

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

September 2016

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ *Dad's First Day* (Mike Wohnoutka)

In this twist on a first-day-of-school story, Oliver's dad is the one who is nervous. Oliver is excited, but his dad isn't ready for summer to end or for his son to start school. Your child will laugh as the dad complains of a tummy ache and ends up having a tantrum when it's time to leave Oliver at school.



■ *Ruby Lu Brave and True* (Lenore Look)

Ruby Lu lives in Seattle with her family. She loves to put on backyard magic shows and dress up. But she doesn't love going to Chinese school on Saturdays. This first book in the Ruby Lu series includes "Ruby's Fantastic Glossary and Pronunciation Guide" with Chinese words.

■ *Edmund Unravels* (Andrew Kolb)

A ball of yarn named Edmund always loved adventure and travel. But whenever he went too far, he'd unravel, and his parents had to wind him back up. As he gets older and bigger, Edmund goes farther away to explore the world. The farther he goes, the smaller he gets, and eventually he misses the familiar tug from his family.



■ *Ada's Violin* (Susan Hood)

Read the true story of an orchestra in Paraguay that plays instruments made entirely from recycled materials. Young Ada never thought she'd be able to play the violin until a new music teacher got creative with materials found in a landfill. (Also available in Spanish.)



Fall into reading

Autumn is quickly approaching! Your youngster can learn all about the new season while he practices reading for information. Here are fun opportunities.

Collect facts

How do pumpkins grow? Why do leaves fall off trees? Read non-fiction library books about fall, and encourage your child to listen for interesting facts.

Then, let him cut out autumn shapes (pumpkins, leaves) from construction paper, and help him write down the facts. *Example:* "Pumpkins grow on vines." He could hang up the shapes for a colorful autumn display to read again and again.

Read autumn "news"

Take a walk around town, and look for fall-related announcements. A police station sign might remind drivers that students are back at school, a street banner may announce an autumn festival, and a sign in a store window could advertise



a fall sale. Ask your youngster to read any words he knows, and read the rest to him.

Research fall produce

Visit an apple orchard, a farmers' market, or the grocery store, and help your child discover fall fruits and vegetables. Together, read signs or brochures to learn about them. For instance, which apples are more popular for baking pies—Golden Delicious or Granny Smith? Where was the cauliflower grown? What is quince used for?♥

Show me what you wrote in school

Invite your child to "read" a story she wrote in class. You might be treated to an elaborate tale while she points to a drawing with random letters underneath—that's okay! She has picked up on the fact that printed words tell a story, and she is taking her first steps toward writing them.

Then, encourage her to talk about her writing by asking open-ended questions like these:

- "How did you come up with the idea for your story?"
- "What do you think will happen to the characters next?"
- "Does the story remind you of anything that has happened in real life?"♥



Alphabet fun

Lines, loops, circles, and tails...each letter of the alphabet has its own shape. And being able to instantly recognize every uppercase and lowercase letter is an important foundation for reading success. Try these activities.

ABC collage. Have your youngster cut out letters in different colors and sizes from cereal boxes, magazines, newspapers,



and catalogs. She can arrange and glue them onto paper however she likes. Take turns pointing to a letter and saying its name. This will help her recognize letters out of order and in various sizes and fonts.

Mystery letter. What has one big vertical line with three smaller horizontal lines attached to it? (A capital E.) Think of a letter, and give your child directions to draw it on

paper. For a lowercase g, you might say, "Make a circle at the top. Add a tail going down that curves up to the left." Can she tell you what letter she made? Next, she could give you one to draw. She'll learn to notice small differences between letters—a key to mastering letter recognition. For example, ask her what happens if she erases the bottom horizontal line on a capital E. She has an F!♥

Parent to Parent

Pictures contain clues

My son Jackson is just starting to read, and he often looks at the pictures to help him figure out words. I wondered if he should be sounding out words instead, so I asked his teacher.

To my surprise, Mrs. Thomas said using picture clues and sounding out words are both good strategies for early readers.



For example, Jackson might come to a word that starts with R and see a rainbow in the illustration. Using what he knows about beginning sounds, he could guess that the R word is rainbow. Mrs. Thomas said this builds confidence and teaches children to try different strategies.

She suggested that when Jackson and I choose library books, we get some with just a few words on each page and pictures that match. A librarian helped us find books, and Jackson is enjoying practicing his reading strategies at home.♥



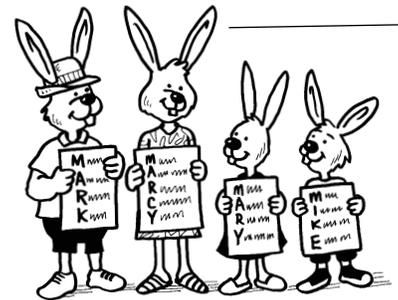
Fun with Words

Family acrostics

Your youngster will stretch his vocabulary as he selects just the right words to describe himself and his family.

On separate sheets of paper, have family members write their first names down the left margin. Then, each person adds a word or phrase that begins with each letter in his name and tells something about him. For instance, Luke might think of "Loves to laugh," for L and "Ultra strong" for U. *Note:* Keep a dictionary on hand in case anyone gets stuck.

When everyone is finished, read your acrostics to each other. Next, work together to make one with your last name. Maybe the Barr family will write, "Barbecue fans, Adventurers, Readers, Riders of bikes."♥



Q&A Fine-motor play

Q My daughter is just learning to use a pencil and cut with scissors. Can you suggest ways I can help her practice at home?

A Playtime is ideal for strengthening little hands for writing, cutting, and other fine-motor tasks.

For example, let your daughter make a car wash for her toy cars. In a sink or big plastic bin, she can squirt shaving cream onto her vehicles and use a spray bottle to rinse them off. Pressing the dispenser on the

shaving cream and squeezing the spray nozzle are both great workouts for her "writing muscles."

Or encourage your child to use kitchen tongs when she builds with blocks. She'll think it's fun to pick up each block with the tongs and add it to her tower. And she'll work on hand-eye coordination as she tries to see how tall she can make her building before it topples over.♥



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■ *Where Are My Books?*

(Debbie Ridpath Ohi)

While a little boy named Spencer sleeps, his beloved books disappear. He soon discovers they're being stolen by squirrels who love to read. Instead of getting angry, Spencer opens a "library" and lets the squirrels borrow and return his books.



■ *My Colors, My World / Mis colores, mi mundo*

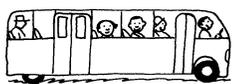
(Maya Christina Gonzalez)

Young Maya and her cute bird friend search for colors in their sandy desert neighborhood. From the pink sunset to the yellow pollen to Papi's black hair, they spot beautiful colors everywhere. A bilingual story told in English and Spanish.

■ *Last Stop on Market Street*

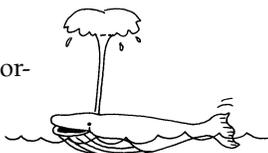
(Matt de la Peña)

Take a ride on the city bus with CJ and his nana as they travel to a soup kitchen. On their journey, CJ wonders why they live in the "dirty" part of town and don't own a car. Then, CJ realizes that although they don't have much money, they can help people who have even less.



■ *The Blue Whale*

Does your youngster know that a blue whale blows water as high as seven people standing on each other's heads? Or that a baby whale drinks 50 gallons of milk a day? This nonfiction picture book uses fun comparisons to help young readers imagine the enormous animal's size.



Listen and understand

Reading aloud to your child can make her a better reader and a better listener. Try these story-time suggestions to boost her listening comprehension. The skills she develops will come in handy when she reads to herself, too.

Let's get acquainted

Before reading, help your youngster make a personal connection to the book. You'll spark her curiosity and set her up to understand it. *Example:* "This little girl is in kindergarten just like you" or "This book shows different dog breeds. I wonder if there's a border collie like ours."

Encourage participation

A good listener is an *active* listener. Give your child a special role—perhaps she'll do a particular motion every time she hears a certain word or line. If you read *The Pout-Pout Fish* (Deborah Diesen), she could puff out her cheeks and pout when you read "I'm a *pout-pout* fish..."



Or while listening to a nonfiction book about transportation, maybe she'll add sound effects (car horn, train whistle).

Shed light on new words

When you come across a word you think your youngster doesn't know, weave a quick explanation into your reading. You'll help her understand what's happening without interrupting the story's flow. *Example:* "They were *stranded* on the island—they were *stuck*—so they had to search for food."♥

Magazine storytelling

For these storytelling activities, your youngster will need a stack of old magazines—and his imagination!

Help your child cut pictures from magazines. He can keep them in a paper bag labeled "My story bag." Each day, let him pull one out and tell a story about it. Encourage him to look closely for details to use. He might notice a saxophone player on a city street corner or a frog on a lily pad in a pond.

Or let him choose several photos and arrange them into a "storyboard." Explain that moviemakers use storyboards to plan what will happen first, next, and last in a movie. He could point to his storyboard as he tells his tale.♥



Write this down for me!

How often do you add an item to a grocery list, write down a reminder for yourself, or send mail to a relative? These are all examples of real-life writing that you can share with your youngster.

● **Ask for his help.** You could say, “I’m busy looking for recipes. Will you start the grocery list?” Hand him a notepad and a pencil, and encourage him to look in the refrigerator or pantry for help



You might even write to troops together. Visit operationgratitude.com/writeletters for information.♥

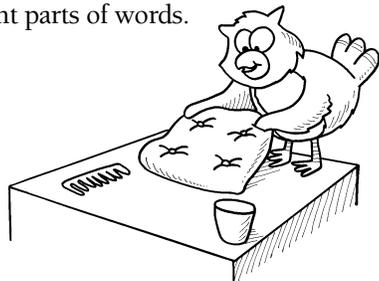
writing words like *milk* and *macaroni*. Or have him put a sticky note on the front door saying “Take grocery bags” or “Return library books.”

● **Send mail.** Fill a basket with paper, envelopes, postcards, note cards, and stamps. Then, suggest that your child write to friends and relatives. Show him how to include a greeting and a closing, and help him address his mail. *Idea:*

Fun with Words

Guess the sound

What do *pen*, *spoon*, and *can* have in common? They all end with the letter *n*! This word game lets your youngster identify sounds in different parts of words.



Take turns walking around the house and choosing three objects with the same sound at the beginning, middle, or end. Place the items on the table, and the other person has to figure out which sound they have in common. If your child picks a *comb*, a *cushion*, and a *cup*, you would say, “Beginning sound, *c*.” On your turn, if you choose a *remote*, a *hammer*, and a *lemon*, she would say, “Middle sound, *m*.”

Idea: Pick objects whose names share a letter combination, such as a *brush*, a *leash*, and a toy *clownfish* (ending sound, *sh*).♥



Parent to Parent

And the book award goes to...

My daughter Sarah recently noticed gold and silver seals on the covers of some books, and she asked what they were for. I explained they were awards the books had won.

Sarah thought it would be fun for us to give medals to books, too. She came up with categories like “Funniest book,” “Kindest main character,” “Coolest setting,” and “Best writing.” Now every time we go to the library, we pick a category and check out books that might qualify. At home, the whole family reads the books, and each person nominates her choice and presents an argument for why it should win. Then, we vote.

Finally, Sarah makes a medal for the winning book that lists the title, author, and year. Her choice doesn’t always win, but she’s practicing making arguments and talking about books.♥



Q&A Be a reading volunteer

Q I want to volunteer at my son’s school, but I’m not sure what I can contribute. I do love to read—could I use that to help out?

A Let your son’s teacher know when you’re available and that you enjoy reading. She might ask you to listen to students read or to read aloud to a small group or even the entire class. Or perhaps she’ll have you help students read math story problems.

Try contacting the school librarian,

too. She would probably appreciate help shelving books or creating displays—and these are tasks that could possibly be done outside of school hours.

If you prefer to volunteer at home, you may be able to place book club orders or compile book titles for a unit the teacher is planning. As you’ll see, school is the perfect place for a parent volunteer who loves to read! And when you help out, you show your son that school—and reading—are important to you.♥



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■ **Nubs: The True Story of a Mutt, a Marine & a Miracle** (Brian Dennis, Kirby Larson, and Mary Nethery)

In Iraq, Marine Brian Dennis formed a bond with a wild dog, sharing rations and standing watch. This touching read-aloud tells of the pair's determination to be together against all odds.



■ **The Box of Holes** (Carmen Gil)

A child's imagination turns a cardboard box into an adventure. Andrea's mother scolds her for buying an empty box, but the little girl discovers that it's full of "holes" that lead to magical characters. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ **Alphabet Rescue**

(Audrey and Bruce Wood)

Your youngster can learn uppercase and lowercase letters with this colorful ABC book. The lowercase letters want to help the capital letters on their fire truck, but the big ones say no. After the little



ones fix a broken-down fire truck (little *p* gets paint, little *t* finds new tires), they prove they're big enough to perform rescues.

■ **The Tooth Book: A Guide to Healthy Teeth and Gums** (Edward Miller)

This colorful how-to book encourages youngsters to take good care of their teeth. Your child will see the parts of a tooth, find out why she loses baby teeth, and learn about what happens at the dentist's office.



I can use big words!

Many youngsters are familiar with big words like *stegosaurus* and *abracadabra*. If they're able to say those words, they can also learn long words like *investigate* and *summarize*. Try these ideas to help your child find and use big words.

Read new words

Reading is an ideal way to build vocabulary. Your youngster will hear bigger words when you read aloud to him from more challenging books. Encourage him to listen for unfamiliar words, and help him figure out their meanings. Because children need to hear the same word many times to really learn it, weave the words into conversations throughout the day.

What's in the category?

Each week, ask your child to post a category ("Animals," "Foods," "Things that are shiny") on the refrigerator. Everyone looks for words to add that match the category. For instance, watch a science program about animals to hear words like *orangutan* or *gazelle*. Or your youngster



could scan grocery ads for food words, such as *nutritious* or *gorgonzola*.

Make trading cards

Have your child make trading cards for new words he encounters. During a walk, you might say, "How many kinds of *transportation* can we spot?" At home, help him write *transportation* on an index card, and let him illustrate it (perhaps with a car and a bus that he saw). Suggest that he keep his cards in a zipper bag and practice using them. Friends or relatives can start their own decks and trade with him—your youngster will discover even more new words.♥

Read a book, write a math problem

Combine reading, writing, and math by having your child make up word problems based on her favorite books. Here's how.

If she reads *The Rainbow Fish* (Marcus Pfister), she could write (or dictate to you) a story problem like, "Rainbow Fish had 10 colorful scales. He gave 9 away. How many are left?" Or after reading *The Gingerbread Man* (Jim Aylesworth), your youngster might make up a word problem such as, "The gingerbread man ran from 3 people and 3 animals. How many chased him in all?"

Idea: Have your child read and act out the story problems. She could use household items like foil scraps for fish scales or toy people and animals.♥



Enjoy nonfiction

As your youngster gets older, she'll spend more time reading nonfiction in school. Consider these ideas for letting her discover the joy of learning new facts and exploring the interesting features in children's nonfiction books.

Know what's real. Some information books for kids blend fiction and nonfiction. For example, a talking animal might state real facts, or a mythical creature may narrate a true story. Help your child distinguish fact from fiction by asking how she knows a picture or an event is real or not real.



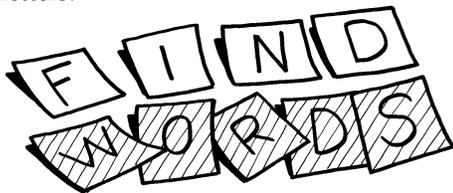
Take your time. Give your youngster a chance to explore all the features on a page. She may want to look at a time line or a diagram before you read the main text to her. Then, she could study the photos while you read the captions aloud. She'll become familiar with the features in nonfiction, which will prepare her to read textbooks in school.♥

Fun with Words

Hide, seek, and spell

Combine hide-and-seek with spelling practice, and watch your child have fun learning his spelling words.

First, ask him to write each word on a strip of construction paper, using a different color paper for every word. Then, he should cut each strip into individual letters.



Choose one or two words, and hide the slips around the house. Tell your youngster how many to look for (say, five blue and four red), and send him hunting! His job is to find the letters and spell the words. He might wait until he has every letter, or he could spell as he goes.

Check to make sure he spelled his words correctly. Now he can hide letters for you.♥

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Q&A

Understanding reading levels

Q When I get my son's progress reports, they include his reading level in addition to his grade. What does the level indicate?

A Usually, a letter, number, or word (such as *emergent* or *novice*) on a progress report tells what level book a child can read independently. A parent-teacher conference is a great opportunity to find out more about your son's reading abilities and to see examples of books that are at his reading level.

In general, though, the important thing is that your child's reading level improves steadily over time. At home, focus on how much fun it is to read with him rather than on the level of the book he's reading. His excitement about books will motivate him to try hard—and he'll be likely to make progress.♥



Parent to Parent

A parent-child notebook

My daughter Rebecca received a cute notebook and a pack of colored pens for her birthday. I thought the notebook would make a great diary, but she had an even better idea. She asked if we could use it to write notes to each other.

Sometimes I work late, and I love coming home to drawings

and notes from Rebecca. If she's asleep when I get in, I write a note for her to find in the morning. We write about our days and leave questions for each other to answer. And sometimes we'll put in a funny joke or an interesting tidbit we heard that day.

It has turned out to be a great way for Rebecca to practice writing—and for us to stay connected on our busy days.♥

