

# Reading Connection

INTERMEDIATE EDITION

Working Together for Learning Success

January 2018



## Book Picks

### ■ *Martin Luther King Jr.: 10 Days* (David Colbert)

Your child can read about some of the most significant days in the life of the civil rights leader. This biography describes the day King launched a bus boycott, the day he gave his legendary “I Have a Dream” speech, and more.



### ■ *The League of Unexceptional Children* (Gitty Daneshvari)

The heroes in this story are just average kids. In fact, being ordinary is why the government recruited them to be spies. Their mission: Fix the country’s biggest security breach ever and locate a missing vice president! The first book in the League of Unexceptional Children series.

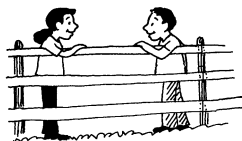
### ■ *Puppet Mania!* (John Kennedy)

In this how-to book, a professional puppeteer shares his secrets for creating puppets. The text provides step-by-step instructions for 13 puppets, such as a “bottle bug” and a “spoon chicken.” Your youngster will also find ideas for making puppets move and talk.



### ■ *Return to Sender* (Julia Alvarez)

A Vermont farmer hires migrant workers to save his farm after he’s injured in a tractor accident. This brings together Tyler and Mari, two 11-year-olds from very different worlds who quickly become friends. A story about cultural understanding. (Also available in Spanish.)

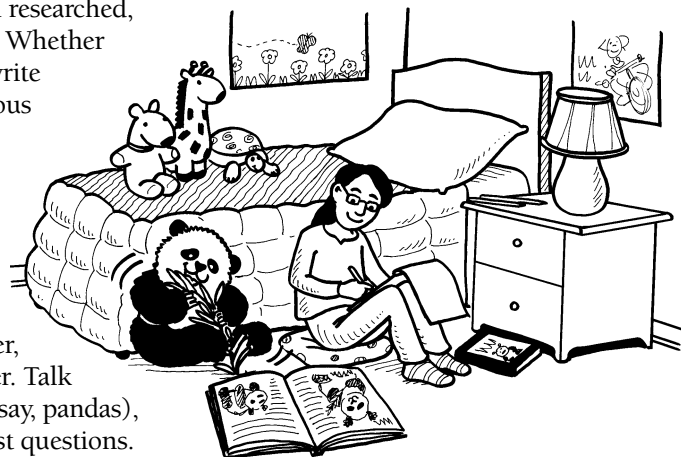


## Report-writing tips

A good report is well researched, interesting, and factual. Whether your child is asked to write about an animal, a famous person, or a historic event, here is advice to help her do her best.

### Be curious

Curiosity can motivate your youngster to investigate deeper, making her report better. Talk to her about her topic (say, pandas), and encourage her to list questions. *Examples:* “Where do pandas live?” “What do they eat?” As she reads books and websites, she’ll probably become even more curious. For instance, she may wonder why pandas eat bamboo if it’s hard for them to digest and not very nutritious.



### Keep the audience interested

Inspiring quotes, surprising statistics, and “little-known” facts can keep readers intrigued. For a report on an inventor, your child might “grab” her audience by starting with a quote. If she’s allowed to include graphics, maybe she’ll draw a

diagram of one of the person’s inventions and label its parts.

### Check the facts

Encourage your youngster to verify each fact in her report by checking at least two trustworthy sources. These usually include library books with recent copyright dates and websites of public libraries, schools, universities, and museums. If she’s not sure whether a source is reputable, she could ask her teacher or school librarian. ■

## Long reading assignments made easier

As your youngster gets older, he’ll be asked to read longer books over several days or weeks. Help him build his “reading stamina” with these ideas.

● **Mix it up.** Using different approaches can motivate your child to stick with a long assignment. He might alternate reading one page silently and the next page out loud. For fiction, he could talk in the voices of the characters. If he’s reading nonfiction, let him pretend he’s narrating a documentary.

● **Break it up.** Suggest that your youngster divide a reading assignment into shorter sessions. He might read half after school and the other half before bed. Or he could set a timer to read in 20-minute segments with 5-minute breaks in between. ■



## Be a word-attack whiz

Unfamiliar words don't have to stop your youngster in his tracks. Encourage him to use these strategies to figure them out as he reads.

**Sound it out.** Your child can try to pronounce challenging words aloud. If he says *mis-chie-vous* or *com-part-ment*, he may remember that he's heard the word used in conversation.

**Cover up familiar parts.** Suggest that he look for familiar prefixes and suffixes and cover them up to see what's left. For instance, he could put



his finger over *dis* in *disobey* or *ize* in *generalize*. Isolating *obey* or *general* may help him read the word.

**Notice roots.** A tricky word might have a root that he knows. If your child is confused by *aquanaut*, perhaps he'll think, "Aqua has to do with water. Maybe an aquanaut explores the ocean like astronauts explore space."

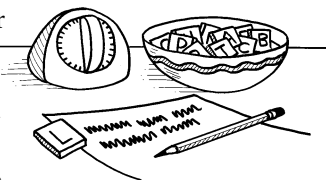
**Use context.** Suggest that your youngster skip a word he doesn't know and continue reading to the end of the sentence or paragraph. ("The *frigid* weather made Jack want to stay inside by the fireplace.") The meaning of the passage may make the word clear. ("*Frigid* must mean very cold.")



## Fun with Words Ahh, alliteration!

"Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers" is a fun example of alliteration—where two or more words start with the same sound. Play the following game to let your youngster explore this writing technique.

**1.** Have your child put magnetic letters or letter tiles in a bowl. (Leave out Q, X, Y, and Z.)



**2.** Your youngster can pull a letter out of the bowl and set a timer for 3 minutes.

**3.** Each player writes the longest possible sentence using only words beginning with that letter. Sentences may be silly, but they should make sense. For L, your child might write, "Laura Llama licked lovely lavender lollipops."

**4.** When time's up, read your sentences aloud. Award one point for each word that begins with the chosen letter. After three rounds, the highest score wins.

## Parent 2 Parent Reading around town

My daughter Gabriella and I recently found a way to learn new facts about our town.

It started when we spotted a historical marker during a walk and realized that one of Gabby's favorite authors once lived nearby. Gabby learned that the writer arrived with her family in a covered wagon and wrote several books here. And I learned that this was a good opportunity for my daughter to read for information!

Now we point out all kinds of signs when we're out. Gabby read a plaque on a building and discovered that our town was once known for hat-making. We've also enjoyed reading the map at the commuter rail station, which describes landmarks along the train route—apparently there's an ice-cream factory three stops ahead. We plan to hop aboard soon and look for more things to read along the way!



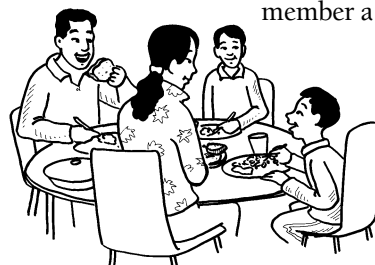
## Q&A Family discussions for everyone

**Q** My older son loves chatting at the dinner table, but my younger one doesn't join in very often. Any ideas on how I can balance out the conversation?

**A** Since good communication involves listening and speaking, your younger child benefits from hearing his older brother talk. But you can encourage him to speak, too, with these suggestions.

Try asking a "Question of the Day." It could be funny ("If you were an amusement park ride, which one would you be?") or straightforward ("What is your favorite family tradition?"). Then, go around the table to give each family member a chance to answer.

Another idea: Before dinner, ask each child what he'd like to discuss during the meal. Your younger son may be excited to participate in a conversation if it's on a topic he suggested.



### OUR PURPOSE

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# Reading Connection

INTERMEDIATE EDITION

Working Together for Learning Success

February 2018

## Book Picks

### ■ *A Dog's Life: The Autobiography of a Stray* (Ann M. Martin)

What does a stray dog think about? This story is told from the viewpoint of a dog named Squirrel. As a puppy, he became separated from his mother. Now he must search for a permanent home—while avoiding dangers along the way.



### ■ *Eye of the Storm: NASA, Drones, and the Race to Crack the Hurricane Code* (Amy Cherrix)

Young weather buffs can follow hurricane hunters and NASA scientists doing the difficult work of predicting when and how hard a hurricane will hit. Also explains how smartphones and social media have saved lives and improved emergency preparedness.



■ *Smile* (Raina Telgemeier)  
Sixth grade isn't off to a great start for Raina, especially since she lost her two front teeth when she tripped and fell. This funny and colorful graphic memoir is based on the author's middle school dilemmas. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ *Lives of the Presidents: Fame, Shame (and What the Neighbors Thought)* (Kathleen Krull)  
Celebrate Presidents' Day with these profiles that focus on fun facts. Kids will enjoy discovering how one president got stuck in the bathtub, another had a beard that was so long it dipped into his soup, and much more.



## Background knowledge builds comprehension

"I saw a shark just like that at the aquarium."

"I camped out under the stars once."

"I always want to win big prizes at carnivals, too."

When your child connects what he already knows to something he's reading, his comprehension can soar. Try these ideas to activate his background knowledge.



### Brainstorm word associations

Before your youngster starts reading a book, ask him to scan the cover for an interesting word or picture—and use it to trigger associations with words he knows. For *Treasury of Greek Mythology* (Donna Jo Napoli), he might target *mythology* and come up with a string of words like *stories*, *legends*, *heroes*, and *old*. This kind of brainstorming gives him a general idea of what to expect from the book.

### Visualize the setting

Having an image in his head increases your child's understanding. As he reads, he could jot down places mentioned in

the text (examples: castle, island). Every time he adds a setting to the list, he can ask himself: Does this place remind me of any place I have visited or that I've seen in a TV show or movie?

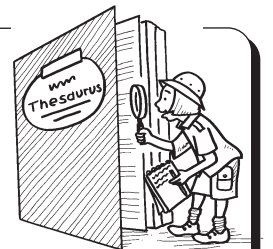
### Think about other books

When your youngster starts a new book, encourage him to look back on similar books he has read. For example, if he's reading historical fiction, he might relate it to a textbook chapter he read about the same time period. Before reading the second book in a series, he can skim through the first installment to recall details about the characters' personalities and the plot.

## Just-right words

Encourage your child to stretch her vocabulary by going on a "word quest." She'll see how papers and other written assignments can be more interesting when she uses a variety of words.

1. Ask your child to write three sentences and underline at least one word in each. Examples: "The ugly monster roared." "The little rabbit ate." "The leaves blew in the dark forest."
2. How many synonyms can she list for each underlined word? Perhaps the rabbit *nibbled* and the leaves *rustled*. (Hint: If she's stuck, suggest that she use a thesaurus.)
3. Now she can try the new words in her sentences. Which ones sound best?



## Picture this! Write that!

Looking for a way to inspire your youngster's creative writing abilities? Photos can do the trick. Here are ways to get started.

**Photo walk.** Go for a walk together, and let your child take pictures of scenes that might lead to a story. She could snap a photo of a fire truck speeding past with its lights flashing or of a frozen lake shimmering in the sun. At home, she



can look at the pictures and write a story about a courageous rescue or an ice hockey game.

**Magazine clippings.** Have your youngster cut out pictures of people, places, animals, and objects from old magazines. Next, suggest that she put the pictures in a paper bag, reach in, and pull out three at random. She can challenge herself to write a story to go with all three pictures. If she pulls

out a photo of a cat, a backpack, and a little girl sitting in a classroom, your youngster may

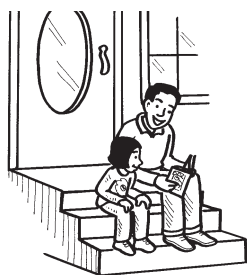
write about a cat who sneaks into his owner's backpack so he can go to school, too. 📖



## Q&A Never too old for read-alouds

**Q** Now that my daughter can read by herself, should we still read aloud?

**A** Reading aloud—at any age—is great for parent-child bonding and for boosting your child's reading and listening skills.



Let her choose books she might not read on her own, perhaps ones with more complex stories or longer chapters. Mix

things up by having her read a page or section to you, too. Or choose characters for you each to “play,” and read their lines in different voices.

Another way to liven up read-alouds for this age is to read in various places and at different times. Reading before bed is great, but you could also read to her in the kitchen over snacks, on the front steps on an unexpectedly warm day, or while waiting for a relative at the bus station. 📖

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## Parent 2 Parent

### Watch out for spell-check

For the longest time, I couldn't get my son Max to understand the importance of proofreading his writing. He would roll his eyes and insist that spell-check and autocorrect were there to do the job for him.

Then one day, he read a story he had written to our family. He kept tripping over sloppy mistakes—and he couldn't believe how much they changed the meaning of his story. The first one was kind of funny: “I didn't know he was a police officer because he wasn't wearing his *unicorn*.” It was obviously supposed to be *uniform*. We laughed about what autocorrect had done to his story, but he quickly realized that proofreading wasn't a laughing matter.

Now when Max writes, he likes to share funny examples from autocorrect. But I'm glad to hear them, because finding the mistakes means he is proofreading his work carefully. 📖



## Fun with Words

### A new kind of word puzzle

What in the world is a *ditloid*?

It's actually a rather funny name for a clever kind of word puzzle. Simply put, you combine numbers and letters to represent a familiar phrase, date, or fact. For example, *24 H in a D* is a ditloid for *24 hours in a day*. (Note: Common words like *the*, *in*, *a*, *an*, *of*, and *to* usually aren't abbreviated.)

You and your youngster can take turns making up ditloids for each other to solve. He'll practice creative thinking, and you'll enjoy a fun game together. Score one point for each one you get right.

**Idea:** If you need hints, sketch pictures to go along with the clues. 📖



### Try these!

- 50 S on the F
- 27 A in the C
- 52 W in a Y
- 101 D
- 1 F 2 F RF BF
- A the W in 80 D

- Around the World in 80 Days
- Blue Fish
- One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, 101 Dalmatians
- 52 weeks in a year
- Constitution
- 27 amendments in the
- 50 stars on the flag

### Answers

# Reading Connection

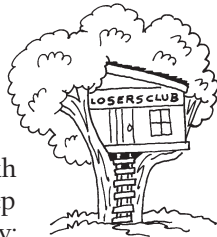
Working Together for Learning Success

March 2018

## Book Picks

### ■ *The Losers Club* (Andrew Clements)

In this laugh-out-loud story, Alec just wants to be left alone to read. So he starts a club with a name sure to keep the other kids away: "The Losers Club." Now the sixth grader can't understand why so many of his classmates want to join him.



### ■ *Who Was Albert Einstein?* (Jess Brallier)

This illustrated biography explores the life of physicist Albert Einstein. Einstein was a shy child who struggled in school but grew up to be one of the world's most famous scientists and thinkers. (Also available in Spanish.)

### ■ *Lily's Mountain* (Hannah Moderow)

Unwilling to accept that her father died while climbing Mt. Denali, 12-year-old



Lily embarks on a mission to rescue him.

Along the way, she uses the many outdoor skills her dad taught her to overcome physical and emotional challenges. A fast-paced adventure tale.

### ■ *The Animal Book* (Steve Jenkins)

Does your child know that most of the animals on earth are insects? Or that there are more extinct animal species than living ones? This almanac features hundreds of creatures and interesting facts about where they live, what they eat, how they defend themselves, and more.



## Write with a purpose

Whether your youngster is running for student council, writing a story for younger children, or leaving instructions for a pet sitter, keeping her purpose in mind will help her communicate clearly. This advice can help her keep her eye on her goal throughout the writing process.

### Keep it front and center

Encourage your child to write her purpose on a sticky note and put it where she'll see it as she works. For instance, maybe she's writing a campaign speech. Her purpose might be "To persuade others to vote for me." This will remind her to include information about how students would benefit from selecting her as their candidate.

### Choose words carefully

The words your youngster uses can help her achieve her goal. Say she's writing a story to read to a kindergarten class. Picking words little ones will understand (*happy* vs. *elated*) will make her story more entertaining for them. Or if she's



writing instructions for a neighbor who's watching her pet iguana over spring break, she could describe the animal's personality (*timid, playful*). That will tell the sitter how to approach him.

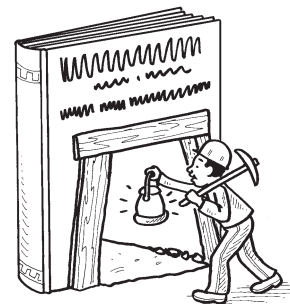
### Revise

Suggest that your child reread her writing to make sure every sentence is in line with her purpose. She might add missing points or take out anything that doesn't fit. For example, in a letter to her grandmother, she may realize that she should write about her piano lessons rather than mentioning her favorite video game twice. 📖

## Dig deep

As your child gets older, he'll be expected to think more deeply about books. Talk together about what he reads. You may not realize it, but the questions you ask can encourage higher-level thinking on his part! Here are two ideas:

- Pose questions that require more than a one-word answer. *Example:* "How did the main character change as the story went on?" instead of "Who is the main character?"
- Choose questions that can't be answered by what's in the story alone. Questions that start with "Why do you think..." or "What if..." are good options. ("Why do you think the author ended it that way?" or "What if the story took place 100 years ago?") 📖



# The “extra! extra!” benefits of newspapers

Sharing the newspaper every day is an easy way to encourage your youngster to read regularly. Consider these ideas.

**Sports recaps.** Start by watching a game together. The next day, pick up the sports section, and look for a story about the game. Which highlights does he think the reporter captured well? What would he have added if he were the writer?



**Entertainment reviews.** Does your child agree with reviewers’ opinions? After you see a movie, play, or museum exhibit, let him read a review of it in the newspaper and tell you what he thinks.

**Comic strips.** Have your youngster choose a comic to read aloud each day at breakfast or dinner. He could use a different voice for each character. At the end of the week, let family members vote for their favorite strip.

**Calendar of events.** Your child can use the newspaper to plan family outings. Encourage him to look for free community offerings like a farmers’ market or a parade. Then, let him announce the time, date, location, and other details.

## Fun with Words

### What’s in a contraction?

Words like *it’s*, *she’ll*, and *wouldn’t* add variety to our language and make writing flow smoothly. These *contractions* are formed by combining two words, with an apostrophe replacing one or more dropped letters. Enjoy these activities.

#### Talk and listen

Play a game over dinner: no contractions allowed during your conversations! Your child will need to choose her words carefully—and listen closely to others to make sure they don’t use a contraction. Who can go the longest? She’ll see that without contractions, speech can sound awkward or choppy.

#### Read and write

Ask your youngster to read a page from a book



out loud, replacing each contraction with the two words that form it. For example, if she sees *you’re*, she would say *you are*. Then, have her write each contraction on one side of an index card and the two words that form it on the other side. This will help her remember the correct spelling.

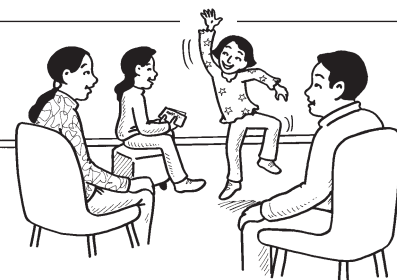
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### Three cheers for improv

“Improv” lets your child practice speaking and thinking on her feet. Short for *improvisational theater*, improv involves acting without a script or planning ahead. Try these suggestions for a fun family night.



#### Guess the character

Each person secretly picks a storybook character (Curious George, Rapunzel). Set a timer for 5 minutes, and take turns being the character you picked. “Curious George” might run and jump around, then say, “I got in trouble today, as usual, but my friend with the yellow hat rescued me.” And “Rapunzel” could act out brushing her long hair while saying, “I can barely hear you up here in my tower!” When the timer goes off, try to guess each other’s characters.

#### One word at a time

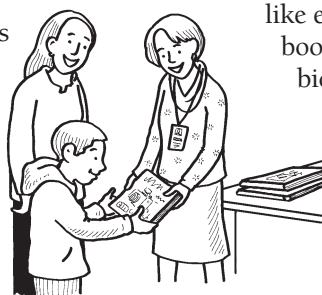
Work together to say an outrageous sentence. On each turn, a player may say only one word. The first person might say “I,” the next player could say, “saw,” and so on. (“I saw a big green dragon eating a cheeseburger on the bus.”) After the last word is said, everyone acts out the sentence. One player might be the dragon, another could drive the bus, and everyone else could be passengers, for example.

## Q&A

### Challenging a strong reader

**Q** My son reads above grade level. But the books he picks out are either too easy or the subjects are too mature. How can I help him stay challenged and find appropriate books?

**A** Start by talking to his school librarian. She will be able to suggest books on your child’s reading level that are appropriate for him. Perhaps classics or historical fiction would be a good fit.



Or nonfiction may be a good choice. Your youngster can look for books with advanced vocabulary that match his interests. Is he a shutterbug? He can check out photography books. Does he like engineering? He might enjoy books about how things work or biographies of engineers.

Keep in mind that it’s okay if your son occasionally wants to read easy books or reread old favorites. Reading for fun is an activity that he can enjoy all his life.

# Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

April 2018

## Book Picks

### ■ *Cosmic* (Frank Cottrell Boyce)

Twelve-year-old Liam is tall for his age, and he and his friend Florida think it's funny to pretend they're father and son. They go so far as to use this joke to win a trip to outer space. When their rocket veers off course, everyone expects "Dad" to save the day—not knowing he's just a kid. (Also available in Spanish.)

### ■ *Dara Palmer's Major Drama* (Emma Shevah)

Dara wants to star in her school's production of *The Sound of Music*. When she's not cast, she thinks it's because she's adopted from Cambodia and doesn't look the part. In this coming-of-age story, Dara learns to take pride in her heritage.



### ■ *A Child Through Time: The Book of Children's History* (Phil Wilkinson)

How did children live in the past? This book takes young readers on an exciting journey from the Ice Age to modern times. Profiles of 30 children deliver kid-friendly information on the games, food, and clothes from different historical eras.



■ *The Mayor of Central Park* (Avi)  
Oscar isn't your typical mayor. He's a squirrel, and he's also the manager of Central Park's baseball team. When rats invade his park, Oscar must stop

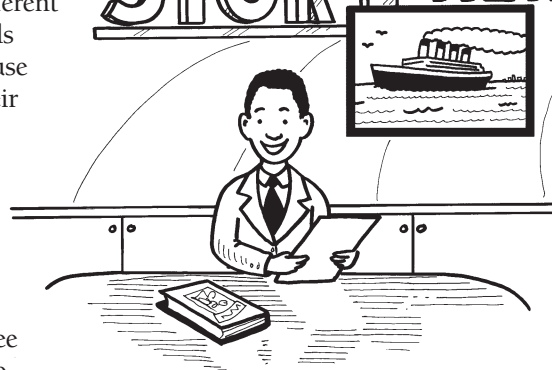


them before they drive out the other animal residents. Fans of animals and baseball will enjoy this tale.

## Synthesizing from start to finish

Your youngster's understanding and opinion of a book he has just started reading may be very different from the way he thinks and feels when he's finished. That's because readers *synthesize*, or adjust their thinking, as they digest a story or topic. Try these activities to help your child notice how his thinking changes as he reads.

## STORY NEWS



### Make a jigsaw puzzle

Synthesizing is like putting together a puzzle—you don't see the big picture until you're done. Have your youngster draw lines to divide a poster board into 8–10 puzzle pieces, number each piece, and cut them apart.

Then, he could write about his growing comprehension of a story on separate puzzle pieces. The first piece might say, "This book seems to be about two kids who have nothing in common and don't like each other." And the final piece may read, "Now I know that the story was actually about accepting differences." Each time he fills out a piece, he adds it to the puzzle. When he finishes the book, he can read his puzzle in order.

### Be a newscaster

Invite your child to pretend he's reporting on a "developing story." He can give you updates that reflect his latest understanding as he reads several nonfiction books on the same topic.

Say he's researching the Titanic. His original "broadcast" could be: "A ship sank, and there weren't enough lifeboats to save everyone." As he reads on and discovers that there's more to the story, perhaps he'll report: "Many more passengers would've been saved if the lifeboats had been filled to capacity." 📺

## Experiment with point of view

One fun part of being an author is that you get to decide which character will tell the story. Help your child see how interesting a change in perspective can be!

- Encourage your youngster to rewrite a familiar story. For example, she might have Babe the Blue Ox tell the tale of Paul Bunyan. The original version makes the lumberjack's feats sound pretty amazing—is Babe in awe of his owner, or tired of his antics?



- If a visitor from the distant future came to your town, what would he think of it? Suggest that your youngster draw one comic strip showing a day from her point of view ("We rode the school bus"), and another showing the time traveler's ("We traveled in a rickety yellow capsule and stayed on the ground the whole time"). 📺

# Poetry writing made easy!

Poems are a great way for children to express themselves and practice writing. Use these ideas to spark your youngster's interest in poetry.

**Acrostic "selfie."** Have your child write her name vertically down the left side of a sheet of paper. Now she could begin each line of a poem about herself with a letter of her name:

*Each day brings new adventures  
Middle child and only girl  
In dance class I love to twirl  
Living in a little town  
You know I love to be a clown!*



**Shape poem.** This idea encourages your youngster to choose words that will fit specific line lengths. Suggest that she draw the outline of an object, perhaps a ladybug or a flower. Then, she can write a poem that fills the space inside. For instance, the first and last lines of a poem about ladybugs would be shorter than the middle lines:

Bright speck of red on a green leaf; cute little ladybug with polka-dots. Fly away home!



## Fun with Words Sentence scramble

Encourage your child to think about sentence structure and grammar with this cooperative game.

1. Secretly write a sentence from a book on a sheet of paper, and cut the words apart. Mix them up, and place them in a bowl on the ground.
2. Have two or more players line up 15 feet from the bowl.
3. On "Go," the first player runs to the bowl, grabs a word, and returns to the line.
4. He tags the next player, who runs to pick up a word, and so on.
5. Once the players collect all the words, they rebuild the sentence together. *Tip:* Suggest that they find the subject, add the verb, and then look for ways the remaining words could fit into the sentence.
6. Play again using a new sentence from the book.



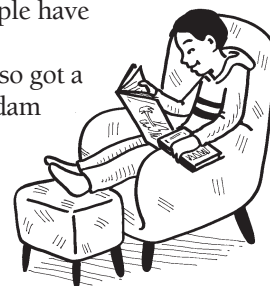
## Parent & Parent The perfect pair: Fiction and nonfiction

My son Adam loves adventure novels. Reading these stories has made him curious about things like exotic locations and extreme sports. When he asked questions I couldn't answer, it reminded me of how his teacher wants kids to read more nonfiction.

So when he wondered how many people have climbed Mt. Everest, I suggested that he look for a nonfiction book about the mountain. Adam borrowed a school library book and learned that more than 4,000 people have reached the summit.

Then, when he checked out a story set in Antarctica, he also got a nonfiction book about scientists living and working there. Adam said that knowing which events and details in the story were based on facts made the book even better for him!

Now Adam often reads fiction and nonfiction that are related. He's picking up a lot of new facts—and reading more books, too.



## Q&A Building your child's book collection

**Q** I've heard it's good for kids to have books of their own, but we're on a budget. Any tips on building a home library for my daughter?

**A** You're right. Having books at home is one of the best ways to improve reading achievement. And kids love seeing old favorites on their shelves to read whenever they like.

Now that spring is here, consider going to yard sales or flea

markets with your child to pick out books. The school book fair is another place to stock up on low-cost books. And don't forget year-round opportunities like used bookstores, thrift shops, and discount online bookstores.

Finally, friends and relatives may have chapter books or children's nonfiction books they're finished with. Let them know your daughter would love to inherit them—you could even offer to pick them up.



**OUR PURPOSE**

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote their children's reading, writing, and language skills.

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