



25 Ways Parents Can ...

Read With Children



... and Help Them Do Better in School

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It's No Surprise That Reading Is the First of the Three R's

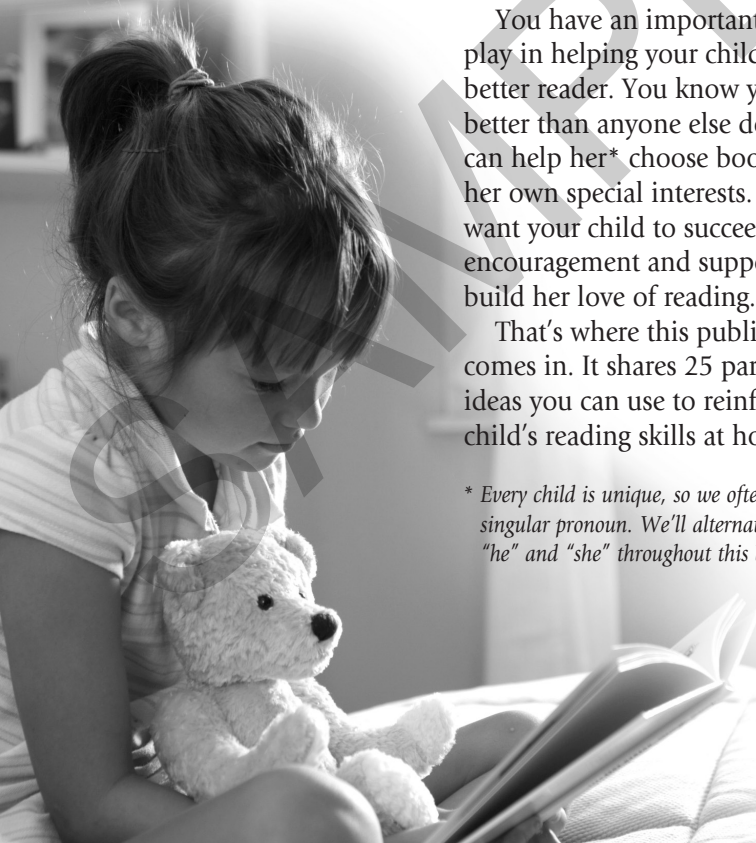
Reading is the foundation for success in school—and in life. The ability to read and write is necessary to master *every* subject and to communicate what is learned. Even more importantly, children who enjoy reading will continue to learn throughout their lives. Reading is one of the most inexpensive and readily available forms of education and entertainment.



You have an important role to play in helping your child become a better reader. You know your child better than anyone else does, so you can help her* choose books that meet her own special interests. You also want your child to succeed, so offer encouragement and support as you build her love of reading.

That's where this publication comes in. It shares 25 parent-tested ideas you can use to reinforce your child's reading skills at home.

** Every child is unique, so we often use the singular pronoun. We'll alternate the use of "he" and "she" throughout this booklet.*



1 Encourage your child to spend time reading every day. Reading is a skill and it gets better with practice. Research shows that kids who spend at least 30 minutes a day reading books, magazines and newspapers are more likely to become good readers.



2 Help your child get into the library habit. Set aside some time every week for a family trip to the local library. While you're there, check out a book yourself. You'll be setting a powerful example of the importance of reading for your child.

3 Make reading easy. If TVs and digital devices are within easy reach, but books are stored on a high shelf, you can probably guess how your child will spend her free time. But if she has her own bookshelf filled with interesting books, and screen time must be scheduled in advance, she'll probably pick up a book.



4 Read aloud to your child. Research shows that this is probably the most important thing you can do to encourage your child's reading success. Here are some tips from Jim Trelease's *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, an excellent book to read before you start:

- **Begin reading** to your child as soon as possible—no matter how young she is.
- **Set aside time** every day for reading aloud. Start with just 10 minutes a day.
- **Read stories** that you also enjoy.
- **Vary the subject matter** and length of your reading.
- **Don't confuse quantity** with quality. Your child will remember 10 minutes of reading together far longer than he'll remember two hours of staring at a screen.



- **Don't compete** with digital media. If you ask your child if he'd prefer a story or screen time, he will most likely choose the screens. But remember: You're the adult. Tell your child that digital devices will be turned off at 7:30. If he wants a story, fine. If he doesn't, that's OK, too. But don't give your child the idea that books are the reason he can't watch a video.

5 Use tried-and-true teacher tips to help your child become a better reader. During your read-aloud times at home:

- Stop before the end of the story. Ask your child to predict what she thinks may happen next.
- Encourage your child to guess what the next rhyming word may be if you're reading a poem.
- Have your child relate the story to a personal experience she may have had.
- Ask your child how she might have changed the story.

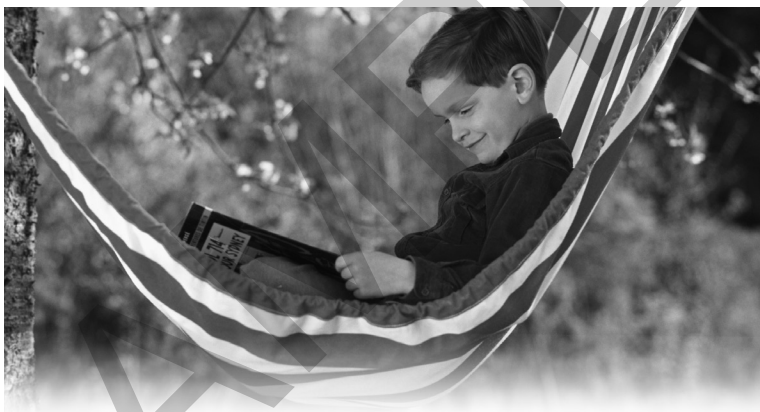


6 Give your child a wide range of experiences, which are the foundation for understanding what she reads. Take your child on picnics, visits to the zoo or trips to a nearby park. A child who has seen and touched a sheep, for example, will learn the words *sheep*, *wool* and, of course, *baa*.

7 Relax your family's bedtime rules occasionally. Do you remember how hard it was to put away a good book just because it was bedtime? Did you bring a flashlight to bed to try to sneak in a few extra pages before your parents caught you?

Once a week, let your child know he can stay up as late as he wants—as long as he's reading in bed. (He'll probably fall asleep soon anyway.)

Choose a weekend night when your child can sleep late the next morning. You might even want to plan a special bedtime snack. You'll encourage your child to read for pleasure—and help him discover that reading is fun.



8 Look for unusual places for your daily reading time with your child. Here are some suggestions:

- Read outside under a shady tree, in a sandbox, in a hammock or at a nearby park.
- Toss a sheet over a clothesline or table to create a reading hideaway.
- Keep a book in a tote bag or your glove compartment for long trips, traffic delays or those times when you get stuck in a line.
- Spread a blanket on the floor. Have an indoor reading picnic.

9 Have a family contest to determine “The Most Unusual Place I Ever Read.” Take pictures of family members in their favorite reading hideaways. (These would make great holiday greeting cards.)



10 Schedule time to read aloud. In some families, when everyone says, “Oh, DEAR,” that doesn’t mean something’s gone wrong. Instead, they’ve agreed to **D**rop **E**verything **A**nd **R**ead.

During DEAR Time, the screen devices are turned off. The telephone goes unanswered. And everyone sits down for some uninterrupted reading time. Here are some suggestions for making DEAR Time a success at your house:

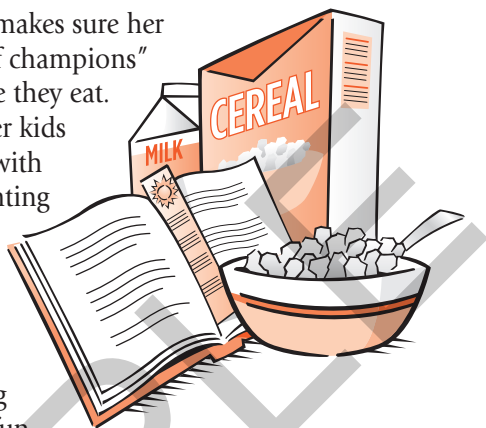


- **Schedule DEAR in advance.** If you have a family calendar, write “DEAR Time” on it. This lets your child see that reading time is just as important as basketball practice.
- **Make sure everyone has something to read.** You might want to plan a trip to the library before DEAR day.
- **Start small.** Some families schedule a half-hour of DEAR time once a week. When everyone has the reading habit, DEAR time is more frequent.
- **Join in.** DEAR time can be a success only if everyone takes part. So pop a big bowl of popcorn, grab that best-seller you’ve been dying to read and settle down for a few minutes of quiet reading yourself.

11 Squeeze reading into a busy day. You can include reading during:

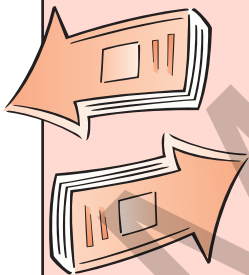
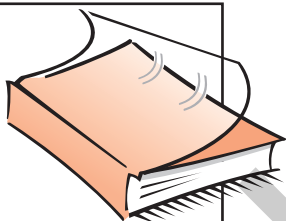
- Breakfast.** One mom makes sure her kids get a “breakfast of champions” by reading aloud while they eat. Best of all, she says, her kids become so engrossed with the story they stop fighting with each other!
- Bathtub time.** On hectic days, one family schedules read aloud time during baths for good, clean fun.
- Travel time.** Today’s families seem to spend a lot of time on the road. Try recording a favorite book during one of your regular story hours. Then play it as you drive so your child can read along as she listens.

Keep a small stack of books and magazines handy so your child can read during the afternoons she spends traveling back and forth to activities.



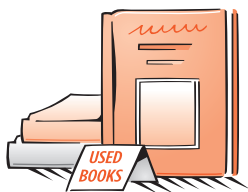
12 Start a family library so your child can enjoy favorite books again and again. Of course, few families can afford to buy every book their children like. But with a little planning, you can have a library that will spark your child's interest in reading. Here's how:

- **Buy paperback books.** To make them last, cover them with clear contact paper.



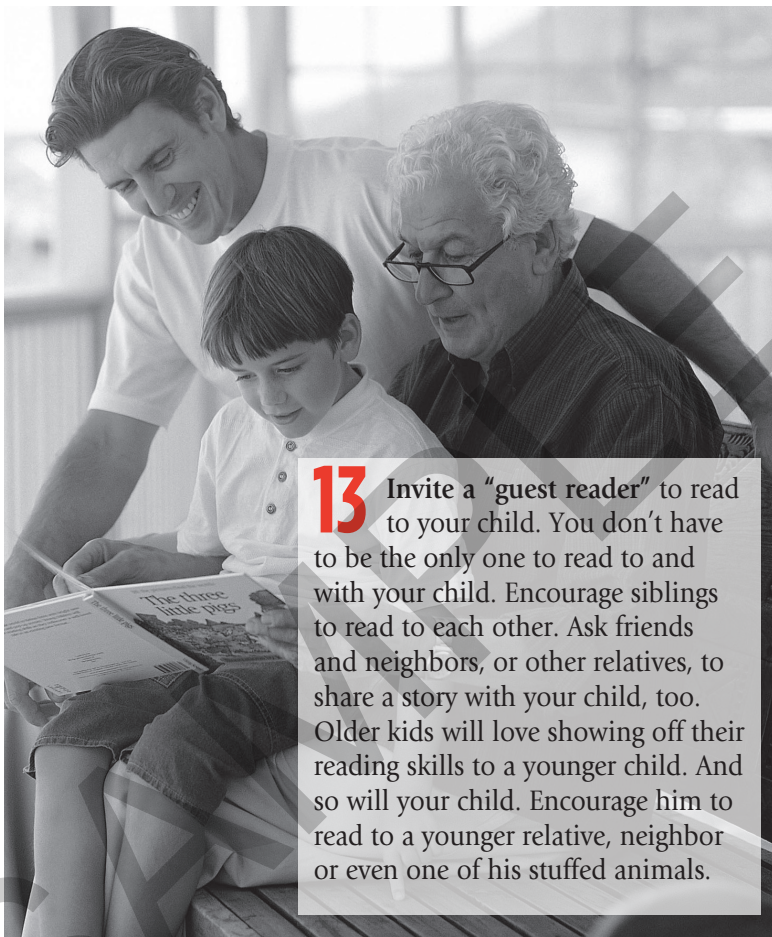
- **Encourage your child to swap books with friends.** Host a "read-in" in your neighborhood. Have each child bring a favorite book. Afterward, they can exchange or borrow books.

- **Look for a used book store.** You can often buy books for a very reasonable price. Your library may also hold a used book sale.



- **Give books for gifts.** Establish a family tradition of giving books for holidays. If you're not sure which book to choose, give a gift certificate to a bookstore.





13 Invite a “guest reader” to read to your child. You don’t have to be the only one to read to and with your child. Encourage siblings to read to each other. Ask friends and neighbors, or other relatives, to share a story with your child, too. Older kids will love showing off their reading skills to a younger child. And so will your child. Encourage him to read to a younger relative, neighbor or even one of his stuffed animals.

14 Make sure a book is on your child’s reading level. Some educators suggest using the following “rule of thumb”:

Have your child read a page of the book aloud. Have her hold up one finger for each word she does not know. If she holds up four fingers and a thumb before the end of the page, the book is probably too hard for her to read alone. But it might be a great book to read aloud.



15 Turn your whole house into a reading lesson for your very early reader. Make labels for everything your child sees or uses: *door, wall, sofa, bed, light switch*. (Hint: Use masking tape that won't hurt walls or furniture.)



16 Limit your child's recreational screen time. Doctors recommend that families limit screen time to allow children plenty of time for reading and other productive screen-free activities. Some families give their children "tickets," each good for 30 minutes of screen time. When the tickets are gone, the screens are turned off for the week, unless they are needed for schoolwork.

17 Give your child practice reading directions by following a recipe together.

Choose a simple recipe and be sure it's to make something your child enjoys. Have her read the directions out loud to you. Work together, step-by-step. Then enjoy!



18 Make your child a reading detective. Write clues that send your child from one part of the house to another. (In nice weather, hide some clues outside, as well.) While your child is having fun, she's also getting some valuable practice in reading.

19 Try a newspaper scavenger hunt. To help your child learn about the different sections of a newspaper, give him a list of things to find, such as:

- A picture of a famous athlete.
- The temperature in your town yesterday.
- A favorite cartoon.
- The time his favorite television program starts.
- The title of a program at your local library.
- The movie schedule for your local theater.

Give your child the list, a pair of scissors, some glue and your newspaper. As he finds the items, have him cut them out and paste them to his paper. If more than one child wants to play, make up a separate list and use yesterday's paper as well.



20 Play **Alphabet Concentration** with a child who's just learning to recognize letters. On one set of index cards, print the alphabet in capital letters. On another set, print the alphabet in lowercase letters. Then shuffle the cards, turn them over and lay them all out. Players can make a pair by matching the capital letter with its lowercase partner. For very young children, start with a few pairs, gradually working up to the entire deck.

With older kids, try playing **Synonym Concentration**, using words on cards, instead—for example: *happy* and *jolly*, *tiny* and *little*, *cold* and *frigid*.

21 Schedule a “**reading dinner**.” It’s a great way to provide special reading time for your family. Announce the meal beforehand. That night, have everyone come to the table with something to read. And don’t forget to turn off digital devices.



Make it the one time when reading at the table is allowed. You may want to read something aloud for everyone to share. And be sure to talk about what each family member is reading.

An occasional reading dinner works because it’s special. It also gives kids a chance to see that reading is important for the whole family.

22 **Teach your child to find information.** When your child asks a question and you don't know the answer, help him find it. A trip to your local library or a search online will help your child find the answer to his question—and he'll learn how to find answers to many questions in the future.



23 **Promote reading** even if you're not a good reader yourself. Listen to audiobooks with your child and follow along in the printed book. When your child begins reading for herself, set aside some time to have her read to you—while you cook, for example. Make regular library visits to refresh your child's supply of reading materials and keep reading interesting.



24 **Encourage an older child to write a letter to a favorite author.** (The library can provide the book publisher's address. Publishers are usually glad to forward letters to authors.) This may lead to a continuing interest in the life and works of this author.

25 **Don't make it an issue** if your child seems to lose interest in reading. But make a special effort to find reading materials on subjects that interest your child. Leave them around the house in easy reach. You might subscribe to a magazine for children. Odds are, your child will be reading again in no time.



Encouraging your child's love of reading is one of the most important things you can do to put your child on the road to school success.

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