

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

January 2017

Book Picks



Read-aloud favorites

■ *Mr. Ferris and His Wheel*

(Kathryn Gibbs Davis)

This is the true story of how an American engineer invented the Ferris wheel.



George Ferris designed an enormous steel wheel with fancy cars that fairgoers could ride in, and it became one of the most popular carnival attractions of all time.

■ *Henry and Mudge: The First Book*

(Cynthia Rylant)

Henry's new puppy, Mudge, quickly grows into a 180-pound dog who walks Henry to school, sleeps in Henry's bed, and occasionally gets into trouble. The boy and his dog learn a valuable lesson when Mudge gets lost. Book 1 in the Henry and Mudge series. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ *Before After* (Anne-Margot Ramstein and Matthias Arégui)

In this wordless book, pairs of pictures show “before” and “after”—a caterpillar and a butterfly, a pumpkin and a carriage, a snowy winter scene and a lush spring one. Can your child explain how each pair is related?



■ *I Had a Favorite Dress*

(Boni Ashburn)

A little girl wears her favorite dress every week until she starts to outgrow it. She asks her mom to turn it into a shirt—which she wears every week until it's too small. But that's not the end of it! What will her mom turn it into next?



Plan for creative writing

Youngsters are naturally creative, whether they're doing art projects or playing with toys. Let your child use his creativity to plan the stories he writes. Here are playful ideas.

Sculpt a character

Who will star in your youngster's story? Encourage him to create a main character out of play dough. It could be a person, an animal, or an imaginary creature. Suggest that his character perch nearby as he writes about it—he might write its name and its age, describe its personality (silly, serious), and tell what it likes to do for fun.



write a detailed story: “My best friend and I sit at the same round table in class.”

Plan a plot

What problem does your youngster's character face? He could flesh out his plot by using small toys (action figures, bouncy balls, blocks) to act out scenes. “Seeing” the action will help make his writing more vivid and specific. For instance, he might describe exactly how a basketball player sank the winning shot or how the dragon toppled the tower. ♥

Sketch a setting

Where will your child's story take place? Have him draw or paint the setting (a classroom, a playground, a castle), and ask questions that will inspire him to add details. For example, are there tables or desks in the classroom? Does the castle have a moat and a drawbridge? He can refer to his picture while you help him

Everyone reads!

Show your youngster the importance of reading by talking about books on a regular basis. Consider these everyday tips.

● **“Today I read...”** Tell your child what you read at work or in your spare time. You could describe the dishes on the new menu at your restaurant or mention a suspenseful mystery that's keeping you on the edge of your seat. Ask her to tell you what she's reading, too.

● **“I know who'd enjoy this book...”** Point out what relatives or friends might like to read. While looking at the “new arrivals” shelf at the library, you could say, “Uncle Rick loves science fiction. Let's tell him about this book.” Then, encourage your youngster to be on the lookout for other books to recommend. ♥



Super sight-word activities

Being able to recognize common words automatically is an important step toward fluent reading. Try these activities to help your youngster learn to read frequently used words like *said* and *went*.

Note: Use a list of sight words that your child's teacher sends home, or find a list online (try lincs.ed.gov/readingprofiles/Dolch_Basic.pdf).



Slide and find. Your youngster can reveal sight words hidden in rice. First, cut a sheet of construction paper to fit inside a plastic zipper bag. Write 15–20 sight words in random places on one side of the paper, slide it into the bag, and have your child add scoops of dry rice until the page is covered. Seal the bag, and lay it flat on the table. She

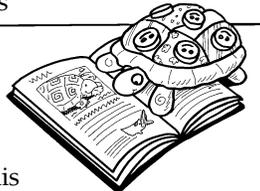
should use her finger to slide the rice around through the plastic and say each word as she uncovers it.

Park and read. Let your youngster draw a parking lot for her toy cars on poster board or construction paper. In each parking space, have her write a sight word (*was, they, because*). As she parks each car, she reads the word in its spot. Or call out any word in the lot, and she has to park a car in the space labeled with that word.♥

Stuffed animal research

What would your child's stuffed squirrel like to eat? What kind of home does his turtle need? He can practice reading nonfiction and build early research skills as he finds out!

1. Together, find library materials that would answer his questions. You might try information books, picture book biographies, children's encyclopedias, or kids' science and nature magazines.



2. Help him read the table of contents and the glossary to see which pages contain the facts he wants. For instance, he could look for pages that mention *diet* or *habitat*.

3. Now it's time to use what he learned to "take care of" his animals. He might "serve" acorns to his squirrel. Or he can create a pond for his turtle using blue construction paper. He'll discover that doing research to learn new things is fun and useful!♥



Q&A

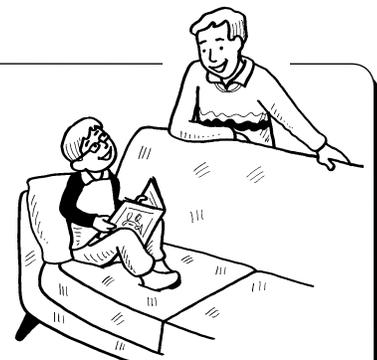
Reading silently

Q My son recently started reading silently. Since I can't hear him read, how can I check on how he's doing?

A Silent reading is typically—but not always—a sign that a child is reading automatically and efficiently.

To make sure your youngster understands what he reads silently, invite him to tell you about it when he's finished. Browse through the book as he talks so you can see how well he understood it. Ask him to show you any hard words he figured out—or any he couldn't get. Also, tell him that he can come to you or an older sibling for help when he reads.

And remember, just because your son *can* read silently doesn't mean he has to do it all the time. Let him read aloud to you, and you'll be able to hear his progress.♥



Parent to Parent

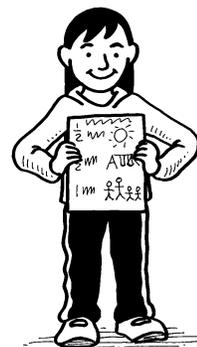
A recipe for writing fun

In school, my daughter Sara had to write a recipe for something other than food. Sara decided that her recipe would be for friendship, and it called for "ingredients" like 1 cup loyalty and a pinch of laughter.

She enjoyed the assignment, so I suggested that she write recipes for other things. In her recipe for a perfect day, her instructions included mixing together

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sunshine, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup playground fun, and 1 cup family. Sara has also written recipes for her ideal sleepover, soccer game, and school field trip.

This has been a great way to encourage my daughter to practice writing. Now, she's compiling her recipes into a "cookbook" to keep on our bookshelf for everyone to read.♥



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Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ *Kitten's First Full Moon*

(Kevin Henkes)

Is that a bowl of milk in the sky? An adorable kitten sees the full moon for the first time and tries her hardest to drink from the “bowl.” But no matter what, it never seems to get closer. After a night of mishaps, she returns home to a surprise on her porch. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *Mama Panya's Pancakes: A Village Tale from Kenya*

(Mary and Rich Chamberlin)

In this story about sharing, Adika and his mother go to the market where Mama Panya makes pancakes. Even though she doesn't have much money, she cooks enough to feed everyone in the village. Includes facts about Kenya, greetings in Kiswahili, and, of course, a pancake recipe!



■ *Her Idea* (Rilla Alexander)

A little girl named Sozi has a big imagination and is always dreaming up ideas. Like many kids, she figures she'll do something with them later. Then an unlikely helper gives Sozi the perfect place to save her ideas—and the motivation to follow through.

■ *I See a Pattern Here*

(Bruce Goldstone)

Patterns are everywhere—in nature, on buildings, and on your youngster's clothing. This nonfiction book will encourage your child to look for patterns, figure out what comes next in the patterns pictured, and even create his own.



Build empathy with stories

Some of the same strategies that boost your child's reading comprehension can also help her develop empathy. These activities let her practice recognizing and thinking about feelings as she explores books.

“I know how she feels...”

When you read to your youngster, have her look for clues that hint at emotions. If a story says, “A tear rolled down her cheek,” your child might say that the character is sad. Identifying characters' feelings will help her understand people's emotions in real life, too.

“If I were that character...”

Encourage your youngster to put herself in a character's shoes. What would she do differently, and how would that change her feelings—and the story? For example, in *Harold and the Purple Crayon* (Crockett Johnson), the little boy felt scared after he drew a dragon to guard his apple tree. Your child may say she'd draw a friendly dragon and feel



happy—but her dragon wouldn't make a very good guard!

“This reminds me of...”

Help your youngster make connections between storybook characters and real people. This can deepen her understanding of the story and build empathy. Perhaps a character who moved to a different town makes her think of the new kid in her class. How did the character feel, and how does she think her classmate feels? (She might answer, “Scared,” “Nervous,” or “Excited.”)♥

Make your own books

Your youngster will feel like a real writer when he creates a homemade book. Try this plan.

Draft. Help your child write a rough draft. A fun title for a little author is “All About Me.” He could write about his family, friends, school, and favorite things.

Publish. Cut sheets of white construction paper in half. On each page, your youngster can copy one sentence from his draft and illustrate it. When he's finished, staple the pages together.

Share. Hold a “Meet the Author” night. Your child gets to read his book aloud to your family and answer questions about it.♥



Great reasons to visit the library

Making the public library a regular family hangout spot has a lot of benefits. Consider these points.

It's a nice place to read. Your child will never run out of books. Plus, there may be plenty of cozy reading spots like beanbag chairs and quiet corners. Let him pick a few stories, and choose a place where you can read—and enjoy time together.



There are fun activities. Ask about special reading-related events, and plan to attend some as a family. You might make a craft after listening to a story, watch a puppet show based on a favorite book, explore ABC books and do alphabet activities, or even read with dogs.

Reading opportunities are endless. Your youngster may decide to read every book by a particular author or all the books in a series. He could check one out each time you visit the library. Or perhaps he'll pick a topic he'd like to learn about. Let him check out nonfiction books to become an "expert" on his choice, whether it's polar animals or hockey.♥

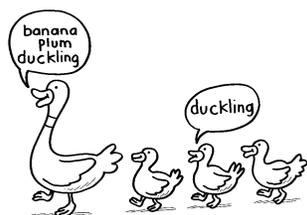


Odd word out

Build your child's vocabulary and thinking skills with this simple game that you can play at home or on the go.

1. Ask your youngster to listen carefully while you say three words—two that go together and one that doesn't "belong."

2. Have her tell you which is the odd word out. For instance, if you chose



banana, plum, and duckling, she would probably say *duckling*, because the other two are fruits.

3. If she picks a word you didn't expect, that's okay! Let her make a case for it, and she'll stretch her thinking. Maybe she'll say *plum*, because bananas and ducklings are both yellow.

4. Now it's her turn to say three words, and you decide which doesn't belong.♥

Parent to Parent

A household joke station

My son Leo has been on a joke kick lately. It seems like every day he tells us a new joke he heard or made up. Because he's learning to read, we decided to create a household "joke station" where he could read jokes whenever he wants.

We got a few joke books and put them in a basket in the family room. Soon afterward, when I read Leo a funny joke I found online, he asked if I would print it out and put it in the basket. And now when he tells me a joke, I help him write it down, and he adds it to the station.



Our family joke station has become a favorite household spot. If we're feeling silly or someone needs to be cheered up, we visit the station and take turns reading jokes aloud. Leo's reading skills are improving—and there's more laughter in our home!♥

Q&A Writing backward?

Q My first-grader sometimes writes letters or words backward. They look just like mirror images! Could she have a learning disability?

A When children are first learning to write, they occasionally write backward. Most kids outgrow this. But if you notice your daughter doing it more often, talk to her teacher.

Find out whether the teacher has any concerns. Is your child performing below grade level? Does she have a hard time spelling new words? Are her skills uneven (she reads well but struggles with

writing, for instance)? If you suspect a problem, or the teacher does, ask about the possibility of testing your daughter to see if she needs extra help.

In the meantime, you could work with her on writing correctly at home. Remind her that we write the way we read—from left to right. Whenever you see her writing backward, ask, "Do you notice anything unusual about those letters?" Then, help her correct them.♥



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■ *Drum Dream Girl* (Margarita Engle)

A little girl dreams of playing the drums, but on her island, only boys are drummers. She plays in her imagination and practices on furniture. Finally her dad gets her drumming lessons. Based on the life of Millo Castro Zaldarriaga, who broke Cuba's male-only drumming barrier.

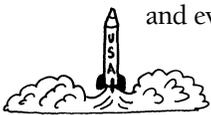


■ *Born to Read* (Judy Sierra)

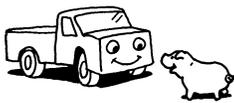
The moment baby Sam opens his eyes, he knows how to read his name. From that point on, he never stops reading. As Sam grows up, reading helps him win a bike race and even saves his town from a baby giant named Grundaloon. A fun book about the love of reading.

■ *The Best Book of Spaceships* (Ian Graham)

Space is the place in this nonfiction book! Your aspiring astronaut will learn about planets, rocket power, and even what it's like to work in space. Each page contains detailed photographs, so your child can see spacesuits and space stations. Includes a glossary of space words.



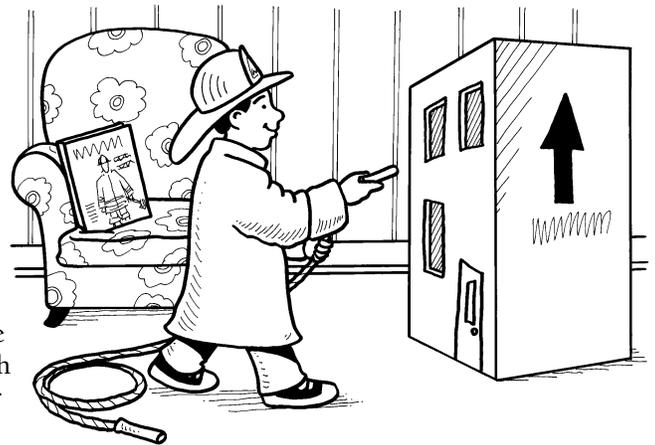
■ *Little Blue Truck* (Alice Shertle)
“Beep!” says the little blue truck as he greets all the farm animals. The animals respond with their own sounds like “Baa” and “Oink.” When an unfriendly dump truck gets stuck in the mud, it's up to the blue truck and his animal friends to help. (Also available in Spanish.)



Book-inspired play

After reading a book on firefighters, Jonathan puts on his red hat and pretends to spray water from a jump rope. Lucy reads a story about trains, then lines up a row of kitchen chairs and climbs aboard.

Children's play is often inspired by books. Combine playtime and story time with these ideas that stretch your youngster's thinking.



Dress-up time

Veterinarian, chef, banker... it's fun for kids to try out grown-up roles. When you read to your child, point out jobs people do. Afterward, help him gather costumes and props (apron, cooking utensils). As he plays, encourage him to use vocabulary from the story. (“I'm kneading the dough like Baker Joe did.”)

Building blocks

Place books near your youngster's blocks, and he can create buildings from the stories' settings like an igloo or airport. Ask him about his building's design.

(“Why is there a tunnel in front of your igloo's door?”) If he's not sure, he could look in the book (the tunnel blocks wind and cold when the door is open).

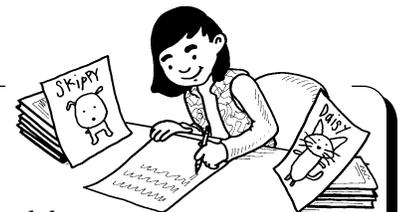
Treasure bin

Fill a plastic container with sand or dry rice or beans. Suggest that your child put in items related to a story he enjoyed and act it out. Maybe he'll get seashells and a mini beach bucket for a book about the ocean. Or he might bury coins when he reads a nonfiction book about money—he can dig them up, estimate the amount, then count to check.♥

Collect lessons from authors

Professional authors make great “mentors” for little ones who are just starting to write. Here are writing techniques your child can discover:

- Help your youngster read a book with a pattern and then write a repeating story. For example, on each page of *It Looked Like Spilt Milk*, Charles G. Shaw writes: “Sometimes it looked like (_____), but it wasn't (_____). It was (_____)!” Have your child make up the pattern she will build her tale around.
- Let your youngster read multiple stories by the same author and try the plot structure in a story of her own. In both *Stellaluna* and *Verdi*, Janell Cannon tells of a little animal who overcomes a problem and makes new friends. What problem will the characters face in your child's story, and how will they solve it?♥



Read the signs

Your town is full of signs for your child to read. Help her practice using strategies to sound out words by looking for these three things.

1. Letter combinations. Your youngster is probably learning to recognize letter combinations like *th*, *str*, *ph*, and *qu*. Pick one to look for while you stroll—maybe you’ll spot a “No hand-held *ph*ones” or “Quarry entrance ahead” sign. If she struggles, remind her of the sounds the combinations make (“*Ph* sounds like *f*”).



2. Words within words. Bigger words are easier for your child to read if she finds smaller words inside them. Call out compound words you see, like *railroad* or *westbound*. Can your youngster read the words that make it up (*rail* and *road*, *west* and *bound*)?



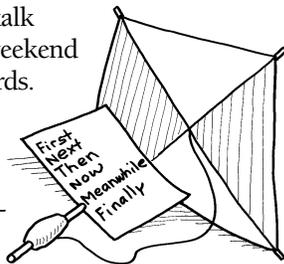
3. Beginnings and endings. Knowing prefixes (*re-*, *un-*, *dis-*) and suffixes (*-ed*, *-er*, *-ing*) helps your child read words. Luckily, road signs contain a lot of these (“*Dismount* bicycle on bridge,” “*Pedestrian crossing*”). How many will you and your youngster spot and read during your walk? ♥

First, next, and last

Some words act like glue—they make sentences in a paragraph or story “stick” together. Let your youngster learn to use these types of words so his writing flows logically.

Down the left side of a sheet of paper, help him list words that show when events took place. He might think of *first*, *next*, and *last*. You could suggest others like *then*, *now*, *later*, *meanwhile*, and *finally*.

Together, talk about your weekend using the words. Take turns picking a word and starting a sentence with it. Maybe you’ll



say, “First, you ran across the field with your kite.” Your child may add, “Then, it rose into the air.” Continue until someone chooses *finally* to end the paragraph. (“Finally, the kite dove to the ground.”)

Idea: Have your youngster keep the list so he can use it when he writes. ♥

Q&A

Understanding written directions

Q When my second-grader takes a test or does a worksheet, he sometimes gets answers wrong because he didn’t read the directions correctly. How can I help him?

A Suggest that your child read directions with a pencil in his hand. He could number the steps and underline important words or copy them onto scratch paper. Reading *actively* like this will help him pay attention to the instructions and understand them.

Practice at home when you play a board game or do a project. Help your son read the directions aloud and then go back and mark important parts with sticky notes (examples: “Play continues clockwise,” “Win by exact count only”). You can also ask him to explain the instructions to you in his own words to be sure he’s ready to follow them.

Note: If he tries these strategies and still doesn’t understand a set of directions, encourage him to ask his teacher for help. ♥



Guess the book by its cover

Book covers get a makeover with this activity, which strengthens your youngster’s reading comprehension and creativity.

First, let each person secretly choose and read a picture book from the library or your family’s bookcase. Then, wrap your book in brown paper, and decorate the new cover with a different title and illustration. The catch? You can’t use any words or images from the original!

Your child will need to think carefully about the story to come up with a title and picture. For example, she might rename *Goodnight Moon*

(Margaret Wise Brown) *Bedtime for Everything*.

Now, take turns reading your books aloud. Begin by presenting the cover and reading the title. Can anyone guess the real book before you open and read it? ♥



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