Elementary School • October 2021

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Charles City Public Schools

Be your child's reading buddy to boost fluency and comprehension

Some children struggle to sound out every word as they read. This can actually make it hard to understand what they are reading. Helping your child read more accurately and fluently can make reading easier and more fun for him.



To be a reading fluency buddy:

1. **Look for a short passage** that your child would find interesting. Make sure it is at his reading level, too.
2. **Read the passage aloud** while he listens and follows along.
3. **Have him read** the passage aloud. If he has trouble reading it, read it to him again. Then have your child read it after you.
4. **Ask each other questions** about what you read. What was the biggest challenge characters faced? Discuss your favorite characters or the most entertaining part. This will help build your child's comprehension skills.

Work with the teacher to set reading goals

It is important to be on the same page as your child's teacher when it comes to reading. Work together to set appropriate goals for your child. Talk to the teacher about your child's:

- **Reading level.** Is your child meeting expectations for her grade? What kinds of materials are best for her? How can you tell if a book is the right level? How can you help her improve her literacy skills?
- **Reading habits.** Many teachers expect students to read for a certain number of minutes each day. Should your child keep and turn in a log to track the time she spends reading? What other ideas does the teacher have to motivate your child and instill good reading habits?

Decoding strategies help your child figure out words

When readers hit a word they don't know, they need to decode it. Decoding skills include sounding out words.

Have your child try these strategies:



- **Notice familiar beginnings** and endings.
- **Say parts of a word** slowly and then blend them together.
- **Try different sounds** for the same letters.
- **Look for smaller, familiar words** within the difficult word.

Ask your child to tell you a story for a change

Next time your child asks you to tell him a story, trade places. Let him make up a story of his own, and when he finishes, suggest he write it down. Encourage him to leave spaces so he can add illustrations. Now he'll be the author of a tale he can read whenever he likes.



Explore nonfiction with your child

To achieve in school, your child will have to be able to learn. Reading nonfiction books on topics she likes is a great way to practice.

Reading nonfiction helps your child:



- **Apply comprehension** skills to factual content.
- **Develop new hobbies** or interests.
- **Learn how authors** use text to inform and persuade their readers.

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Help your elementary schooler persevere through reading challenges



Reading is part of many home and school activities, so if your child struggles with it, it can feel as if it affects every part of his life—and his confidence can suffer.

To support your child:

- **Consult his teacher.** Ask about realistic expectations. What has your child's teacher noticed? What strategies have been taught and how can you apply them at home? What additional help is available?
- **Use reading materials at home** that minimize frustration. Choose books that are easy for your child to read and understand. This builds his confidence while he is reading.
- **Stay positive about his learning.** Focus on how his strengths can help. Remember to to notice progress and praise your child for his effort.

Pumpkins can inspire reading, word play

Now that it's October, pumpkins are everywhere! Make a pumpkin the center of your family reading with books like *The Biggest Pumpkin Ever* by Steven Kroll or *It's Pumpkin Time* by Zoe Hall.

Then, play some pumpkin-related word games! Have fun as a family while you build language skills. Here's how:

- **Look at a pumpkin.** Who can make the longest list of words or phrases that describe it? (*round*, *lumpy*, *orange*, *future pie*, etc.)
- **Write the word *pumpkin*** on a large sheet of paper. How many smaller words can each person make from the letters in it? (*pump*, *pin*, *pink*, etc.)

Whoever has the most words in either activity wins!





Q: Our family is so busy. How can we make time for reading together?

A: Put family reading on the schedule during times when everyone is home—even if it's just once a week. Perhaps you could schedule a reading dinner or a surprise DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) time during Saturday chores. The key is to make reading a fun part of already established family routines.

Mnemonic devices work!

A *mnemonic* ("neh-mon-ic") *device* is a tool used to remember information. Mnemonics can help your child with tricky spelling words. She could make up a sentence like ***B**ig **E**lephants **C**ould **A**lways **U**se **S**ome **E**xercise* to help her remember how to spell the word *because*.



For lower elementary readers:



- ***Rubia and the Three Osos*** by Susan Middleton Elya. This take on *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* includes Spanish vocabulary—and a surprising twist at the end!
- ***The President and Mom's Apple Pie*** by Michael Garland. When President William Taft goes to a small town to dedicate a flagpole, he is entranced by all of the aromas he smells.

For upper elementary readers:

- ***Jake the Fake Keeps It Real*** by Craig Robinson and Adam Mansbach. Jake is enrolling in the Music and Art Academy with a big secret—he is neither a musician nor an artist.
- ***Grandma Chickenlegs*** by Geraldine McCaughrean. When Tatia's stepmother sends her to get a needle from Grandma Chickenlegs, the evil woman traps the girl in her cottage.

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