

Family Reading Routines

What can you do every day to boost your youngsters' reading skills and turn them into lifelong readers? Simple routines—like reading alongside your children or asking them to teach you words they have learned—go a long way toward inspiring them to read and learn. Try these ideas.

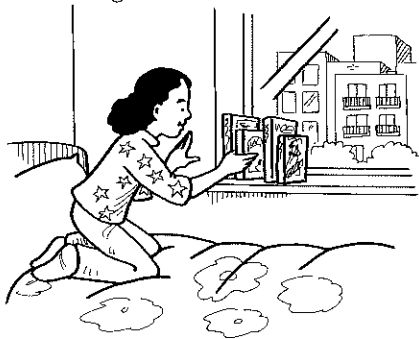


A well-rounded reader

In school, your youngster will read all kinds of materials, from novels to textbooks to journal articles. To get him used to various genres, visit the library regularly. Each time, he can look for something different, such as biographies, science fiction, essays, historical fiction, mysteries, graphic novels, or how-to books. *Tip:* Encourage him to choose nonfiction as often as fiction. That will help him get comfortable with all the nonfiction he'll be reading in school.

Books for every occasion

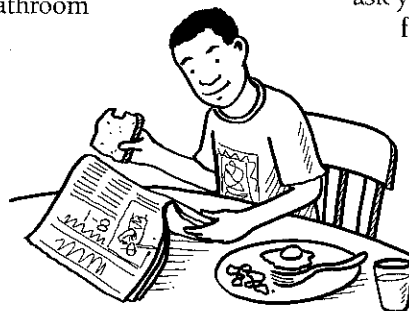
Being able to choose your own books is a terrific motivator for reading. After all, it's nice to make selections that fit your



mood or the time available to read. Put books in each room of your house or apartment—and have your child do the same—so that family members always have something to read. Suggest that she keep a variety of books (novels, poetry, nonfiction) on her nightstand. She could also stock a basket in the bathroom with joke books, magazines, and trivia volumes.

News at breakfast

Begin each day with a quick dose of reading, and help everyone stay up to date on current events, by sharing the newspaper. Put the paper on the breakfast table, and tell each person to pick a section. You might read



interesting headlines or facts aloud. Also, point out articles related to your youngster's interests (baseball, music). Soon, he'll be likely to share what he finds with you, too. *Note:* If you read news online, you can email each other stories that catch your eye.

Reading out loud

Your child is never too old to listen to you read. Take turns being the reader and the audience. You could do this in your living room, at a picnic or patio table, or at bedtime. Try using a different voice for each character and reading with expression to really get into the story. You'll probably find your youngster getting into it, too! *Idea:* Pick a book that intrigues her and you, and alternate reading chapters out loud. You'll both look forward to story time so you can see what happens next.

Word of the day

Let your child try to stump you with his growing vocabulary. Each day, he can choose an interesting word. It might be an unusual word from a novel or a term from math, science, or social studies (*coefficient, magma, nomadic*). During dinner,

ask your youngster to say the word and have family members try to guess what it means. Can anyone get it right? *Idea:*

Suggest that your child sign up for a new word to be delivered to his email with the definition and a sample sentence. He could try merriam-webster.com/word-of-the-day or wordsmith.org/awad.

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Blogs and e-zines

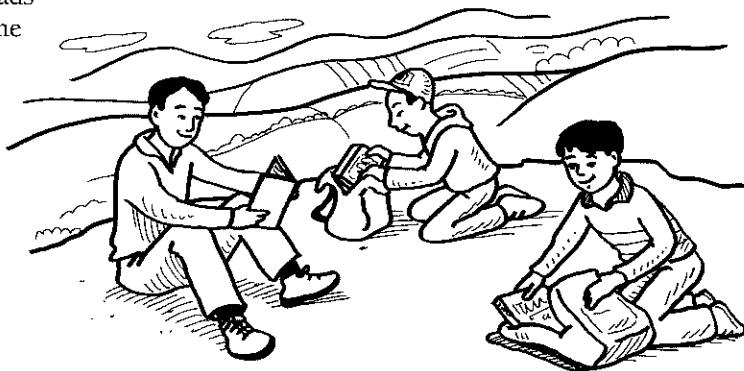
Many kids (and adults) love to read online these days. Perhaps each family member could choose a blog to follow and then share their discoveries with each other. Help your child find appropriate blogs, maybe on topics she’s studying in school, like space (blogs.nasa.gov/cm/newui/blog/blogs.jsp) or Antarctica (antarcticablog.blogspot.com). Or look for kid-friendly versions of popular magazines like *National Geographic* (kids.nationalgeographic.com), *Sports Illustrated* (sikids.com), and *Time* (timeforkids.com).

Family reading time

Reserving a special family time every day for reading shows your youngster how important you think it is. Hold silent reading time each evening or, as he may know it from school, “Drop everything and read!” You could gather in the living room at, say, 8 p.m. The adults might read novels or nonfiction while your child reads a book for school or one he is reading for pleasure.

What we’re reading

Create a bulletin board called “What Our Family Is Reading.” Each time someone reads a new book, she can write the title and the author’s name on a slip of paper and hang it on the board. Your youngster might add a review to encourage other family members to read a book she liked. Ask her to tell you about her books, and share details of what you’re reading.



Everyday tips

Here are ways to fit reading into every part of your family’s life:

- Give each other reading-related gifts for holidays and birthdays. You could pick out novels, volumes of poetry, coffee-table books, magazine subscriptions, or bookstore gift certificates. *Idea:* Have each family member keep a reading wish list on a bulletin board or at an online bookstore.
- Encourage everyone to pick up reading materials wherever they are and share them at home. You might get a takeout menu from a restaurant or a health brochure in a doctor’s office. Your youngster could bring home the school newspaper or literary magazine, and you might share a newsletter from work or the yoga studio.
- Make word games a regular part of your family’s day. In a waiting room, play hangman, or see who can list the most palindromes (words like *mom* and *level* that are spelled the same forward and backward).
- Look for free mobile apps that boost reading skills. Download a dictionary (*Dictionary by Farlex*, *Dictionary.com*), play mobile word games (*Words Free*, *Scramble Free*), or read with an e-book app (*Kindle*, *iBooks*).



Books on the go

Take books along on family outings like picnics and hikes. Try to pick out books related to where you’re going—a nature guide for a camping trip or a story about family traditions when you’re visiting a grandparent, for instance. Also, keep books in the car for your child, or carry books with you to read while you’re on the bus or subway together. *Tip:* Suggest that your youngster make sure he always has a book in his backpack. That way, if he’s waiting for a ride or an appointment, he can pull it out and read.

INSPIRED TO WRITE



Writing for pleasure can help your child do better in every school subject. And being on the “other side”—as the writer instead of the reader—can boost her reading comprehension. Here are fun activities to spark your youngster’s imagination and get her to write regularly.

LOVE, ROVER

Authors usually write stories from points of view other than their own. Suggest that your child write from a different perspective by sending letters from a pet.

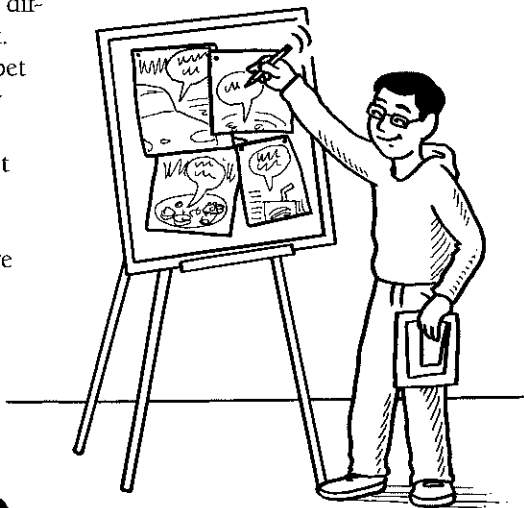
Start by encouraging her to think like your pet (or like a pet she knows). You could ask, “How would Biscuit describe your day today?” For example, she might have the dog write, “I don’t know what’s wrong with my humans. Today they ran in the sprinkler and got wet on purpose!” When she’s finished with her letter, have her mail or email it to a friend’s or relative’s pet. Remind her to ask the other pet to “write” back!

Tip: If she doesn’t know a pet to use, she could write a letter from an animal she sees outdoors, such as a bird or a squirrel.

TALKING HEADS

Here’s a fun way for your youngster to experiment with dialogue. Let him cut out photos from old magazines and glue each one to a separate page of a small notebook.

Ask him to think about what the characters in the pictures might be thinking or saying. He can draw dialogue balloons for each one and fill them in with funny or serious lines. For instance, a new car could say, “Buy me, please. I really want to get out of this showroom and onto the road!”

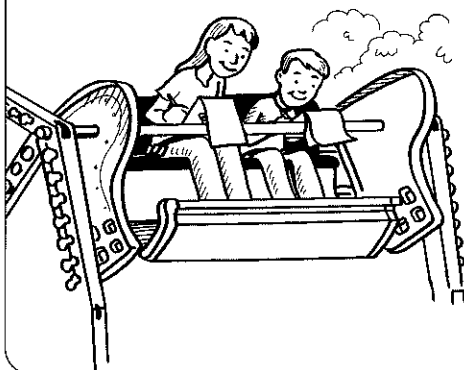


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WRITING PROMPTS

Is your youngster stumped for a story topic? Share this fun list of ideas to choose from.

1. Write a first-person tale that begins with the narrator at the top of a Ferris wheel.



2. Develop a plot based on the words to a favorite song.

3. Start with this sentence: “When I grow up, I will tell my grandchildren about the time I _____.”

4. What would happen if you woke up one morning and the moon and stars were out instead of the sun?

5. Imagine that your two favorite holidays were combined into one. Describe the celebration.

6. Pick any number from 1 to 100—that is the title for your story.

7. Look out the window. The first person you see will be the main character in your story.

8. Write a “Twitter tale”—a story with no more than 140 characters (including letters, spaces, and punctuation marks).

9. Pretend that you are living on the International Space Station. How will you get home?

10. You discover a newspaper dated exactly one year from today—and realize that you’ve traveled into the future. How does your day turn out?

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

Encourage your child to explore historical fiction by writing a diary entry. She'll also learn to weave facts into her writing.

Let your youngster choose a person from history who interests her. Perhaps she read about Charles Lindbergh in her history book, or maybe she'd like to get a biography of Martha Washington from the library. Have her use her imagination along with facts from the books to write a diary entry about an important day in the person's life. *Example:* "January 6, 1759: Dear Diary, Today I married Colonel George Washington..."

THE BAD-DAY BAG

Does your child have a friend who is home with a bad cold or who is upset because he didn't make the travel soccer team? Suggest that he try to cheer up his buddy with this writing project. In the process, your youngster will practice writing with a specific audience in mind.

Ask him to consider what his friend might enjoy reading and then fill a gift bag with short items geared toward the person's taste. Maybe his friend likes funny jokes or is into spiders. Your child might write a few knock-knock jokes or make up a silly poem about spiders. *Idea:* He can look up and add facts that would interest his pal

("There are 40,000 different species of spiders"). When he finishes the bag of writing, let him decorate and deliver it.



WRITING FROM THE HEART

Many children enjoy the inspirational tales and life lessons in the Chicken Soup for the Soul series. Have your youngster read a few of the stories and then write her own.

She can start by thinking of someone who has inspired her (perhaps her grandmother worked hard to support her family) or of a difficult time she went through herself (moving to a new state and having to make all new friends). Encourage her to think about what she learned from the person or experience. Then, she can write a first-person story about it. She might even decide to share her story with someone who has had a similar experience.

(SUPER)HERO SANDWICHES

Your child can practice writing instructions by inventing a new sandwich. First, show him a cookbook so he'll see how



recipes are written—usually with a list of ingredients and step-by-step instructions.

Then, suggest that he get an index card and write a recipe for a sandwich that his favorite TV or comic book character would like. His ingredients can be silly or realistic. For instance, a man of steel might eat nails or spinach on toast. After he writes instructions for putting together the sandwich, have him use them to draw a picture of his sandwich or to make the real thing—he'll be able to tell if he included every step.

PHOTO ESSAYS

Combining digital photos with a fun activity is a great way to encourage your youngster to write nonfiction.

The next time he goes fishing, bowling, or hiking, let him take pictures. During a hike, he could snap photos of wildlife, flowers, scenic views, and the people he's with. Afterward, have him put the photos into a computer document and type captions underneath. For example, if he's writing about a fishing trip, he might say, "The worms were crawling all over each other when I pulled one out for bait." He can email copies to the friends he fished with and print out a copy to keep.



Be a Reading Star

With so many books out there, how does your child find ones he will love? Here are some that are sure to please.

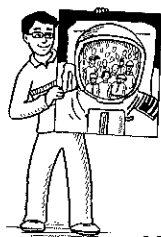
Encourage him to use the star-studded log on the back of this guide to keep track of the books he reads. As he fills the page with titles, he will become a reading superstar!

Tip: To find more books, he can share his interests with the public librarian or school media specialist and ask for recommendations.



The Young Man and the Sea

To save his family's fishing business, 12-year-old Skiff needs to catch a bluefin tuna. But after the town bully sabotages his plans, Skiff must fish using only a 10-foot plywood boat and a harpoon. A story of adventure and perseverance by Rodman Philbrick. (Also available in Spanish.)



Team Moon: How 400,000 People Landed Apollo 11 on the Moon

Engineers who built heat shields, seamstresses who sewed space suits, and workers who built the lunar module are just some of the people behind sending Apollo 11 to the moon. Author Catherine Thimmesh used NASA transcripts and other documents to tell this behind-the-scenes story of the first successful moonwalk.

A Long Way from Chicago

Summer vacations with Grandma Dowdel during the Great Depression are never boring for Joey and Mary Alice. Every year, Grandma gets into some kind of mischief, from catching milk thieves to "borrowing" the sheriff's boat. An entertaining look at life in the 1930s by Richard Peck.

The Tail of Emily Windsnap

Seventh-grader Emily Windsnap has a secret—she has discovered that she's a mermaid! As if that were not enough, she has also learned that her long-lost father is in merman prison. Determined to meet him, Emily will risk everything to break into his underwater jail. The first book in the Emily Windsnap fantasy series by Liz Kessler.

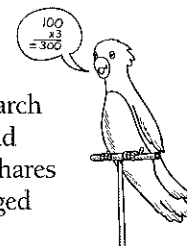


Sidekicks

After a peanut allergy knocks Captain Amazing out of commission, he decides he needs a sidekick. The trouble is that all of his super-powered pets want the job! Your youngster will enjoy the funny competition among the animals in this graphic novel by Dan Santat.

Alex the Parrot

Alex was supposed to be a "birdbrain." After all, he was just a parrot. But in a research project, Alex learned math skills, colors, and more than 100 words. Stephanie Spinner shares the real-life story of Alex and how he changed what people believe about animal brains.



Touch Blue

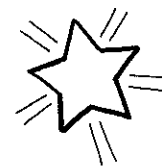
Eleven-year-old Tess wants her school to stay open, but there aren't enough kids on the island where she lives. Tess's family is among those who take in a foster child to boost the school's enrollment—but what if her new brother doesn't want to stay? Cynthia Lord's book explores what it means to belong.

The Word Snoop

Your child will discover how much fun words can be in this nonfiction book about language. Ursula Dubosarsky covers everything from the first alphabet to modern text messages. Young readers will also learn fun ways to play with words, using anagrams, secret codes, and more.



My Reading Log



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2	Title	Author
3	Title	Author
4	Title	Author
5	Title	Author
6	Title	Author
7	Title	Author
8	Title	Author
9	Title	Author
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11	Title	Author
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