

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

January 2018

Sweetbriar Elementary School

Book Picks



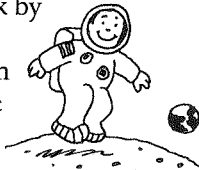
Read-aloud favorites

■ Snow Party

How do snow women, men, and children celebrate the first snowfall of winter? In Harriet Ziefert's story, they gather for a big celebration on the new-fallen snow. Dressed in colorful hats and scarves, the snow people sing, dance, eat, and exchange gifts. A fun read-aloud for a snowy day.

■ If You Decide to Go to the Moon

This nonfiction book by Faith McNulty takes your youngster on an imaginary trip to the moon. She will discover what supplies astronauts need, how it feels to blast off, and what it's like to land on the moon. Also includes scientific facts about the moon's atmosphere, temperature, and gravity.



■ Mitch and Amy

Twins Mitch and Amy have very different personalities, and they start most of their days by arguing. In this book by Beverly Cleary, it takes a school bully to bring the twins together—and to show them that their bond is stronger than they thought.



■ Big Red Barn

This classic rhyming story by Margaret Wise Brown is just right for beginning readers. Your child will meet farm animals and learn about other things on a farm, like scarecrows, cornfields, and weather vanes. (Also available in Spanish.)



How stories work

Knowing how stories are organized can make it easier for your child to understand them. Most books follow a familiar path: we meet the characters in the beginning, they face a problem in the middle, and the problem is solved in the end. Here are some activities that will let your youngster explore stories.



What's in a story! Read a book aloud, and ask your child to make a "story house" for it. She can start by drawing a house with four rooms and a triangular roof. Then, have her write the title on the roof and illustrate a different "story element" in each room: characters, setting, problem, and solution. When she reads books, thinking about the house can help her visualize what's in a story.

What's the order! Being able to tell what happened first, next, and last can improve your youngster's reading comprehension. Help her read a story. Then,

each of you can divide a sheet of paper into thirds and draw a different event from the story in each section—but place them out of order! Trade papers, cut the sections apart, and put the events in order. Finally, have her use the drawings to retell the story.

What will happen next! Encourage your child to use what she knows about stories to make predictions. Read a book, but pause before the problem is introduced. Can she predict what it will be? (She might look at previous pages for clues.) Then, stop before the book ends, and ask her to guess the solution. ♥

Stronger writing muscles

When your youngster holds his pencil correctly, writing is easier. He can strengthen his hand muscles—and enjoy writing more—with these tips:

- Have him write while holding a penny or marble between his ring finger and pinky. He'll think it's funny, but it will remind him that those two fingers don't belong on his pencil! Or he could try writing with a miniature-golf pencil or broken crayon—he will have less room for fingers that don't help with writing.
- Did you know it takes more strength and coordination to write on a vertical surface? Let your child give his hand and wrist muscles a workout by writing and drawing on a chalkboard, whiteboard, or large cardboard box. He could play school, or he might use markers to turn a box into a fire truck or castle. ♥



Poetry play

Can your youngster describe a tree in 17 syllables? Or use rhyming words to write a riddle? Making up poetry is a fun way to practice thinking and writing. Consider these ideas.

Haiku

A *haiku* is a 17-syllable poem in three lines. Let your child choose something outside, such as a pine tree. Then, take turns writing lines of a haiku about it. The first line has five syllables (“Tall,



green, and pointy”), the second has seven (“Standing in the dark forest”), and the last has five (“With sticky pinecones”). *Note:* He can dictate his lines to you if he’s not writing yet.

I Spy

Write an “I Spy” poem together. First, have your youngster choose a small item in a magazine picture (say, a star). Help him think of a pair of rhyming words

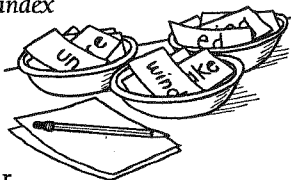
for it (shiny, tiny) and use them in a two-line riddle. (“I spy something bright and shiny. It’s high in the sky and looks very tiny.”) *Variation:* Suggest that he draw a picture with hidden objects and write an “I Spy” poem about it. For instance, he might draw a soccer ball in the sun. ♥



Building words

Exploring prefixes and suffixes can help your child learn more words quickly and easily. Try this word-building game.

Materials: 18 index cards, pencil, 3 bowls



1. On separate index cards, help your youngster write six prefixes (*un, re*), six suffixes (*ed, ing*), and six root words (*wind, bake*). Put the prefixes, root words, and suffixes into three separate bowls.

2. Take turns drawing cards, one at a time, and try to make words. For instance, *re + wind = rewind*, and *re + wind + ing = rewinding*. (You can rearrange your cards at any time to make more words.) *Note:* If a root word drops an *e* before adding the suffix (*bake + ing = baking*), your child can cover the *e* with the suffix card.

3. When the bowls are empty, tally your scores. Earn 1 point for each word with a prefix or suffix and 2 points for each word with both. The high score wins. ♥

Q&A

Successful read-alouds

Q My daughter doesn’t always want to sit still long enough for me to read her a whole story. What should I do?

A The first thing is to try to figure out why this happens. Perhaps the books have too many words on a page for her, or maybe there’s a better time of day to read aloud.

You might start with a book that has one sentence per page and work up from there. Then, experiment to find the best time to read. Your daughter may want to snuggle up with you right after school, or you could read while she eats a snack. Also, choose a spot without distractions. You might sit in the living room with the TV off or go out on your front porch or to a quiet park bench. ♥



Parent to Parent

Let’s have a treasure hunt

My boys have always loved treasure hunts. I used to draw picture clues for them, but now that my younger son is starting to read, I decided to write clues so he could practice his new skills.

First, I hid one of their favorite books under a sofa cushion. Then, I hid a series of clues to lead them to the book. For example, I wrote, “Look under the thing that controls the TV.” Under the remote

control, I left a clue directing them to look under the milk carton, and so on.



The boys worked together to read the clues. It was cute to watch my older son help his little brother sound out words like “under” and “carton.”

When they found the book, we read it together. Then, I had them practice writing by making a treasure hunt for me! ♥

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

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Working Together for Learning Success

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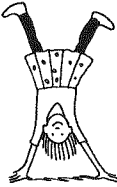
Sweetbriar Elementary School



Book Picks

■ *Sophie the Awesome* Sophie

knows her life would be great if she could show people how awesome she is. But her humorous stunts lead to trouble, and it's an unexpected rescue that finally earns her the title of "Sophie the Awesome." The first book in the Sophie series by Lara Bergen. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *Liar & Spy*

Georges thinks it will be fun when his only friend, Safer, invites him to join a spy club. But as plans to observe their mysterious neighbor become dangerous, Georges isn't sure he can trust Safer. A tale about friendship by Newbery Medal-winning author Rebecca Stead.

■ *Guys Read: The Sports Pages*

This collection, edited by Jon Scieszka, includes short stories by children's authors and nonfiction from famous athletes. Read about unusual baseball superstitions, the case of the missing trophy, the life of hockey player Dustin Brown, and more. From football to track to mixed martial arts, there's something for every sports fan.



■ *Spilling Ink: A Young Writer's Handbook*

Anne Mazer and Ellen Potter share tips and stories to inspire young writers. Written in a friendly question-and-answer format, the book includes advice about writing "ugly" first drafts, bringing characters to life, creating suspense, and keeping a journal.



Reading resolutions

Here's a New Year's resolution that's fun and rewarding to stick with: read more! Have your child try these tips for a year full of reading.

Read a "mile." There are 5,280 feet in a mile. How long will it take your youngster to read that many pages? He can resolve to read a certain number of pages each day and keep track of his daily page count on a calendar. You might celebrate with a trip to the bookstore when he reaches $\frac{1}{4}$ mile (1,320 pages), $\frac{1}{2}$ mile (2,640 pages), and $\frac{3}{4}$ mile (3,960 pages). *Variation:* Work toward this goal as a family, and combine your totals.

Explore new genres. Encourage your child to branch out. If he normally reads mysteries, for example, he could try science fiction or historical fiction. He might aim to read a book from a different genre each month.



Get to know an author. Have your youngster list several books by a favorite author and check off each one as he finishes it. When he has read every book on his list, ask him to tell you about the one he liked best. *Idea:* Help him explore the author's website to learn more.

Watch less, read more. This year, your youngster could spend more time reading than he spends watching TV. Ask him to track his time for both activities on a calendar. (He might draw a book for every 30 minutes spent reading and a TV for every 30 minutes he watches.) At the end of each month, he can see how he did. ■

What's on a map?

Knowing how to "read" symbols that stand for words is an important literacy skill. Here are ways your youngster can use maps to practice reading symbols:

- Cover up the key on a map. Point to a symbol, and ask your child to guess what it represents. For instance, a star probably stands for a capital city. She can check the key to see if she was right and then pick a symbol for you to guess.
- Suggest that your youngster draw a map of a familiar place (your neighborhood, her school). She could come up with symbols to represent different map elements, like a slide for a playground or a desk for a classroom. Then, have her make a key to show what each symbol stands for.

Idea: Look for symbols everywhere you go, and ask your child to figure out what they mean (fork and knife = restaurant, suitcase = baggage claim). ■



Reports that stand out

Finding a fresh, creative angle can turn an ordinary writing assignment into a fun project. Suggest these approaches to get your youngster motivated—and see how her enthusiasm shows in her work!

Create a list

Your child might list 10 unusual facts to include in a report. For instance, she could call her paper, “Ten Facts to Know About Robotics” or “Ten Ways Frogs Are Fascinating,” and write a paragraph or section about each fact on her list.



Focus on characters

Before your youngster begins her next book report, she might make a “who’s who” describing each character’s role in the story. *Example:* “Dorothy Gale is taken to Oz by a tornado. She makes unusual friends on her way to meet a wizard.” She can refer to her descriptions as she writes her book report.

Ask questions

What does your child wonder about the topic she has been assigned? Encourage her to write questions before she starts (“Why did Amelia Earhart want to fly?” “How did she learn to fly?”). As she does research, she can jot down the answers. Afterward, she can use her notes to write the report. ■



Fun with Words Backward spelling

Your youngster can practice spelling and creative thinking by playing these two “backward” games.

1. Write the letters of a well-known word in reverse order on a piece of paper. For example, “freeze” would be “ezeerf.” Ask your child to try sounding out the backward word. Then, he can give the word a silly definition. *Example:* “Ezeerf: The sound screeching tires make.” Next, let him write a backward word, and you make up a definition.

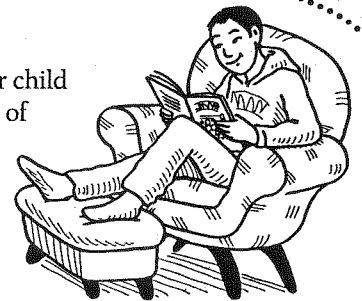


2. Take turns reading a backward word to each other and trying to figure out what it is. Start with familiar ones, such as your names. *Tip:* Write the letter sounds you hear, then reverse the letters to discover the word. ■

Discover biographies

Biographies are like people—no two are alike. Your child can try the following ideas for learning about the lives of famous folks:

- Reading a biography can be a fun way to explore a school subject further. If your youngster is studying physical science, for example, encourage him to read biographies of scientists who came up with theories about force, motion, and energy. Or if he’s learning about a particular country in social studies, let him look for biographies of famous people who lived there. He’ll get an inside look at different aspects of life in that country.
- The story of a person’s life is often told in chronological order. Suggest that your child make a timeline to help him keep track of events as he reads. He can write each event on a sticky note and arrange them in order on a piece of paper. Putting events in sequence can strengthen his reading comprehension. ■



Q&A Table talk

Q When I try to start a dinner conversation with my daughter, I get one-word responses. Any suggestions?

A Conversations improve your child’s vocabulary, which can make her a better reader and writer. And the dinner table is a great place to start.

Try asking open-ended questions—ones that require more than a “yes” or “no” answer. Also, be specific. Instead of asking, “What did you do today?” you could say, “What game did you play in gym?” You might also have

everyone share their favorite moment of the day. In general, try to keep the conversation light and friendly, which can make your youngster more likely to talk.

Another idea is to make a dinner conversation kit. Have family members write questions or topics on separate index cards, and keep the cards in a recipe box on the table.

Examples: “Which zoo animal would make the coolest pet?” “What would life be like if we didn’t have electricity?” Take turns drawing a card and using it to start a discussion. ■



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