



DEVELOPING YOUR CHILD'S READING SKILLS

Tips for Every Age

Fostering a love and aptitude for reading is critical to your child's success, from the moment they start school all the way up to their high school graduation. Your child needs strong reading and comprehension skills to succeed—not just in English, but in science, math, social studies and various school activities as well.

Use the following tips to support your child at each stage of their education. Readers at all levels should be encouraged to read books that celebrate diversity, focus on social and emotional learning and books that foster critical thinking.

Reading with infants and toddlers

Goals at this age include fostering a love of reading, an understanding of the relationships between pictures, words and sounds, and responsiveness to rhythms and rhymes.

- ✓ **Have lots of books at home.** This doesn't have to cost a lot. Visit the library, ask family members to read to your child and ask for books as gifts.
- ✓ **Read with expression.** Use different voices for different characters and animals. Point to pictures that relate to what you're saying.
- ✓ **Find stories with strong rhythms and rhymes.** Have your child repeat or sing them along with you.
- ✓ **Make reading a daily habit.** Pick a regular time, such as before bed or after breakfast or lunch.
- ✓ **Use pictures to start building vocabulary.** Talk with your child about what the pictures show. Ask them to point to things as you say them.



- ✓ **Link reading to real life.** For example, once your child learns hot and cold, ask them to find something hot in the picture, like the sun.
- ✓ **Encourage your child to ask questions.** As you read, stop regularly and prompt them with questions of your own, such as "Why did the rabbit get lost?" or "What do you think will happen next?"
- ✓ **Find books on topics you know will interest your child.** Make note of topic preferences, such as cars or animals. Ask your child to choose their own books.
- ✓ **Read the same stories over and over.** Repetition helps your child become familiar with the way stories are organized, as well as concepts and vocabulary.

Reading with children in kindergarten through third grade

Goals at this age include developing the basic building blocks of reading like letters and words, as well as increasing reading confidence and comprehension.

- ✓ **Keep reading to your child.** Even when they have started to read on their own, it's important to maintain a daily practice.
- ✓ **Use opportunities in everyday life.** Build vocabulary and listening skills by talking through what you're seeing and doing while cooking, driving or visiting new places.



- ✓ **Make words tactile.** At first, use magnetic letters on the refrigerator to spell out basic words, or cut letters out of magazines. As your child progresses, point out new words in books and practice pronouncing them. As they advance further, point out parts of words that are important to the definition, such as “un,” “full” and “less.”
- ✓ **Take turns reading out loud.** Don't interrupt your child to correct mistakes that don't change the meaning of the story.
- ✓ **Talk about the main components of stories.** Discuss the plot and characters. Ask your child how different characters are related, how they think a character will solve a problem and what parts of the story were the beginning, middle and end.
- ✓ **Develop comparison skills.** Ask how characters or subjects in one book are similar to or different from those in others your child has read.
- ✓ **Ask your child to name the stories they like best and why.** Discuss which books are adventures, mysteries or other genres.
- ✓ **At the end of a book, ask your child to name anything they learned or enjoyed.** Ask about the author's intention: “How did she want us to feel?” “Did she teach us anything new?”

Reading with children in grades four through six

Goals at this age include improving fluency, analytical skills and diversity of reading materials.

- ✓ **Practice reading difficult text out loud.** Do this until your child no longer stumbles over words.
- ✓ **Read the same story or novel separately.** Then discuss it together.
- ✓ **Monitor independent reading choices.** Make sure your child is challenging themselves. Make sure they are transitioning from early reader books with only a few words on the page, to longer books with chapters.
- ✓ **Keep a running list of difficult vocabulary words and their meanings.** Include words your child is learning in other subjects such as science and social studies.
- ✓ **Play word games like Scrabble and hangman.** Or, find fun word games online.
- ✓ **Start to introduce informational materials.** Read items such as instructions, mail or maps together.
- ✓ **Read non-fiction articles in newspapers or online.** Discuss the difference between facts and opinions.
- ✓ **Encourage research.** When your child asks questions, ask them to think about where they might find the answer.
- ✓ **Develop recall skills.** After your child reads, have them verbally summarize the main ideas and details to you.



Reading in middle and high school

Once your child has basic reading skills, they will be expected to develop—and continually deepen—their ability to use the written word to:

- ✓ Conduct research for various school subjects
- ✓ Compare and contrast points of view and form their own opinion
- ✓ Understand what's going on in the world
- ✓ Gather information and instructions needed to manage everyday life
- ✓ Seek enjoyment, enrichment and inspiration

As your child moves through middle and high school, ensure they have many different kinds of books at home and read the news, whether on paper or online. Talk to your child's teachers about their progress and, if they are struggling, make a clear action plan for helping them improve. Many schools and libraries have tutoring programs and other resources. It's critical to catch reading problems early, as reading is fundamental to every aspect of your child's education and, later on, college and professional success.

Reading Resources

PTA Reading Programs:

pta.org/programs

NEA Read Across America Program:

nea.org/grants/886.htm

First Book:

firstbook.org

Reading is Fundamental:

RIF.org

Reading Rainbow:

readingrainbow.com

Reading Rockets:

ReadingRockets.org

International Literacy Association:

Reading.org

PBS Parents:

PBSParents.org/Education

Scholastic:

Scholastic.com/Parents/Resources

Other Resources

There is a range of other Parents' Guides to help you ensure your child thrives at school. Here are just a few examples:

- ✓ Preparing Your Child for School
- ✓ Raising Ready Readers
- ✓ Raising Scientifically Literate Children
- ✓ Helping Your Child with Today's Math
- ✓ Helping Your Teen Succeed in High School

For these and other guides, visit NEA.org/Parents/NEAResources-Parents.html or pta.org/familyguides



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