

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

September 2020

Keystone Oaks School District

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ *The New Small Person* (Lauren Child)

Life as an only child is going well for Elmore, until a new little person comes along to interrupt his TV shows and knock over his toys.

But as his brother gets older, Elmore realizes that a sibling can become a friend—maybe even enough of one to share his prized jelly beans with.

■ *The Word Collector* (Sonja Wimmer)

Luna loves to collect magnificent words, but one day she notices words disappearing from her collection. Soon she discovers that they're missing because people are too busy to remember them. Can Luna bring love, friendship, and fun back into their lives through the power of words? (Also available in Spanish.)

■ *Even Superheroes Have Bad Days* (Shelley Becker)

Superheroes could use their powers to do naughty things, like change the weather or cause chaos when they are sad or mad—but do they? Readers will find out how even the mightiest superheroes work through their emotions to make a difference in the world.

■ *How Did That Get in My Lunchbox? The Story of Food* (Chris Butterworth)

Where do common foods like bread, cheese, and carrots come from? This nonfiction book describes their journeys from farm to lunchbox. Your child will discover that it takes a lot of work to grow and produce yummy foods.



Adventures in reading

What's between the pages of a book? An adventure that your youngster could go on—without leaving home! These ideas will show him all that he can learn on his nonfiction reading expeditions.

Take an animal safari

Together, look for animals outside, and help your child make a list of the ones you see. Then, read books or look online to learn facts about each one. What does it eat? What are its babies called? Does it sleep at night or during the day? Encourage your youngster to write each fact (or dictate it to you) in a notebook to carry on future walks. How many new animals can he "meet"?

Meet people

Scientists, artists, civil rights leaders... biographies are full of fascinating people. Suggest that your youngster make a trading card for each person he reads about. He could write facts like the person's name, birthplace, and accomplishments. Or he might write a letter (real



or pretend) to the person that includes questions he has.

Visit new places

Let your child plan an imaginary trip to a book's setting. After a story about a rain forest, read a nonfiction book on jungles. He can use facts he learns to make a packing list for his journey. He'll have to think about the climate (hot, rainy) to decide what he needs (wide-brimmed hat, lots of water, umbrella). He could also write a pretend postcard from his destination. ♥

Fine-motor fun

Playing with tiny objects strengthens little hands—building the fine-motor skills your child needs for handwriting, drawing, and more. Try these activities.

● **Cotton-ball race.** Give each player an empty bowl and a bowl containing 12 cotton balls or other small, soft items. Using tweezers or your thumb and forefinger, race each other to transfer them—one at a time—to the empty bowl. Who will win the race?

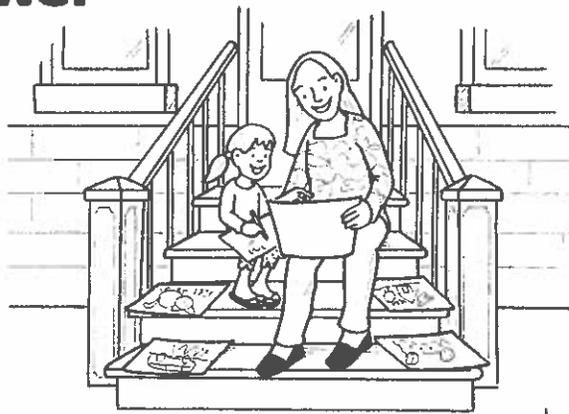
● **Yarn wrapping.** Let your youngster use safety scissors to cut long pieces of colorful yarn. Then, have her tape one end of each to the outside of a cup, wrap the yarn around and around, and tape down the opposite end. *Idea:* She could use her creation as a pencil or crayon holder. ♥



Ready, set, write!

Drawing is the first way children express their thoughts on paper. You may also have noticed—or will soon notice—your youngster writing scribbles, letters, or words on her pictures. Use these strategies to support your little writer at every stage.

Drawings. Invite your child to tell you all about pictures she draws. Ask questions that encourage her to tell a



story: “Who is in your drawing?” “What are their names?” *Tip:* As your youngster learns to write her name in school, have her start printing it on pictures she draws at home.

Scribbles. Is your child adding scribbles or letter-like shapes to her pictures? Combining drawing and writing is a big step toward learning to write. Acknowledge her efforts by asking, “Can you read that to me?”

Writing. When your youngster begins writing actual letters or words,

help her list words she uses frequently. *Examples:* *the, like, Mommy, Daddy.* She can label her list “Words I Know”—and refer to it to help her write captions for her pictures.♥

Q&A Reading aloud—together



Q My son loves when I read to him. Any tips for using story time to help him learn to read himself?

A Sure! Start by asking your child to join in when you read. Try reading a book with a refrain, perhaps *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Eric Carle) or *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* (Laura Numeroff). After a few pages, pause before the repeating part—your son will feel proud to finish the page himself (“But he was still hungry!”).



Your child will also learn from listening to you read rhyming books. Stop before you say each rhyming word to let your youngster fill it in.

Finally, develop his reading comprehension by talking about stories. Share your reactions (“That part really cracked me up!”), and listen while he tells you his response.♥

Fun with Words

Plant an alphabet tree

Read an alphabet book with your child, then encourage him to build his own alphabet tree to identify and remember letters.



1. Let your youngster plant a “tree trunk” (an empty cardboard paper-towel tube) in a cup filled with dirt or sand. Then, help him cut small slits into the trunk and insert craft stick “branches.”
2. Have your child draw 26 “alphabet leaves” on green paper, cut them out, and write a letter on each leaf. *Tip:* He could flip through the alphabet book to remind himself what each letter looks like.
3. Together, recite the alphabet (or sing the alphabet song) while he tapes each leaf to any branch.
4. Read the book again—can your child find each letter on his tree?♥

Parent to Parent

Family show-and-tell

When my daughter Erica began kindergarten, she was hesitant to speak up during show-and-tell. Her teacher suggested that we practice at home, so we decided to hold a weekly family show-and-tell night.

Every Friday, we gather in the living room and take turns sharing something that’s important to us. Each person explains why her show-and-tell item is special. Then we

ask questions, such as, “What do you like best about it?” or “Where did you get it?” We’ve shared books, drawings, souvenirs, and more.

What began as a way to help Erica practice speaking has turned out to be a great family conversation starter. Now Erica is in second grade—she’s speaking up more in class, and we still look forward to family show-and-tell each week.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

September 2020

Keystone Oaks School District



Book Picks

■ Crazy About Cats (Owen Davey)

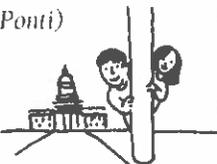
From wild cats like ocelots and pumas to house cats, this nonfiction book from the About Animals series teaches readers all about cats. Your child will discover where cats live, what they eat, and the special features they have.



(Also available in Spanish.)

■ Framed! (James Ponti)

Twelve-year-old Florian Bates is no ordinary middle schooler. When his family moves to Washington, DC, he starts his own spy agency with the help of his new friend Margaret. Follow along in this spy adventure as the young sleuths help the FBI solve a big case.



■ The House That Lou Built (Mae Respcio)

Lou loves her woodshop class, and for a school project, she's planning to build her own tiny house on a piece of land she's inherited. But she quickly realizes that building a new structure isn't as simple as it seems. Determined, Lou finds creative solutions to the many roadblocks she faces along the way.



■ Go Figure! Big Questions About Numbers (Johnny Ball)

Your youngster can learn about ancient numbers, explore "magic" numbers, and imagine a newspaper with no numbers in this nonfiction book. He'll also see how numbers are used in all aspects of life. Includes quiz questions and answers.

Strategies for a new year

As your youngster reads more complex stories and textbooks, she'll need new strategies for understanding and remembering new material. Help her start the year off right with these activities.

Fill a "thinking cap"

When your child needs to tackle a challenging chapter, have her get a baseball cap. Each time she finds a new fact or unfamiliar word, she can write it on a slip of paper and put the slip in the hat. After she finishes reading, she should reread everything in her thinking cap and look up definitions of words she doesn't know. Writing and reviewing the information will help her learn it.



Draw a comic strip

Suggest that your youngster create a comic strip about what she's studying (stick figures are okay!). Say she's reading about the water cycle in her science book. She could draw one panel with a character boiling a pot of water and explaining evaporation, and another panel with someone walking in the rain

and talking about precipitation. This is a fun way for her to visualize the material.

Take a "commercial break"

Your child can pretend there's a commercial break at the end of each chapter in a novel she's reading. Her job is to write a "teaser"—a question to encourage the audience to stay tuned. If she's reading *Bunnicula* (Deborah and James Howe), she might write, "Will Bunnicula get caught in the vegetable garden?" Then, have her predict the answer. Asking questions and checking predictions let her monitor how well she understands a story. 📖

Fact or opinion?

"It's the best toothpaste for your family!" When your child reads a sentence like this in an advertisement, does he understand that it's an opinion? Distinguishing fact from opinion is an important reading skill. Suggest that he ask himself these questions to tell the difference:

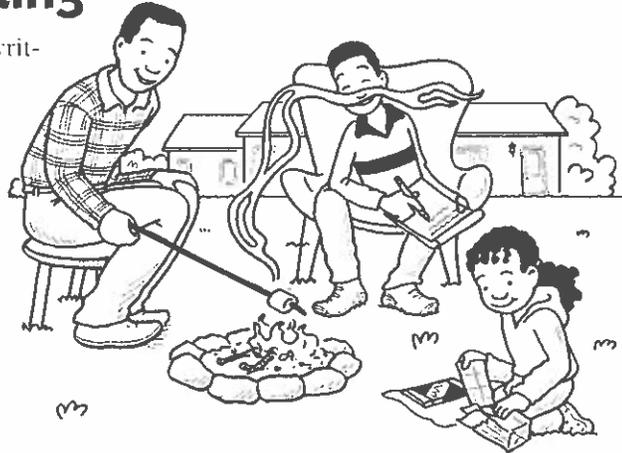
- "Would most people agree?" A fact is true regardless of who wrote it ("Trees are plants"), while an opinion reflects the writer's feelings or beliefs ("Trees shouldn't be cut down").
- "Does it rely on adjectives?" Descriptive words ("Apple pie with ice cream is the perfect dessert") frequently indicate opinions, while facts are more likely to stand alone ("Apples are harvested in autumn"). 📖



Add details to writing

Vivid details make your youngster's writing come alive. And getting a firsthand look at something he's describing can help him be more specific. Share these ideas to use when he writes stories.

Specific verbs. Suggest that your child think of active verbs that illustrate what he sees rather than using bland verbs like *was* or *went*. When he's outside, he might notice how a tractor moves along a road. Later, he can incorporate the details



into a story about a boy living on a farm: "The tractor crept slowly along the dirt road" (instead of "The tractor went down the road").

My five senses. Have your youngster use at least one of his senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch) in his description. If he's writing about making s'mores, you could toast marshmallows together so he can notice how

they smell and look. That may lead him to write, "A sweet, toasty scent filled the air as my marshmallow turned golden brown." 📖

Q&A Is my child on track?

Q As the school year gets underway, how can I tell if my daughter is on track with reading and writing or if she needs help?

A The best way is to stay involved with what your child is doing in school. Go through her backpack with her daily, and look over her work. Review the teacher's comments on her assignments or tests, and monitor the grades she's receiving.



Also, notice what she's reading for pleasure—or if she's reading for pleasure. Take turns reading aloud to each other, and when it's her turn, listen for whether she reads smoothly or seems to stumble over words.

If you're concerned, contact your daughter's teacher. He can let you know if your child is on track, and if she's not, he'll work with you to provide help. 📖



Better listening = better learning

Good listening skills help your child learn information from lessons, class presentations, and videos. Encourage him to become a better listener with these challenges.

● **What's different?** Read a paragraph from a newspaper or magazine to your youngster. Then read it again, but switch a few details. For example, you might change the name of a person or a city. It's your child's job to listen closely and tell you what's different the second time around.

● **Listen and answer.** Together, listen to a podcast or an audiobook for five minutes. Each of you can jot down a question the other person should be able to answer—if you listened carefully. Then trade questions, and answer them. Replay the audio to check if you heard right. 📖



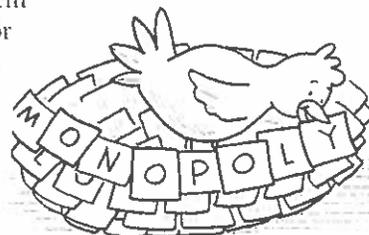
Fun with Words Build a word

The word-making possibilities are almost endless in this vocabulary game.

Have your youngster write each letter, A–Z, on separate slips of paper and scatter them in a bowl. For each round, draw three letters, lay them faceup, and set a timer for three minutes. Each person writes words that contain all three letters in any order. The goal is for players to come up with

the most words that no one else thought of and the longest possible word they can define. For M, L, and P, a player might write *monopoly* or *planetarium*.

When time's up, read your words aloud to each other. Earn one point for every word that no one else wrote—and a bonus point for giving the correct definition of your longest word. *Tip:* Keep a dictionary on hand to check answers. 📖



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