

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

April 2013

Sweetbriar Elementary School

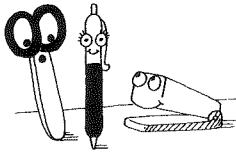
Book Picks



Read-aloud favorites

■ *The Little Red Pen*

No one will help Little Red Pen with her paperwork—the scissors nor the stapler. After the poor pen falls into the trash, the office supplies must work together to rescue her. A funny tale by Janet Stevens and Susan Stevens Crummel.



■ *Teammates*

When baseball player Jackie Robinson became the first African American in the major leagues, many people didn't want him to play. Pitchers threw balls at him, crowds booed, and some teammates refused to sit with him. This is Peter Golenbock's true story of Robinson and the teammate who stood up for him.

■ *And Then It's Spring*



In this cute story by Julie Fogliano, a little boy plants a garden and waits patiently for the

seeds to sprout. Your child will enjoy searching for signs of spring in the pictures and watching the turtle, bunny, and other creatures as they look forward to the new season.

■ *Fancy Nancy and the Posh Puppy*

Nancy's family is getting a dog. Everything in the little girl's life is fancy, so she assumes her dog should be fancy, too. In Jane O'Connor's book, Nancy learns that fanciness isn't the most important quality in a pet! (Also available in Spanish.)



Listening to your child read

As your youngster learns how to read, celebrate his new skills by letting him read to you. With these ideas, he can practice reading smoothly and using expression.

Set him up for success.

Help him pick stories he'll feel confident reading aloud. These might be books that you have read to him many times (say, a favorite bedtime story) or stories that have a repeating phrase. *Idea:* If he chooses a harder book, suggest that you take turns reading pages or paragraphs.

Offer encouragement. Pointing out what your child does well can help him do it again. ("Your voice sounded growly—just like a bear—when you read that line!") *Idea:* If he stumbles over a word here and there, tell him what it is so he doesn't get frustrated and can continue reading. If he hesitates over too many words, let him pick an easier book.



Make suggestions. Your youngster will read more fluently if he understands the story. If his voice sounds flat or he's reading too fast or too slow, stop to talk about what's happening in the book. ("Wow, that part was scary! How do you think the mouse feels?") Once he understands the plot, have him read it again.

Tip: Try to let your child read aloud every day. Even a few minutes will increase his confidence and help him become a more fluent reader.♥

My book cover

Designing a "book cover" can be a fun way to improve your child's reading comprehension. Let her pick a book and follow these steps.

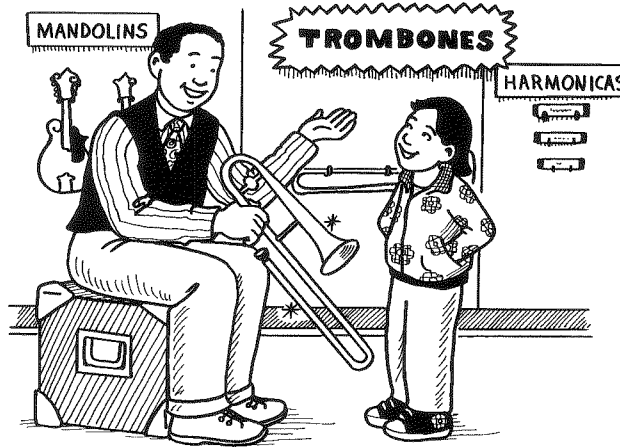
1. Talk about what the cover includes (title, author's name, picture, summary). Then, read the book.
2. Have her fold a piece of construction paper in half to make a pretend cover. On the front, she can illustrate the story—she might draw her favorite part, for instance.
3. On the back, help her write a summary. She could describe the main character and tell what happens to him. *Tip:* If she isn't writing yet, she can dictate her summary to you.
4. Let your youngster hang her cover near her book collection. Then, suggest that she make covers for other stories to display beside it.♥



New words everywhere

From your kitchen to the shops in your town to your child's schoolwork, the world is full of opportunities to use new words. Try these suggestions to help your youngster's vocabulary grow:

- Many new words pop up during everyday activities. When you cook, you might show her a *spatula*. During a walk, you could point out an *awning*. Also, try acting out unfamiliar words. ("That bunny *scampered* away when he saw us. Let's *scamper* like the bunny.")



- Seek out unusual words when you visit new places. At a farmers' market, you could name foods ("This purple vegetable is an *eggplant*"), and in a music store, you might identify instruments ("That *trombone* is shiny").

- Try to use words that you see on the work your youngster brings home. If you're sharing graham

crackers, you might ask, "Are these servings *equal*?" Or if she's learning about weather in science, you could say, "Look, it's raining hard. That's a lot of *precipitation*." ♥



Fun with Words Pick a vowel

What sound does the letter *u* make? It sounds like *uh* in *tub*, *oooh* in *tube*, and *u* in *universe*. Vowels (*a, e, i, o, u*—and sometimes *y*) are tricky for beginning readers because they make many different sounds. This activity can help.



Have your youngster write each vowel on a separate slip of paper. Mix up the slips, and turn them over. Then, let him choose one, and work together to write a sentence with that vowel in every word. If he picks *a*, the sentence could be, "Grandma's cat ate a grape." What different sounds does he hear for *a*? Keep choosing slips until you've made a sentence for each vowel.

Variation: Write a sentence that contains no vowels other than the one he picks! For *e*, you might write, "Ed gets eleven eggs." ♥

OUR PURPOSE

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Q&A Writing that makes sense

Q My son enjoys writing stories, but they often don't make sense. Should I help him?

A It's great that your son likes to write. When a child first learns to write, his stories don't always make sense to others. Gradually, he'll learn to write stories that flow logically.

For now, you can support him by listening as he reads his stories to you. You can also encourage him to add more information ("What did you do with your friends at recess?") or to clear up a part that's confusing ("Who said, 'Let's go home'—you, or your brother?").

Also, have him tell you stories. He might describe the new class pet or something funny that happened at lunch. He'll practice relating events in a logical order, and that can help his stories make more sense when he puts them down on paper. ♥



Parent to Parent "Artsy" spelling practice

My daughter Lindsay was getting tired of studying for weekly spelling tests. One day when she was finger painting, she painted one of her words. I suggested that she paint the rest of them—and then I pointed out that she was finished studying for the day!

Now each week we come up with a different way to use art for studying her words. One week Lindsay

spelled with play dough. She flattened a handful of it and, using a toothpick, poked tiny holes in the dough to spell a word. Another time, I put paint into small eyedroppers so she could squeeze it onto paper, one drop at a time, to spell each word.

Lindsay is having fun with her words, and I'm glad that she's doing well on her spelling quizzes! ♥



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INTERMEDIATE EDITION

Working Together for Learning Success

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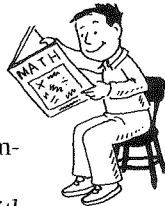


Book Picks

■ Go Figure! A Totally Cool Book About

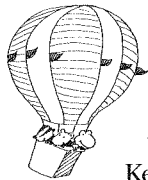
Numbers

Your child can learn how people counted in ancient times, use math to predict the number of petals on a daisy, and even imagine life without math. This nonfiction book by Johnny Ball includes mathematical history, brainteasers, quizzes, and more in a colorful layout filled with diagrams and illustrations.



■ Return to the Willows

Fans of *The Wind in the Willows* can join Mole, Rat, Badger, and Toad on new adventures in this sequel by Jacqueline Kelly. Whether they're hot air ballooning or battling weasels, the friends must be brave and use their wits to save the day.

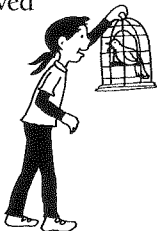


■ Al Capone Does My Shirts

It's 1935, and Moose Flanagan's family is moving to Alcatraz, where his dad will work at the prison. Gennifer Choldenko's story is about Moose's struggle to live a normal life on an island known for its prison—while helping a sister with special needs. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ The Aviary

Twelve-year-old Clara Dooley has spent nearly her entire life cooped up in Glendover Mansion. Then one day, Mrs. Glendover's beloved birds start talking. Suddenly, all is not as it seems, and Clara must learn the mansion's secrets. A mystery by Kathleen O'Dell.



Writing lessons from authors

Did you know that your youngster's favorite authors can help her become a better writer? When she reads, encourage her to pay attention not only to what the book is about, but also to how it is written. Here are some things she might notice and try when she has a writing assignment.



Comparisons

Authors use comparisons to create vivid images. For example, a *simile* states that one thing is like another ("Snow covered the ground like a thick cotton blanket"), and *personification* gives human qualities to an object or animal ("The alarm clock screeched impatiently"). Suggest that your child keep a list of her favorites when she reads. She can use them for inspiration in her own writing.

Format

Ask your youngster to think about how a book is organized. An author might use very short chapters or tell a story through diary entries or letters. And some of today's books are told in comic-strip form. Your child could pick

a format that she enjoys reading and try it herself.

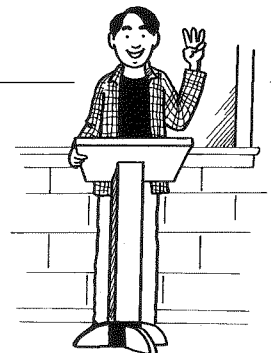
Point of view

Each time your youngster starts a new book, she can notice whether it's written in the first person (using "I") or in the third person (using "she" or "he"). The next time she writes a story, she might write the opening paragraph both ways ("Slowly, I turned. I saw lightning streak the sky," and "Slowly, she turned. She saw lightning streak the sky"). Then, she can write the rest of the story from the point of view she likes best. ■

Successful oral presentations

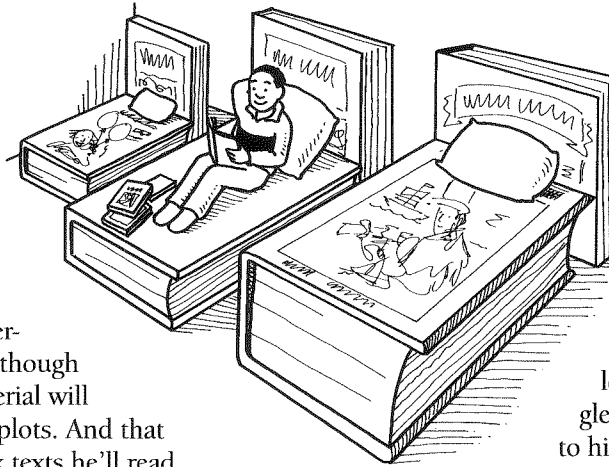
When your child gives an oral presentation in school, he practices communication skills that he will use for everything from casual conversations to job interviews. These ideas can improve his delivery:

- Chin up! Remind your youngster to make eye contact with his audience. *Tip:* Suggest that he choose a friend to glance at from time to time as he speaks.
- Speak up! Encourage him to talk clearly and at an appropriate pace and volume. To practice, let him record his presentation and play it back to find things he can improve.
- Act up! Have your child use gestures for emphasis. For example, if he is counting off important points, he might hold up a finger for each one. ■



“Just right” books

To grow as a reader, your child needs the right books. That means that most of the time, reading shouldn't be too easy or too hard. Ask him to read aloud to you, and then help him find the perfect fit with these tips.

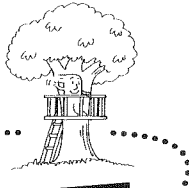


Too hard? Is his reading slow and choppy? Does he stumble over several unfamiliar words per page? Is he confused about what's happening? These are clues that a book is too difficult right now. Ask his teacher or a librarian to help him find books at his level. *Note:* If he often struggles with assigned reading, talk to his teacher to see if he needs extra help.

Too easy? Does your youngster read quickly? Can he recognize every word and easily understand the plot? The book may be too easy. Although that's fine sometimes, more challenging material will offer new vocabulary and more complicated plots. And that will prepare him for the increasingly complex texts he'll read in school.

Just right! Can your child read most of the text smoothly? Did he find a few new words? Can he understand what's going on with a little thought? His book sounds like a good fit—it provides enough of a challenge without frustrating him. ■

Fun with Words Invent new words

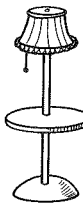


What do you get when you combine the words *breakfast* and *lunch*? *Brunch*, of course!

A *portmanteau* is a word made by combining parts of two words. Encourage your child to think about word parts and meanings—and expand her vocabulary—by making up her own portmanteaus.

First, brainstorm a list of portmanteaus you already know (*chill* + *relax* = *chillax*, *jazz* + *exercise* = *jazzercise*). Once she has the hang of it, it's time to create new words. Have everyone look around the room and think of related words to combine. Then, give a definition for each word you think of. Maybe a *blurtain* (*blind* + *curtain*) is a curtain that you can pull up and down, and a *queet* (*quilt* + *sheet*) is a thin, fitted quilt for a bed.

Idea: Give each other portmanteau riddles to solve. You might say, “What do you call an outdoor meal for children?” (A *kidnic*.) ■



= LAMPLE

Parent 2 Parent Keyboarding skills

My daughter, Kayla, dreaded typing. She used a hunt-and-peck method to email and message friends, but it didn't work well for school assignments. It was slow, and she made a lot of mistakes.

I did a quick online search and found typing games that count words per minute and deduct points for errors. Kayla loves competition, so I suggested that we both play the game and see how much we could improve our speed and accuracy. Once she had learned proper finger placement on the keyboard, she picked up the pace quickly. I also found things she could type for practice, like thank-you notes and recipes.

After a month, my speed had improved by 7 words per minute, and Kayla's had increased by 12! When she typed her latest school paper, she said it was easier to focus on what to say since she didn't have to think about finding each letter on the keyboard. ■



I predict...

Your youngster can build reading comprehension skills by making predictions on a regular basis. Help him practice with these activities:

- Before you cook dinner, let him read the list of ingredients and predict the finished dish. “Tomatoes, lettuce, cheese, beans, and tortillas. I predict we're having burritos or tacos.”
- Ask your child to read the description of a movie or TV show that your family is about to watch.

Encourage him to make as many predictions about the plot as he can. How many were accurate?

- Look at a photo from the newspaper, and have your youngster predict what the article is about. He can look for clues in the picture. “The firefighter has his helmet off and is smiling. I bet he put out a fire.” Then, suggest that he read the article to check his prediction. ■



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