a sentence, put a comma after the year as well: *My friend was born December 30, 2005, in Baltimore.*
- Commas are used before or after dialogue: *“Don’t be late,” Mom said. Or Mom said, “Don’t be late.”*

## Apostrophes

- Contractions have apostrophes. They replace one or more letters: *you’re* (*you are*), *it’s* (*it is*), *she’s* (*she is* or *she has*).
- Use an apostrophe to show possession: *My teacher’s desk is neat.* If the noun is plural, the apostrophe follows the “s”: *The teachers’ desks are neat.*
- Don’t use an apostrophe with the possessive pronoun “its”: *The dog hurt its paw.*
- Never use an apostrophe with a plural noun that’s not possessive: *Flowers for sale.*
- Use *your* when you are talking about something that someone has or that belongs to someone: *Don’t forget your jacket. You’re* is the contraction of *you are*: *You’re a great listener.*