

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

October 2011

Literacy Support Team

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ *The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish*

In Neil Gaiman's hilarious story, a little boy trades his father for his friend's goldfish. His mom insists that he trade back, but it's too late: the neighborhood children have been swapping Dad back and forth for things they want. Find out how his family gets him home.



■ *Those Shoes*

Jeremy wants striped high-top sneakers like his classmates have. But the popular shoes are expensive, and he needs boots instead. His trip to a thrift shop leads to an important lesson. A heartwarming tale by Maribeth Boelts.



■ *Night Light: A Book About the Moon*

How are Earth and the moon like friends? In clever language, Dana Meachen Rau's nonfiction book explains how Earth and the moon are held together by gravity. The book also discusses the moon's phases, orbit, and effect on Earth's tides. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ *Crow Call*

Lizzie doesn't know her father very well. That's because he has been away at war for a long time. Lois Lowry's story describes a special day in 1945 when father and daughter reconnect and discover they have a lot to learn from each other.



Good question!

What kinds of questions pop into your child's head while she reads?

By paying close attention to her own questions—and reading carefully for the answers—she can understand a story better. Here are ways your youngster can use questioning to improve her comprehension.

Before

Suggest that your child get ready to read by asking questions before starting a book. For example, if she's going to read about koalas, she might think, "What do they eat?" or "Where do they live?" These specific questions will encourage her to read closely for details as she searches for the answers.

During

Stopping to ask questions is a good way for your youngster to keep tabs on her own understanding. If she's reading a book like *Henry and Mudge and the Forever Sea* (Cynthia Rylant), she might think, "Wait a minute. Mudge is afraid of water, so why is he in the ocean?" Then, she could look back in the book



to see if she missed something, or she can continue reading to see if the next few pages clear things up. ("Oh! He wanted to catch a lobster.")

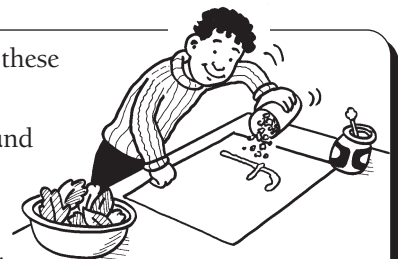
After

When your child finishes a book, let her think more deeply about it by asking herself "big picture" questions. She might ask, "What was the problem in the story, and how did it get solved?" "Would you like the main character as a friend? Why or why not?" "Would you like to live in the story's setting?" *Tip:* Help her make a list of questions to keep on hand. She can ask—and answer—them after each book she reads.♥

Autumn handwriting

Handwriting practice is colorful and fun with these fall-themed projects:

- Let your youngster collect leaves from the ground and tear them into confetti-sized pieces. Then, have him dip a cotton swab in glue and use it to write a message on paper. ("Fall is here!") Finally, he can sprinkle his "leaf confetti" onto his sticky message and gently shake the paper to remove the excess.
- Help your child cut 26 apple shapes from red, yellow, and green construction paper. He can write an uppercase and a lowercase letter on each one (Aa, Bb, Cc). Let him use the apples to decorate a household bulletin board. Or have him glue them to poster board, and hang his "apple alphabet" on the wall.♥

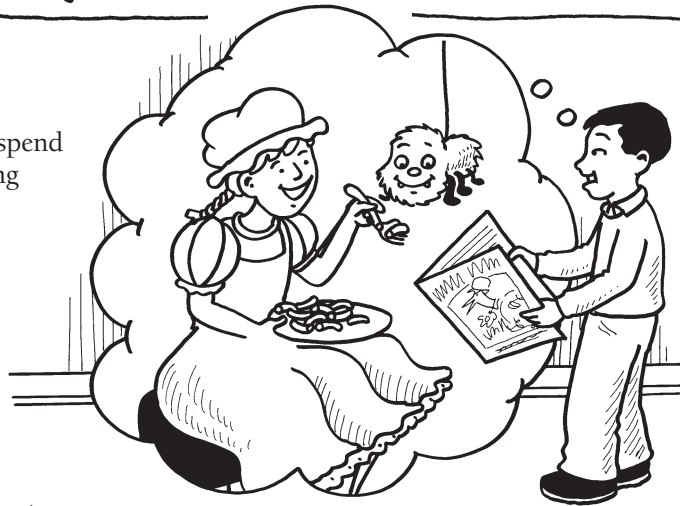


Quick reads

These 10-minute activities let you spend time with your youngster while helping him become a better reader.

What am I reading?

Have each family member write down words from a household item and read them aloud. Other players try to guess the source. For instance, you might find “Hand-wash in cold water” on a clothing tag or “Enter” and “Page Down” on a keyboard. The first person to answer correctly goes next.



Updated nursery rhymes

Read nursery rhymes together. Then, think of ways to change some words to use details from your child’s life. For example, he might say, “Jack and Jill went up the hill to ride a brand-new scooter.” Or you might suggest, “Little Miss Muffet sat on a tuffet, eating her mac and cheese.”

Road stories

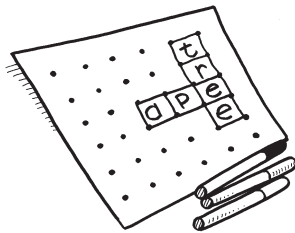
Encourage your youngster to keep a small notebook and pencil in the car. Ask him to choose six to eight words from road signs (“Exit,” “Stop,” “Caution”) and write them down. At home, take turns making up lines of a story that include words from the list. Your tale ends when every word has been used. ♥

Fun with Words Connect the dots



Turn this logic activity into a word game that lets your child practice thinking ahead.

Draw six rows and six columns of dots. Each player chooses a different-colored pen. Take turns drawing a line that connects any dot with the dot that’s above, below, or next to it (not diagonally).



If you draw a line that completes a square, you get to claim the square by writing a letter inside. Your goal is to write letters in connecting squares to spell words. Words can twist and turn in any direction (up, over, down) as long as the letters touch, and you’re allowed to continue a word started by another person.

When every square is full, count the letters with your ink color—the player with the most squares wins. ♥

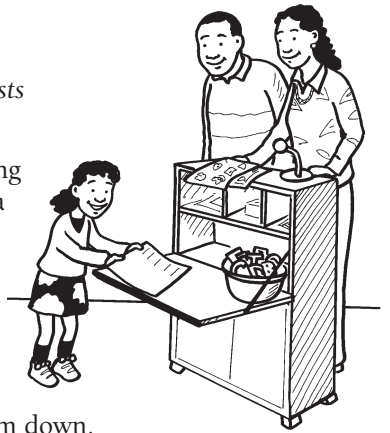
Q&A Family spelling

Q My daughter has weekly spelling tests for the first time this year. How can I help her study?

A Consider having your daughter create a “spelling station”—a place where she keeps her word lists, a dictionary, paper, a variety of writing utensils, and a recorder (a cassette player or an old cell phone). Also, include spelling materials like magnetic or foam letters or alphabet stickers.

To study, she can record herself reading her words slowly. Then, let her play them back and spell the words by arranging letters or writing them down.

She can also invite the whole family to use her station for a weekly spelling bee. Take turns spelling words from her list, either out loud or with the alphabet supplies. A speller can request a word’s definition or ask for it in a sentence. This will help your daughter learn the meanings of her words. ♥



Parent to Parent Writing show-and-tell

Our son Chase told us that his favorite part of school is reading his stories to the class. The children write stories all week long, and on Fridays they sit in an “author’s chair” and read one aloud.

So I thought, why not try this at home? Now, almost every weekend, we have a family author’s chair, where each person shares something



he has written. Chase usually reads a story he wrote at school. His older sister, who recently started writing poetry, reads a few poems to everyone.

Then, my wife and I take a turn. We might read an email we sent to a relative about our family vacation or a short note we’ve written for work. I think it has been good for our children to see that adults write, too! ♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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