

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

January 2018

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ My First Coding Book

(Kiki Prottsman)

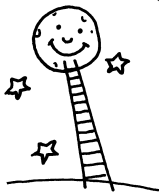
Your child doesn't need a computer to learn about coding! The puzzles, flaps, and games in this nonfiction book make coding fun. Complex terms become easy to understand, and colorful illustrations add to the enjoyment.



■ Ladder to the Moon

(Maya Soetoro-Ng)

Suhaila wishes she could meet her grandmother, who died before she was born. Her wish comes true when Grandma Annie travels down a magical ladder. The pair go on a fantastical journey to help people in need. A dreamlike folktale about empathy. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ On the Spot: Countless Funny Stories

(Amy Krouse Rosenthal and Lea Redmond)

This clever rhyming book invites readers to join in the storytelling. Each page has a fill-in-the-blank spot where your youngster can place a sticker or small object—and it becomes part of the tale. Read the book again using new items, and get an entirely different giggle-worthy story.

■ How People Learned to Fly

(Fran Hodgkins)

People tried many ideas on the path to inventing the airplane. Your child will love these fun facts about the history of flight. An activity at the end invites readers to experiment with creating their own airplanes.



Vocabulary builders

“Fancy” nouns, clever verbs, awesome adjectives—all kinds of words make up a good vocabulary. Here are ways to increase the number of words your child knows, making her a stronger reader, writer, and speaker.

Bring nouns to life

Your youngster has probably sat on an *ottoman*, but she may not realize that's what it's called. When she hears or reads a “fancy” noun (person, place, or thing), encourage her to write it on a sticky note. Have her use the note to label the object. She could stick *bureau* on her dresser, or label the hallway with *corridor*.



acting out a word from the list—whoever guesses it goes next.

Add an adjective

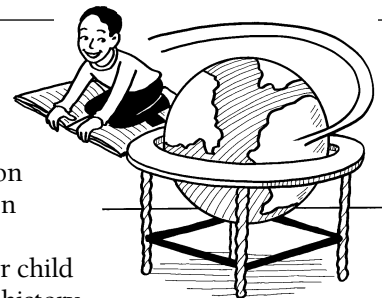
Have your youngster find an object and choose an adjective (descriptive word) for it. *Example*: “This is a *purple* hairbrush.” Then, you take the item and add a word, perhaps an unusual one (“This is a *sturdy* purple hairbrush”). Pass it back and forth until you can't come up with another adjective. Play again with a new item.♥

Read around the world

Turn your youngster into a world traveler by helping him learn about other countries through books.

Together, look at a world map, and list the seven continents. Next, find library books set on each (a Japanese fairy tale, a nonfiction book on Australian animals).

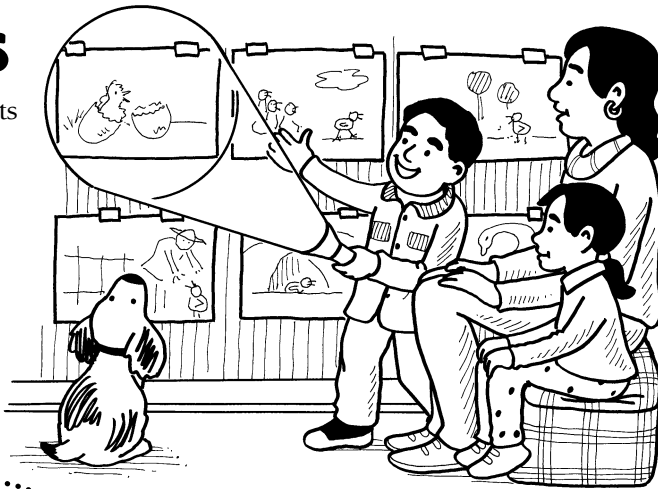
As you read, talk about what you learn. Your child may discover tidbits about a country's culture, history, and traditions, and even learn a word or two of the language spoken there. When you've finished reading, he could make a tally mark beside each continent on his list. How many books can he read for each continent?♥



Retelling stories

Did you know that retelling a story boosts your child's reading comprehension? As he describes the characters, setting, and plot, he's putting events in sequence and picturing the story in his head. Make retelling more fun with these activities.

Slide show. Invite your youngster to draw each scene from a story on a separate sheet of paper and hang them in order on a wall or door. Then, he can put on a



show! Turn out the lights, and have him shine a flashlight on each picture as he tells you the story.

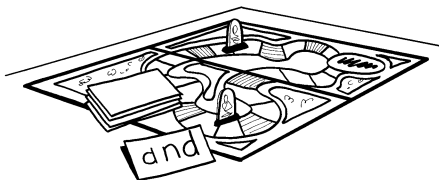
Story figures. Let your child search through old magazines and cut out pictures to represent characters, places, and objects from a book. For a story about a boy who took his puppy to school, your youngster might

Fun with Words

Game-night sight words

Replace the dice in any board game with sight words, and voila! You'll add reading practice to game night.

Ask your child's teacher for a list of sight words (commonly used words) they're working on in class, or find a list online at sightwords.com/sight-words/dolch/#lists. Help your youngster print each word on a separate index card, and stack them facedown.



Choose a board game with dice (Monopoly Jr., Chutes and Ladders). Play as usual—but instead of rolling dice, draw a card. Read the word aloud, and move your piece the number of letters in the word. So *and* lets your little one move three spaces, and *yellow* will send her zooming ahead six. Set the cards aside as they're used. If you run out before the game ends, mix them up and stack them facedown again.

Don't be surprised if your youngster wants to learn longer words so she has a chance to move farther on each turn!♥

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ISSN 1540-5648



find a photo of a little boy, a classroom, and a puppy. He can tape each one to a building block and use the picture blocks to retell the story.♥

Q&A

Paint the alphabet

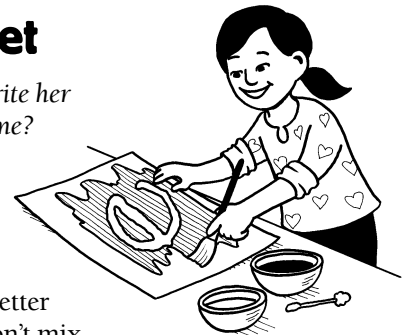
Q My daughter is learning to write her letters. How can I help her work on this at home?

A Handwriting practice can be lots of fun for little ones.

Have your daughter dip a cotton swab into vegetable oil and use it to "write" any letter on paper. Then, let her paint over the letter with watercolor paint. Since oil and water don't mix, the oily letter will "resist" the watercolor, and the letter will be visible!

Make practice more challenging by giving her clues that tell her which letter to form: "Write the last letter in Mommy's first name" or "Your favorite food starts with this letter."

Once your child gets going, she might like to write the entire alphabet and paint over the letters with different colors.♥



Parent to Parent

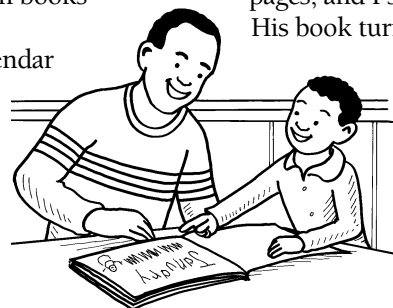
My calendar book

My son Elijah told me that his class writes and puts together "real books" this year, and he wanted to make his own books at home.

His first one was a "calendar book." He counted out 12 sheets of paper, and then I helped him write the name of a month on every page. Next, he thought about each month and added a

sentence describing it, such as "January is for snow," "March is for kites," and "August is for the beach."

Finally, Elijah illustrated the pages, and I stapled them together. His book turned out super cute, and



he was happy to read it to me. The pictures helped him read the names of the months. Next, he wants to make a book all about shapes.♥

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Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites



■ *The Invisible Boy* (Trudy Ludwig)

Brian is not really invisible, but he certainly feels that way. His classmates never pick him for kickball teams, invite him to birthday parties, or notice his drawing talent. When the other students tease a new boy named Justin, Brian draws a picture for him and finally makes a friend. A story about acceptance.

■ *Hooray for Chefs* (Kurt Waldendorf)

Tucked away in the kitchen, a chef prepares meals for others to eat. This nonfiction book takes readers behind the scenes to see how chefs follow recipes, use special tools, and serve up delicious food. (Also available in Spanish.)



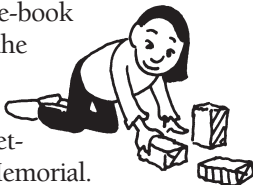
■ *Mercy Watson to the Rescue* (Kate DiCamillo)

Oh, no! Mr. and Mrs. Watson's floor is collapsing, and they're counting on their pet pig, Mercy, to save them. Instead of going for help, however, the pig goes looking for breakfast and gets into mischief. The first book in the Mercy Watson series.



■ *Maya Lin: Artist-Architect of Light and Lines* (Jeanne Walker Harvey)

When Maya Lin was a little girl, she built buildings and towns made of paper and dreamed of being an architect. This picture-book biography tells the story of the girl who grew up to design the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.



I ♥ poetry

Colorful descriptions, kid-friendly topics, and playful language make children's poems a fun tool for boosting your youngster's reading skills. Welcome poetry into your family's reading routine, and use these activities to enjoy it together.

Notice descriptions

If a poem mentions "pretty painted horses" and "spinning dizzily 'round and 'round," will your child guess that the verse is about a carousel? Call his attention to descriptive language with this idea. Secretly choose a poem, and read a few lines without telling him the title. Ask him what it's about. Now have him read a poem aloud so you can figure out its topic.

Bring poetry to life

Your youngster may understand a poem better—and appreciate it more—if he explores its subject firsthand. After reading about "a stack of fluffy pancakes with a melting square of butter," plan a

pancake breakfast. Or read a poem about "prickly pinecones," and let your child collect pinecones outside to examine how prickly they feel.

Play with words

Poets might swap beginning sounds in words (*puddy cuppy* instead of *cuddly puppy*) or rhyme words at the ends of lines ("I'd love a bowl of *custard*, but you can hold the *mustard*"). Encourage your youngster to listen for wordplay like that when you read poetry to him. Then, have fun making up your own silly words or rhyming pairs together. ♥



Listen while you walk

Encourage your little one to practice listening while you take a walk together. Try this twist on I Spy.

Tell your child you're going to walk quietly so you can hear sounds all around you. Choose a sound to imitate, and have the other person try to identify it.

You might say, "I hear, with my little ear, a sound that goes *ring ring*." Can she guess that you're hearing bells or wind chimes? Or your youngster may say, "I hear, with my little ear, something that sounds like *rumble-rumble-rumble*." You might say a garbage truck or a motorcycle.

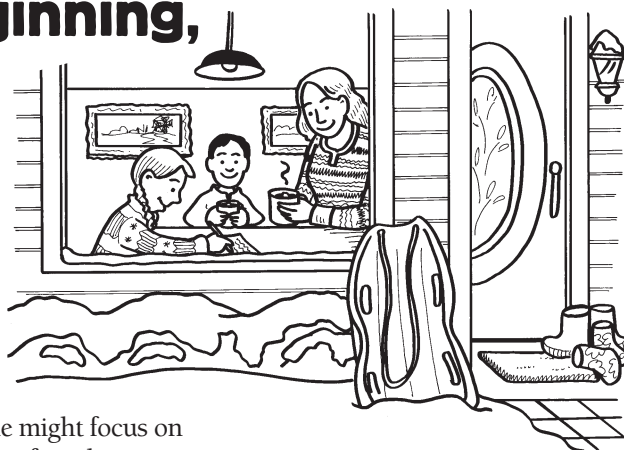
The next time, take a new route or walk at another time of day so your youngster can listen for different sounds. ♥



Story writing: Beginning, middle, end

Your youngster probably has lots of exciting stories in her head. Help her write them down with these tips for getting started, adding details, and wrapping things up.

● **Beginning.** Starting her story will be easier if your child zeroes in on a specific event. Encourage her to “think small.” Instead of writing, “We had a snow day,” she might focus on one part of her day: “I went sledding with my friends on our snow day.”

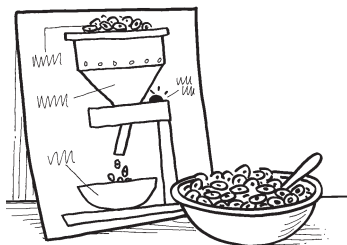


● **Middle.** Ask your youngster questions that will help her find at least two or three details to include. You could say, “How did you feel while you were soaring down the hill?” or “What happened that you didn’t expect?” She may write about snow flying into her face or spotting a deer.

● **End.** A new writer may need help deciding how a story should end. Try asking, “What’s the last thing you remember?” Perhaps she’ll complete her tale with a sentence about going inside to drink hot chocolate with you!♥

Engineer and write

A machine that pours cereal and milk? A robot that tracks down missing socks? Drawing and labeling diagrams of imaginary devices encourages your child to combine engineering and writing skills.



First, explore a few diagrams for real machines together. You can often find these in instruction manuals for household items like a vacuum cleaner or a blender.

Next, ask your youngster to draw a diagram of a contraption he would like to own. Suggest that he label each part. His “cereal maker” could include a timer you set the night before so cereal is ready at breakfast time. Or his “sock finder” might feature a radar dish for zeroing in on any sock without a partner.

Finally, have him walk you through his design and describe how the machine works. What else can he invent?♥



Parent to Parent

Reading the forecast

My daughter Ava was fascinated by the idea of a groundhog “predicting” the weather on Groundhog Day. I decided to have her read a forecast so she could see how people really get information about the weather.

Together, we looked at the weather page of the newspaper. She figured out that a sun symbol with a tiny cloud means mostly sunny, and I explained that a squiggly line tells us it’ll be windy. Then, I had her read the high and low temperatures. Finally, we read tomorrow’s full forecast together.

When I mentioned this to Ava’s teacher, she said it was a great way for my daughter to see nonfiction reading as useful in everyday life—and to practice reading words, numbers, and symbols. Now Ava checks the forecast as part of her bedtime routine and proudly reports the weather so we know what to wear.♥



Q&A From pictures to words

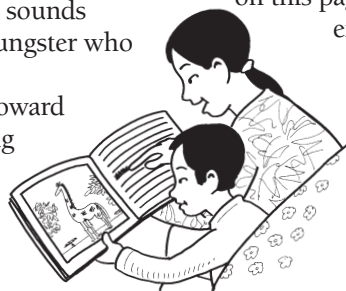
Q When my kindergartner “reads,” he often ignores the words and makes up his own story based on the pictures. What should I do?

A Your son’s behavior sounds totally normal for a youngster who is just learning to read.

Gently nudge him toward the next step—noticing words—by running your finger under the text as you read aloud to him. When you come to a word that’s

illustrated (say, *giraffe*), tell your son, “This word starts with G. Can you look at the picture and figure out the word?”

You can also say, “Do you see a word on this page that you know?” He’ll be excited to point out ones he has learned in school like *the*, *and*, and *friend*. Another idea is to ask a librarian to help you find a book with a character who shares his name—he’s guaranteed to spot at least one word he recognizes throughout the book!♥



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Book Picks



Read-aloud favorites

■ *Lady Pancake & Sir French Toast* (Josh Funk)

In this rhyming book, Lady Pancake and Sir French Toast race through the refrigerator to claim the last drop of maple syrup. Along the way, they must brave a mountain of mashed potatoes, an avalanche of beans, and other perils—as they learn a valuable lesson about sharing.



■ *Plants Can't Sit Still*

(Rebecca E. Hirsch)

While plants don't walk or talk, they do move! Your youngster will be delighted to learn that plants climb fences, tunnel underground, wiggle, and squirm.



This nonfiction picture book shows sunflowers turning toward the sun, a Venus flytrap snatching a fly, and more.

■ *Eerie Elementary: The School Is Alive* (Jack Chabert)

When Sam becomes a hall monitor at school, he thinks his job is to watch the students. Then he discovers that he's actually supposed to stop the creepy school building from eating students! The first book in the Eerie Elementary series. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ *How the Meteorite Got to the Museum* (Jessie Hartland)

Young readers can chant along with the repeating lines of this nonfiction book. The story follows the journey of a meteorite that crashed to Earth and was passed from person to person before winding up in a museum.



Ask your own questions

“Will the little elephant make a friend?” “How many volcanoes are there in the world?” Asking and answering her own questions can boost your youngster's comprehension as she reads or listens to a book. Suggest these strategies for each stage of the reading process.



Before

Encourage your child to think of questions before she even opens the book. Say there's a girl with a bike on the front cover, and the back cover says she got a job to pay for the bike. Perhaps your youngster will wonder, “What kind of job did the girl get?” or “How much did her bike cost?” Looking for the answers will help her pay attention to details in the story.

During

Wondering about a book's topic can keep your child focused on the text. Try this guessing game. Read a page, and think of a question. (“How big do sharks get?”) Say, “Guess what I wonder” and give hints (“I'm wondering something about size”). Once she guesses your question, it's her

turn to read while you figure out what she wonders (“Do sharks sleep?”).

After

Together, brainstorm questions to ask after finishing a book. For fiction, your youngster might list “What problem did the characters solve?” or “What would I do in this setting?” For nonfiction, she could suggest, “What new facts did I learn?” or “What did this book make me want to know?” This helps her better understand and remember the story or the information. ♥

Reading at the grocery store

The supermarket is packed with words. Try these ideas to help your child learn them:

- Give your youngster coupons for items you need, maybe *spaghetti* or *napkins*. When you reach the right aisle, his job is to match the word on the coupon to the product on the shelf. Have him hold the coupon up to the package and spell the word aloud.
- Play “Which one?” At the cheese display, you could say, “Which one says *cheddar*?” In the spice section, you might ask, “Which one says *paprika*?” Together, sound out the words on different labels to find the right one. ♥



Celebrate Dr. Seuss

Dr. Seuss's creative characters and silly language made him one of the most popular children's authors of all time. Celebrate his March 2nd birthday with these reading and writing activities.

Make a "Seuss-eum." Your child could practice writing about books by creating museum-like displays for Dr. Seuss favorites. Read a book, then let him set out play dough sculptures of characters, drawings of his favorite scenes, and props related



to the story (green eggs, anyone?). Next, help him write an index-card plaque for each exhibit. ("Sam was the main character. He did not like green eggs!")

Be an actor. Acting out scenes from the books builds speaking skills. Write the titles of Dr. Seuss books on separate slips of paper, and mix them up in a bowl. Take turns drawing a slip and choosing a part of the book to act out. If you get *There's a Wocket in My Pocket*,

you might pretend to brush your teeth while saying "But that NOOTH GRUSH on my TOOTHBRUSH..." Everyone else tries to guess the book.♥

Fun with Words

Spot the opposite

Playing with opposites is a fun way for your youngster to expand her vocabulary. Enjoy this game.

Secretly pick an item you see, and give your child a clue using an opposite. For a lamp that is



on, you could say, "I see something on a table that's the opposite of off." If she needs help, talk it out. "The opposite of off is on. Do you see something that is on?" Once she figures it out, she chooses an object and gives you a clue. For a Lego brick, she might say, "I see something on the rug that's the opposite of big."

Idea: See how many opposites you can think of to describe one thing. If your puppy is small, calm, and sleeping, your youngster could say, "Our dog is big, excited, and awake."♥

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Q&A

Read-alouds for everyone

Q I try to read aloud to each of my three daughters every day, but sometimes there isn't enough of me to go around. Any suggestions?

A Sure! On days when you don't have enough time to read to each youngster separately, let everyone snuggle up while you read to them together. It's okay if a book is too easy for one child—she could help you read it to the others. And if a book is too hard for a little one, that's okay, too. She'll get a leg up from being exposed to big words and more complex plots.

If any of your girls has learned to read, she could read to the younger ones. They might create a reading "fort" using couch cushions and read during playtime or while you cook dinner, for instance. As they read or listen to books and talk about them, they will build reading skills. It's a win for everyone!♥



Parent to Parent

A journal-writing tradition

My grandson Keith saw me writing in my journal and asked what I was doing. I explained that my grandfather got me started writing in a journal when I was a little boy. Keith said he wanted to start a journal, too, so I gave him a notebook.

He asked me what he should write about. I told him that I use my journal

mostly to store memories, but he can do whatever he wants—even draw pictures. He decided to sketch the two of us writing together in our journals, and he had me help him write a sentence about his picture.

Keith has stuck with his journal for a couple of weeks already. Now when he comes to my house, he can't wait to share what he has written and drawn.♥



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Book Picks



Read-aloud favorites

■ *We Dig Worms!*

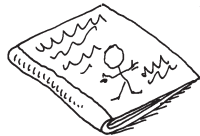
(Kevin McCloskey)

Little wiggly worms have big important jobs. This comic-style nonfiction book blends humor and facts to teach your youngster about earthworms. She'll learn where they live, how they help the soil, why they come out when it rains, and more.



■ *Daisy Dreamer and the Totally True Imaginary Friend*

Daisy is a daydreamer and doodler who spends most of her time pretending. When she receives a magic journal, Daisy's doodle of her imaginary friend Posey comes to life. Now she's off on a trip to the World of Make-Believe! The first book in the Daisy Dreamer series.



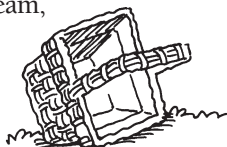
■ *Life in Numbers: Write Haiku*

(Lisa Holewa)

Haiku are short poems that follow a pattern. This guide explains the history of haiku and gives your child advice for writing them. He'll find tips for finding topics, choosing words, and playing with structure to create powerful poetry. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ *The Lost Picnic*

Two children and their grandfather set off on a picnic, but along the way, their lunch falls out of the basket. Your youngster will enjoy using clues from the story to spot the missing watermelon, ice cream, and other foods in the busy illustrations.



Writing: Inspired by nature

Spring is the perfect time to head outside and encourage your youngster to use nature as inspiration for writing. Here are ideas for enjoying different types of writing in the great outdoors.



Rainbow list

Let your child decorate the sidewalk with a colorful list of nature words. Help him use green chalk to write the names of green things he spots (*grass, leaves, caterpillar*) and yellow chalk to list yellow things (*daffodil, butterfly, sun*). Can he find and list something for every color in his box of chalk?

and black feather. I think it came from a blue jay.")

Nature guide

Give your youngster a basket for collecting items like pebbles, feathers, and twigs. Then, suggest that he use the collection to write a nature guide. He could sketch each object in a notebook and add a description. ("This is a blue

Animal tales

What is that cute little chipmunk thinking about as he scurries around? What is the grasshopper doing? Your child can work on creative writing skills by writing a story from an animal's point of view. Maybe the chipmunk is training for a marathon. Or the grasshopper is having a jumping contest with his friends. Let your youngster illustrate his story and read it to you.♥

Read how-to books

Crafts, science experiments, drawing... there's a how-to book for just about every young reader. Try these tips for introducing them to your child:

- Encourage your youngster to choose books based on her interests. If she loves magic, she may like a book on performing tricks. If she's into science, she might pick a book of experiments.
- Help your child see how words and illustrations work together to explain things. For example, she could read the text and then follow a diagram to make a tricky fold for a paper airplane.

Idea: Suggest that your youngster write and illustrate her own how-to book about something she enjoys—perhaps building marble runs or making jewelry.♥

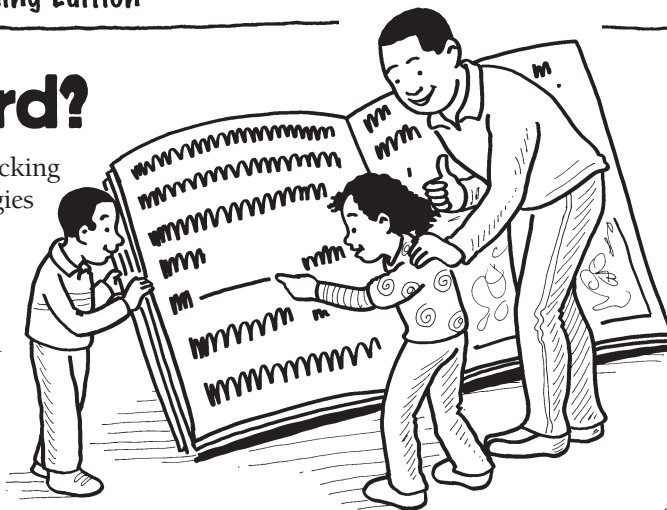


What's that word?

Reading new words is kind of like cracking a code. Share these code-breaking strategies with your youngster.

Break it up. Help your child split a longer word into separate syllables. Ask her to cover up the word with her hand. She can slide her fingers to reveal each syllable, reading them in slow motion as she goes. (“Un-der-cov-er. Undercover!”)

Switch vowel sounds. Long and short vowel sounds sometimes make words tricky. For instance, your youngster might misread *robot* as



rowboat if she thinks both Os are long. If a word doesn't sound right, she could substitute a different vowel sound to see if that works better.

Leave a blank. When your child comes across a word she can't easily sound out, suggest that she read the entire sentence, saying only the first sound of the unknown word. (“The dog jumped over the *fff.*”) Then, have her think of a word that starts with that letter and makes sense in the sentence (*fence*). She can try reading the sentence with the word to decide whether it's right. ♥

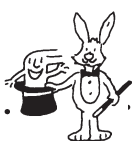
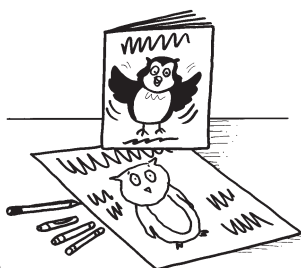
Characters with character

Storybooks are full of good role models for your child. This activity will get him thinking about positive character traits he has in common with his favorite fictional friends.

Identify traits

First, read a book together. Ask your youngster to pick a character to draw a picture of.

Then, help him think of good traits the character showed. For instance, maybe an owl demonstrates perseverance and a positive attitude about learning to fly. Help your child write the character traits in the margins around the drawing.



Fun with Words

Musical chairs

Put on a little music, and let your youngster and his friends practice spelling words they're learning in school with this version of musical chairs.

Set chairs (one per player) in a circle, and pick one player to be the leader. That person will be in charge of starting and stopping the music and calling out spelling words from a list.

To play, the leader turns on music. The children walk around the chairs and freeze in place when he stops the music. Then, the leader gives each person a different word to spell. If the speller gets it right, he sits down in the nearest chair. If not, he's out and removes a chair from the circle.

Once everyone has had a chance to spell, the leader restarts the music. Play until one person is left—he wins and becomes the new leader. *Note:* If you use up all the words on the list, play regular musical chairs with the remaining players to find the winner! ♥



Look at me!

Next, have him draw a “character sketch” of himself showing the same traits, say, while learning to roller-skate. As he discovers examples of good character in other books, he can draw more sketches. ♥

Parent to Parent

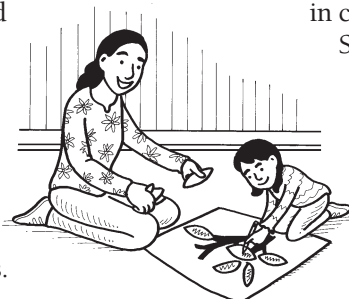
Our family tree

My daughter Tara recently had an interesting homework project—to make a family tree.

She had drawn a tree trunk and bare branches on paper, and she brought home a stack of green construction paper leaves. Her assignment was to write each family member's name on a separate leaf and put them in the right spots.

I helped Tara spell the names of her grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Then, she glued the leaves on the branches.

After Tara shared her finished tree in class, she got to bring it home. She likes to practice reading the names, and she takes pride in showing off the tree when relatives visit. Recently, she was excited to find out she'll soon need to add a new leaf—for her baby brother or sister! ♥



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ISSN 1540-5648