

School success begins with reading at home



Fewer families than ever before are reading with their children on a daily basis. But reading with your child regularly can have the *single greatest impact* on her school success. Even 20 minutes a day can make a difference! Here's why:

- **Every academic subject involves reading.** Your child has to read in English, science, social studies—and yes, even math! Being able to read well—and read many different kinds of material—will make the difference between *learning* about a subject and *understanding* it.
- **Reading affects test success.** Your child has to read material to study for a test. And she also has to read and understand the directions just to take the test! Filling out an answer sheet incorrectly—



or failing to show her work when it's required—could be the difference between a passing and a failing grade.

- **What your child reads now will help her later.** Children who read (and are read to) are often exposed to more words, which gives them larger vocabularies. A strong vocabulary can benefit your child in advanced classes and on college entrance exams!

Simple strategies make reading exciting



Children who are strong readers find it easier to do well in other subjects, because so much of learning depends on the ability to read. But experts say that to improve reading abilities, children must *want* to read. Unfortunately, many children just aren't interested.

To show your child that reading is rewarding:

- **Plan a field trip together.** Challenge your child to research attractions in your area, such as museums and parks. Then ask him to be your tour guide as he shares with you what he's learned.
- **Give reading coupons.** Show your child that you think reading is special by giving him reading coupons. Some might be for an extra 20 minutes of reading with you. Others might be good for a trip to the bookstore or an extra visit to the library to check out books.



- **Introduce audiobooks.** This is a great way to show a reluctant reader how interesting books can be. Your child may enjoy listening to a book that you record for him, as he follows along.
- **Follow current events together.** Is there a developing news story that interests your child? Read the latest reports in the paper or online together.

Build vocabulary to strengthen reading skills



One of the best ways for your child to improve her reading and writing skills is to expand her vocabulary. Try these teacher-recommended strategies for boosting vocabulary:

- **Read, read, read!** This is the easiest way to build vocabulary. The more your child reads, the more new words she'll encounter.
- **Examine the context of new words.** See if your child can figure out what a new word means by reading the text around it or looking at related pictures.
- **Keep a list of new words** and their meanings in a special notebook.
- **Use a thesaurus.** Encourage your child to look up *synonyms* (words with the same meaning) and *antonyms* (words with opposite meanings) for words she uses often.



- **Play word games.** Do crossword and other word puzzles together.
- **Learn the roots of words.** See how many words she can think of that contain the same root—*predict*, *verdict*, *dictionary* and *dictate*, for example. What do these words have in common? What does the root *dict* indicate? (It's a Latin root word meaning *say*.)

Three ways to boost reading comprehension



As your child gets older, he will be expected to read and understand more complex text. He will transition from *learning to read* to *reading to learn*. To help your child, encourage him to:

- 1. See the big picture.** Before reading an assignment, have your child think about what he will be reading. What is the title of the chapter or assignment? Does it offer any clues about the reading? He should look for other clues, such as subheadings, words in boldface or italics, pictures or graphs.
- 2. Take notes.** Most good students take notes on what they read. Taking notes while reading will make it easier for your child to comprehend and remember information. It will also make reading active and engaging. Your child should write down the most important ideas in the reading assignment.



He should also write down any words he doesn't know so he can look them up later.

- 3. Make connections.** The best way to remember new information is to relate it to something you have already learned. When your child finishes a reading assignment, have him answer questions such as: How is this topic similar to something else I have learned? What key ideas did I already know? What new information did I learn?

Reading role models can motivate kids



Lots of factors have an impact on your child's love of reading, but one of them may be closer than you realize. It's an older sibling! Kids who see their older brother

or sister reading for pleasure are more likely to seek out books themselves.

It's not just that book-loving older kids model good reading habits. They're also great resources when it comes to sharing books, suggesting new stories to explore and talking about literature.

To expose your child to reading role models:

- **Make reading a family affair.** Set aside a weekly reading time. Snuggle up on the couch, and read together. Include older siblings, cousins or friends.
- **Visit the library together.** After your younger child chooses his books, let him look in the "big kid"



section while his sibling finds a new book. No older sibling? Explore the preteen section with your child anyway. Let him see all the bigger kids browsing the shelves and reading in the aisles.

- **Involve the babysitter.** The next time your teenage sitter comes over, ask him to bring along a book. Seeing how important reading is to the sitter may inspire your child's interest in it, too!

Kids are never too old for read-aloud time!



Reading aloud is a great way to boost your child's vocabulary, listening skills and problem-solving skills. And long after children have learned how to read, they still benefit from read-aloud time.

To keep it fun as your child gets older:

- **Select books you'll both enjoy.** There's nothing worse than finding yourself with 100 pages to go in a book you can't stand. Ask the librarian for titles of chapter books with plenty of plot twists and interesting characters.
- **Select some books** that are a little too hard for your child to read on her own. Exposing her to these books is a great way to increase her vocabulary.
- **Set the stage each day.** Ask your child to summarize what you read yesterday. Together, imagine what might happen next.



- **Take turns reading.** If your child wants to read, you might alternate paragraphs, pages or chapters. Help her sound out words she doesn't know.
- **Talk about what you read.** Ask your child questions. Has she ever faced a situation like the one in the book? Does she know anyone like the main character?
- **Close the book at an exciting point** so you'll both want to read again tomorrow!