

# Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Literacy Initiative  
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## Combine reading and math for double learning

Reading is a great way to teach students about math concepts. It helps kids who love math enjoy reading—and kids who love reading enjoy math! Help your child:

- **Choose books about math.**

Stories like *Ten Little Rabbits* by Virginia Grossman teach while entertaining, too.

- **Find books with patterns.**

Many books, such as the classic *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do you see?* follow a pattern—just like numbers do.

- **Notice references to math.**

Look for shapes, measurements, numbers and more in books. In addition to fiction, read cookbooks and how-to books.

- **Count your books.** If your child has a book collection, see how big it is. Together, try counting by twos, fives or tens.

**Source:** Kristi Manuel and Catherine Roper, "Explore math through children's literature," Peel District School Board, [www.peel.edu.on.ca/parents/tips/num-index.htm](http://www.peel.edu.on.ca/parents/tips/num-index.htm).



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*"My best friend is the man who'll get me  
a book I [haven't] read."*

—Abraham Lincoln

### Bond through synonyms and antonyms

Here's a fun synonym and antonym activity to do with your child. (*Synonyms* have the same meaning. *Antonyms* have opposite meanings.) Use two pieces of paper—one for each of you. Divide each paper into three columns. Then:

- **In the first column**, describe yourselves in positive terms. For example, "I am ... kind, generous, funny."
- **In the second column**, write a synonym for each description. ("I am ... nice, giving, amusing.")
- **In the third column**, write antonyms for each word. ("I am not ... mean, stingy, boring.")
- **Exchange columns.** Read about each other. Then play the game again—this time describing the other person.

### Exchange 'lunchbox notes'



Here's a fun way to encourage reading—and your child will love it! Put notes in his lunch box. You might write, "I hope you're having a great day" or include a joke he can share with his friends. Cute notepaper is available for you to print, free of charge, at [www.readingrockets.org/books/fun/notes](http://www.readingrockets.org/books/fun/notes).

### Try a reading checklist



A reading checklist can encourage your child to read different kinds of materials.

Here are some things you and your child might include:

- **Fairy tales.**
- **Science fiction.**
- **Comic books.**
- **Poetry.**

Be sure to leave space on the checklist for your child to write in other formats, too.

### Make writing exciting



A benefit of writing is that kids like to *read* their creations. To motivate your child to write and to read:

- **Make lists.** Your child might write instructions, jot down a shopping list or list her ideas for a report.
- **Express feelings.** Encourage your child to keep a journal of thoughts, poems, stories and more.
- **Send letters.** Ask your child to write to a relative or a friend who moved away.

**Source:** "Help Your Child Learn to Write Well," U.S. Department of Education, [www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/Writing/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/Writing/index.html).

## Review grammar basics with confidence

Children often learn basic parts of speech in elementary school. Be prepared to review terms with your child, such as:

- **Noun.** Often a person, thing or place. “John sat on a *bench* in *Brooklyn*.”
- **Pronoun.** Something that stands for a noun. “She went to see *it*.”
- **Adjective.** A description of a noun or pronoun. “The *brown* bear was *big* and *strong*.”
- **Verb.** An action. “Did you *see* the dog *jump* over the fence?”
- **Adverb.** A description of a verb. “The car moved *quickly*.”

## Read aloud with older children

Long after children learn to read, they still love read-aloud time. To keep it fun as your child gets older:

- **Look for chapter books.** Ask the librarian for titles of books with plenty of plot twists and interesting characters.
- **Set the stage each day.** Review what you read yesterday. Imagine what might happen next.
- **Take turns reading.** If your child wants to read, you might alternate paragraphs, pages or chapters.
- **Talk about what you read.** Has your child ever faced a situation like one in the book? Do you know anyone like the main character?



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- **Close the book** at an exciting moment. That way, you'll both want to read again tomorrow!

**Source:** “Tips for Reading Aloud with Elementary School Children,” Reading Is Fundamental, [www.rif.org/parents/tips/tip.aspx?View=11](http://www.rif.org/parents/tips/tip.aspx?View=11).



## For lower elementary readers:

**Max’s Words** by Kate Banks (Farrar, Straus and Giroux). Max’s brothers collect coins and stamps, but Max decides to collect words, such as *big* and *alligator*. His special collection will fascinate young readers.

**If You Give a Cat a Cupcake** by Laura Numeroff (Laura Geringer). This adorable story shows you what happens if you give a cat a cupcake. Follow the cat to the beach, the gym—all over!

## For upper elementary readers:

**Chocolate Fever** by Robert Kimmel Smith (G.P. Putnam’s Sons). Henry loves chocolate so much that he’s turning into it—right in the middle of math class! What will he do?

**The Way We Work** by David Macaulay (Houghton Mifflin). Take a stunningly illustrated look at how the human body works.

## Cook and read together



To get your child excited about reading, try cooking together. Dub your child “kitchen helper” and:

- **Take turns reading** a recipe aloud. Or read it to your child.
- **Make a shopping list** and use it together at the store.
- **After cooking and eating**, read a book related to food—such as a book about France after making quiche.

**Source:** “Recipes,” Reading Is Fundamental, [www.rif.org/leer/cocina/recetas\\_english.msp](http://www.rif.org/leer/cocina/recetas_english.msp).



**Q.** Should reading be part of my child’s everyday routine?

**A.** Reading every day is an excellent habit for kids to develop. Some teachers even require it. Set aside at least 10 minutes a day for “family reading time.” Read with your child. Or sit nearby enjoying a book, magazine or newspaper.

Do you have a question about reading? Email [readingadvisor@parent-institute.com](mailto:readingadvisor@parent-institute.com).

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