

Q&As for Reading Success

As a parent, you may wonder how your child is progressing with his reading, whether he comprehends what he reads, and how to help him pick books he'll enjoy. This guide answers common questions parents have about how their youngsters can be successful readers.



Q How can I tell if my child understands what he is reading?

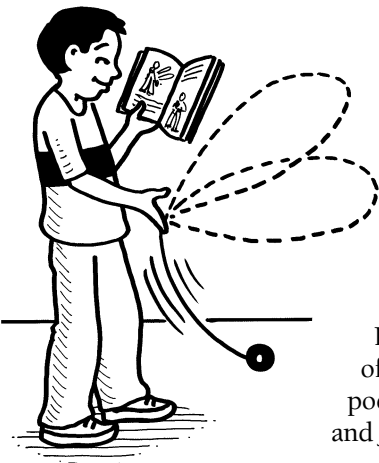
A Talking about books is a great way for you to gauge your youngster's reading comprehension—and it's fun! After he finishes a story or chapter, ask questions, such as "What is the main character like?" "What was the most exciting part?" and "What do you think will happen in the next chapter?" If he can answer your questions and give details, he probably understood what he read. *Tip:* Be sure to talk to your child about what you're reading, too.

Q What is meant by "reading fluency"?

A Fluency is the ability to read accurately and quickly—recognizing words automatically—while understanding the material. When children read word by word (without fluency), they tend to focus on how each word sounds rather than on what the whole text means. Ask your youngster to read a page out loud to you. Does she read it smoothly? Does she read with expression, indicating she understands what she's reading?

Q What kinds of books should I steer my child toward?

A Help your youngster find books that match his interests. If he likes solving mysteries, he might get hooked on a series, perhaps the Magic Tree House books by Mary Pope Osborne or the 39 Clues series by Rick Riordan. Children this age tend to love series, where they get to know the characters and follow their adventures. Also, encourage your youngster to read nonfiction. He could read biographies of famous chess players if he likes the game or a how-to guide if he wants to learn yo-yo tricks. Try poetry, too. Kids often get a kick out of humorous poems from poets like Shel Silverstein and Jack Prelutsky.



Q How can I help my child choose books that are at the right reading level for her?

A Youngsters are more motivated to read books they pick out themselves, so don't worry if every book she selects isn't at just the "right" level. You or an older sibling can help her read if she wants a book that's too hard for her right now. To find books at her level, ask her teacher, reading specialist, or media specialist. They will be able to tell you her reading level and the approximate grade level of books. And they may have lists of books grouped according to level. You can also look at assigned reading your child brings home and help her search for similar books.



Q How will I know if my youngster is making progress with his reading?

A There are several clues to look for. First, you'll notice that he reads increasingly complex books. Also, the reading level on his progress report should steadily rise. If he enjoys reading and chooses to read for pleasure, that's usually a good sign he's progressing as well.

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Q What should I do if I suspect my child has a reading problem?

A Your youngster's teacher will let you know if she has concerns. But if you're not sure, call or email her to set up a time to talk. Tell her what you've noticed at home. Signs of a possible reading problem include reading slowly, struggling with spelling, or needing to read something several times before it makes sense. If the teacher agrees with your concerns, she may refer your child for an evaluation to figure out whether she needs extra help.

Q What is dyslexia?

A Dyslexia is the most common language-based learning disability. While it's often thought of as reading backward,

in general, dyslexia can cause a youngster to have trouble recognizing words, spelling, and comprehending and remembering what he reads. He may also struggle to read accurately and at a good pace.

Q My youngster has been diagnosed with a reading disability. What can I do to help her?

A First, stay in touch with her teacher and her reading specialist—remember that you're working as a team to support her. At home, read aloud to her from harder books than she is currently able to read on her own so she's exposed to more advanced language and complex plots. Or listen to more challenging audio books together. If she's struggling with a textbook chapter, you might ask a librarian for an easier nonfiction book on the same topic. She'll build a knowledge base that may help her better understand the textbook.



10 ways to help your child become a better reader

1. Fill your house with books, magazines, comic books, newspapers—any and all reading materials. A few ideas: Put the newspaper next to your youngster's breakfast in the morning. Use cookbooks together to make dinner. Stack books by your child's bed. Leave magazines in the bathroom.
2. Visit the library regularly. Make a date to get new books and return the old ones before the end of each lending period.
3. Organize a parent-child neighborhood book club. Parents read and discuss one book while children read and discuss another. Come together for snacks at the end.
4. Even though your youngster is getting older, bedtime reading is still a great habit. Continue reading aloud each night, but with a twist: Take turns reading a page or a chapter.



5. Play games that involve words, such as Scrabble or Boggle. Encourage crossword puzzles and other word games.
6. Turn computer time into reading time by suggesting that your youngster read kid-friendly news and information online.
7. Make time to talk about what your child is reading.
8. Have a family reading hour. Schedule a "no television" reading-together date every few days.
9. Let your child decide what to read. Whether it's fiction, comic books, or baseball cards, a youngster who follows his heart will read more often and with more pleasure.
10. Notice when your youngster reads, and give him a high five!

Be a Reading Star

2017 Edition

Reading for pleasure is not only fun, it can also make your youngster a star—a reading star, that is! Have her choose books from our hand-picked list below, read them, and log them on page 2. In no time, she'll be a reading star!



The Kindness Club: Chloe on the Bright Side

(Courtney Sheinmel)

Chloe is the type of kid who sees the glass as half full. But her life changes after her parents get divorced and she moves to a new town. When she has to choose between the It Girls and the Kindness Club, Chloe must decide where she's most comfortable. The first in a series about friendship and kindness.

You Can Fly: The Tuskegee Airmen

(Carole Boston Weatherford)

In a series of poems, your child will read about the true story of the African American World War II pilots, the Tuskegee Airmen. These men faced discrimination but were determined to become pilots and fight for their country. This book is filled with facts and details about life during World War II.



Dance, Nana, Dance / Baila, Nana, Baila

(Joe Hayes)

Welcome to the vibrant world of Cuban folktales! You'll find stories like "Yams Don't Talk" and "Buy Me Some Salt" that are guaranteed to make your youngster's imagination run wild. The stories in this book are told in English and Spanish and are perfect for reading aloud.

The Octopus Scientists

(Sy Montgomery)

Travel to the island of Moorea where four scientists dive deep to discover facts about a fascinating creature under the sea: the octopus. This nonfiction book is filled with colorful photographs and tells about an actual quest to learn more about the octopus. Part of the Scientists in the Field series.

Confessions of an Imaginary Friend

(Michelle Cuevas)

All his life Jacques Papier believed that he was Fleur's twin brother but nobody liked him. It is quite a shock when he finds that he's really her invisible friend! Read Jacques's "memoir" as he explains what it's like to be invisible to the world and what happens when he meets more invisible friends.

Sleuth on Skates

(Clémentine Beauvais)

Get ready to solve a mystery with 11-year-old Sesame Seade (aka Sophie). Sesame lives on the college campus where her parents work, and when a student goes missing, the aspiring detective takes the lead—all while wearing roller skates! The first book in the Sesame Seade Mysteries series.



Weird but True! Ripped from the Headlines

(National Geographic Kids)

This zany collection of real-life weird news stories has something for everyone! Your youngster will read about trash turned into artwork and about the largest pizza ever made. Chapters include "Freaky Food," "Incredible Inventions," "Weird World of Sports," and more.

Meanwhile: Pick Any Path. 3,856 Story Possibilities

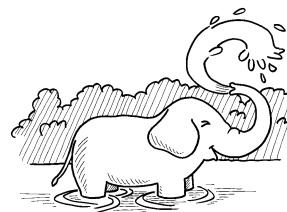
(Jason Shiga)

In this choose-your-own-adventure-style graphic novel, your child takes control of the main character, Jimmy, and decides his fate. It starts with a simple choice: chocolate or vanilla ice cream? With 3,856 possibilities, this book will delight readers over and over again.

What Elephants Know

(Eric Dinerstein)

Abandoned as a toddler, a boy named Nandu is raised in the jungles of Nepal by a man and an elephant. As the story unfolds, Nandu learns about life and tries to protect his dear elephants. Includes a glossary with Nepalese words used throughout the book.



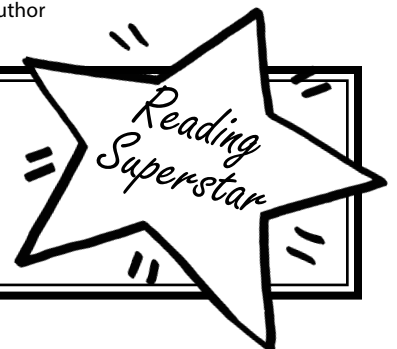


My Reading Log



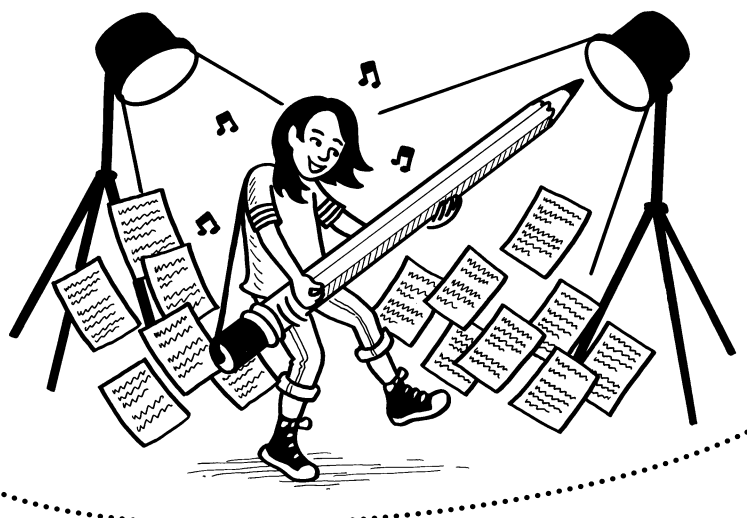
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Writing That Rocks

Children who write for fun build skills that improve their writing success at school. Shine the spotlight on these entertaining activities to foster your youngster's love of writing. The experience she gains by stepping into different writing roles will help her "rock her writing!"



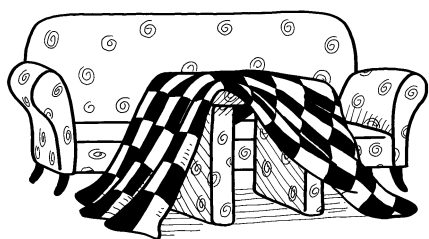
The reporter

Turn your child into the family reporter, and she'll practice writing for a specific audience.

Suggest that she create a monthly newsletter with stories about what's happening in your household (got a new kitten, planted a garden). Before she writes, she should ask herself, "Who is my audience?" She'll choose which stories to write based on her answer. Her gardening grandma may want to read about the flowers or vegetables, but her younger cousin would probably prefer hearing about the kitten's mischief.

Remind your youngster to answer *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, and *how* for each story she writes. And for headlines, she'll want to write something that will draw readers in, such as "Cuteness Overload! New Kitten Arrives." Have her write and illustrate her newsletter to mail, or she could type and email it to relatives and friends.

The technical writer



This direction-writing game encourages your child to be organized and specific—helpful skills for information-writing assignments at school.

Together, brainstorm 10 tasks and write them

on separate slips of paper. *Examples:* brushing teeth, building a fort with sofa cushions. Mix the slips in a bowl, and give each player paper and pencil. Your youngster picks a slip and reads it aloud. Everyone writes step-by-step instructions for the job. Directions for brushing teeth might begin: "1. Take out your toothbrush. 2. Get the toothpaste. 3. Open the toothpaste."

Be as clear and detailed as possible. Afterward, exchange papers, and follow the instructions exactly as they are written. Can you do the job?

The reviewer

Writing book and movie reviews gives your child a chance to back up his opinions with facts.

Have him choose a book or movie to review. *Hint:* Tell him to keep in mind that people read reviews to answer one question: "Should I read (or watch) this?" Your youngster could summarize the plot (without spoiling the ending), describe what he liked or didn't like, and give details to support his opinion. "I love adventure stories, but this one moved too slowly for me and spent more time telling about the characters. I wanted more excitement."

Idea: Help him post his review on a website like amazon.com or goodreads.com where others can benefit from his opinion.



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The advertiser

Companies write advertisements to persuade consumers to buy their products. Let your child practice persuasive writing with this “creature feature.”

Ask each family member to choose an unlikely pet—real or fictional (perhaps a velociraptor or a heffalump). Then, write an argument for why yours is the better pet, filling your piece with reasons and examples that compare the two and support your position. Your youngster might write, “I think a velociraptor is a better pet than a heffalump because you don’t have to feed a velociraptor and it hunts for its own food.” Point out that he should make arguments against the other creature, too. “If you like honey, remember that heffalumps will steal it all, but velociraptors prefer meat.”

When you finish, read your papers aloud and decide who made the better argument. Then, choose two new creatures, and start again!



The novelist

Suggest that your young author turn a story she has written into a series. Revisiting familiar characters and settings creates an ongoing reason to write creatively.

Before she jumps in, recommend that she make a simple plot map. On a paper numbered 1–10, she could write story events in sequence. “1” is for the opening (the baseball player is missing); “10” is the end (the baseball player is found). Have her fill the middle numbers with problems the characters must overcome. “2. Serena investigates at the player’s house, but the house is locked. 3. She breaks in, and the neighbor calls the police.” Have your child use this list to make sure all the story events are in an order that makes sense.

Then, she’s ready to write. Encourage her to open the story in a way that brings readers up to speed. “Serena thought that solving the mystery of the haunted shoes was her toughest case. But now, the star of the baseball team is missing.”

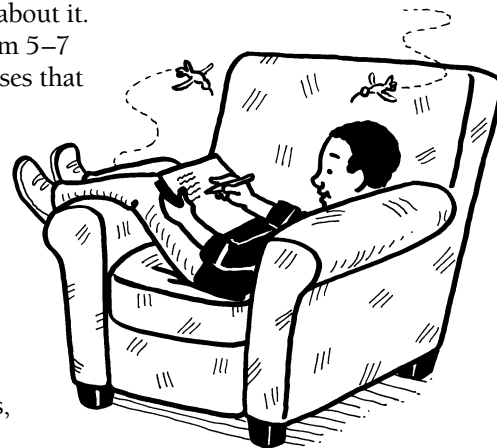
The poet

Poems use *imagery*—descriptive words—to paint a picture for the reader.

Pictures make it easier for your youngster to visualize what he is writing about. Let him find one that inspires him. It could be a family photo, a calendar cover, or a picture from a magazine or newspaper. Then, ask him to secretly give the picture a title (“The Old Barn,” “Hummingbirds”) and write a “list poem” about it.

Have him brainstorm 5–7 vivid words or phrases that describe the image and list them in a poem like this:

Hummingbirds
Nectar-seeking,
flitting,
zipping,
hovering in the
honeysuckle,
jewel-colored wings,
vanish in a blur



Listen as your child reads his poem—without telling you the title. Can you guess what it’s about?

Plan, write, revise!

Good writing is a step-by-step process. Share these steps to encourage your youngster to create her best work.

- **Pre-write.** Choose a topic, brainstorm a list of ideas about it, and make a plan for what to write. You might sketch a story map, draw pictures, or create an outline.
- **Draft.** Follow your plan, and write a “sloppy copy.” Don’t worry about making everything perfect, just get your rough draft down on paper.
- **Edit.** Reread your paper and look for places to add details. Cross out confusing words and sentences. Check the organization. Will rearranging parts make them clearer?
- **Proofread.** Review for mistakes in capitalization, spelling, and punctuation. Consult a dictionary or grammar guide, and make corrections.
- **Finalize.** Write a clean copy that includes all of your changes. Set it aside overnight before proofreading for any errors you may have missed.

