

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

March 2010

Literacy Support Team

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ Knuffle Bunny

Trixie's favorite stuffed bunny accidentally ends up in the wash at the Laundromat. But because the little girl can't talk yet, she's having a hard time explaining why she's upset. When her dad finally rescues the toy, Trixie speaks her first words: "Knuffle Bunny!" Mo Willems's tale is cleverly told in words and pictures. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ The Wolf Who Cried Boy

In Bob Hartman's twist on the original folktale, a little wolf keeps telling his parents that he sees a boy. Each time, they get their hopes up that they'll have their favorite dish for dinner. Find out what happens when the wolf really does see a boy.

■ Night in the Country

There's something special about a night so quiet that you can hear an apple fall from a tree. Cynthia Rylant describes the sights and sounds of a country night: fireflies blinking, a screen door closing, a pig rolling in the straw. A good bedtime read-aloud.



■ Alvin Ailey

Dancers twirl, leap, and soar in this picture-book biography by Andrea Pinkney. Young readers will learn how Ailey became a famous dancer and choreographer—from his childhood in Texas to his first lessons in Los Angeles and the founding of his own dance company in New York City.



Love to read

Reading alongside your child can inspire in her a life-long love of books. When she reads a story for school or just for fun, sit down with her and enjoy a book of your own. Try one of these ideas to help her get the most out of your special reading time:



♥ Make a reading date. Let your youngster choose a spot, such as a playground or a lake. Then, pack up your books and a blanket to sit on, and head out. Your child will see that she can read anywhere! *Idea:* For twice the fun, let her invite a friend along on a reading field trip.

♥ Show your youngster that reading is fun *and* interesting. Don't hesitate to laugh out loud if your book is funny. Stop to read a passage to her that you especially like, or tell her about an interesting part of your story. Encourage her to share sentences and pictures with you, too.

♥ After reading, discuss your books. You'll help your child understand and remember what she reads. You might talk about how the stories are similar and different. For example, your youngster might say, "Mine has a girl main character," and you could respond, "Mine does, too. Mine is a grown-up. How old is yours?" Or you might each make a personal connection to your book ("I'm a mom just like my character, and you're a big sister just like yours"). ♥

Reading break

Almost everywhere your youngster looks, there's something for him to read. Here are several suggestions.

Crayons. From red to cornflower blue, help your child read the color of every crayon in his box.

Instructions. Ask him to help you read directions before you play a board game or build a toy racetrack.

Menus. Save carryout menus so your youngster can look for food words that he recognizes. In restaurants, he can read the children's menu.

Packages. Have him read the cereal box while he eats breakfast or find words he knows on the cracker box when he has a snack. ♥



Planning a story

A good story begins with a plan. When your child comes home with a writing assignment, help him get started with these ideas.

Think

Have your youngster brainstorm a list of words about his topic. For instance, if his teacher asked him to describe his spring vacation, he might jot down *picnic*, *baseball*, and *hike*. His list will help him remember everything he wants to include when he's writing ("I saw a grand slam at the baseball game").



Discuss

Hold a "writing conference" with your child. Ask questions to get him thinking about what information his story needs ("What games did you play when you had your sleepover?"). You might also help him come up with different ways to begin or end his story.

Observe

Taking a firsthand look at his subject can get your youngster's imagination going. Say he is supposed to draw a picture and write a story about his favorite toy. He can keep the toy next to him while he works. If he's writing about something that he can't see (the pyramids, Mars), help him find pictures in a library book or online. ♥

Fun with Words

Jump for j

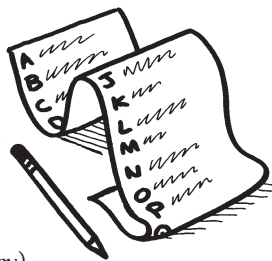
This action-packed game will teach your child about beginning sounds.

Have your youngster write 10–15 letters down the side of a sheet of paper. Together, think of a motion to go with each letter. *Examples:* hop for *h*, kick for *k*. Write the actions beside the letters.

Next, let her choose any letter (*k*). You say several words, including some that begin with the letter and some that don't (*kitten*, *banana*, *key*).

Your youngster should kick every time she hears a *k* word, and stay still for the other words. Then, you choose a letter and have her call out words for you. Keep taking turns until you've used all the letters.

Variation: An older child can choose actions that start with consonant blends (*clap* for *cl*, *stomp* for *st*). ♥



Q&A

It's a piece of cake!

Q When my daughter reads a story, she gets confused by expressions like "on the tip of my tongue." How can I help her?

A Idioms, or sayings that aren't literal, can be challenging for beginning readers. You can improve your child's reading comprehension by explaining these idioms and using them in everyday conversations.

Start a list of idioms from stories that she reads.

When she comes across one, talk about what it means, and help her write it in a small notebook. *Examples:* "A piece of cake" is something that's easy ("Her homework was a piece of cake"), and "apple of my eye" is someone who is cherished ("You are the apple of my eye").

Try to use the phrases from the list whenever you can. Or choose a saying of the day, and have a contest to see which family member can use it the most. ♥



Parent to Parent

Proper punctuation

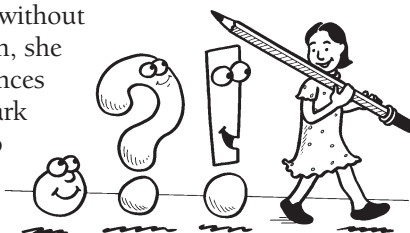
When my second-grader started writing, she often put periods, question marks, or exclamation points where they didn't belong.

Katie's teacher explained that this was a common habit for beginning writers. He suggested that I have Katie write a few sentences without any punctuation. Then, she should read the sentences aloud, putting in a mark each time she came to a stop. Mr. Draper said that if she heard her voice

going up, she needed a question mark. If she read a sentence that was exciting or scary, she should use an exclamation point. Otherwise, she could add a period.

He also said that I should ask Katie to point out punctuation in books when we read aloud. That way, she will see how authors use the marks. His

ideas have really helped Katie use the right punctuation when she writes. And now that she's paying attention to punctuation in stories, she's reading more smoothly, too. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote their children's reading, writing, and language skills.

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