

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

January 2011

Literacy Support Team

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ Kitchen Dance

A brother and sister tiptoe downstairs when they hear their parents laughing and washing dishes. The children are quickly invited to join in the fun, and dinner cleanup becomes a family song-and-dance routine with some Spanish words sprinkled in. A nice read-aloud by Maurie Manning.



■ Dolphin Talk

Dolphins don't talk like people do, but they communicate in many different ways. This nonfiction book by Wendy Pfeffer describes the sounds dolphins make, including chirps, whistles, and clicks. Youngsters will learn what scientists think each sound means.



■ Mud Puddle

In this story by Robert Munsch, Jule Ann keeps getting muddy. She tries to stay clean, but a puddle keeps pouncing on her from up in the apple tree or behind the dog house. Youngsters will laugh when the little girl finally outsmarts the puddle. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ Otis

Otis is a little red tractor who loves his job on the farm. Then, the farmer gets a shiny new tractor, and he doesn't need Otis anymore. When Otis saves the day, everyone realizes how special he is. A tale of friendship by Loren Long.



All kinds of stories

As your child reads more and more books, she'll discover that stories can be written in different ways. Here are suggestions for helping your youngster learn from—and enjoy—two kinds of stories.

Circular stories begin and end the same way. In *One Frog Sang* by Shirley Parenteau, for example, frogs jump out of their hiding places only to hide again as a car passes. It is called a circular plot because the frogs end up in their original places. Your child can visualize a circular story by drawing the events around the edge of a paper plate.

Cumulative stories start with a single incident that sparks a series of events. Your youngster can make a paper chain based on a cumulative book like *There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Shell!*



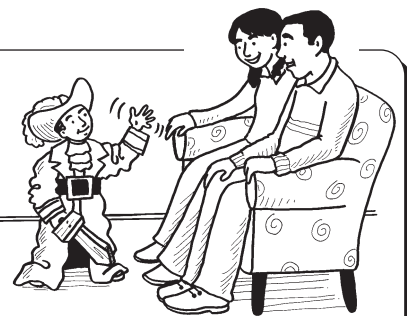
by Lucille Colandro. Ask her to write one word (*pail, sand, wave*) for each page on a separate 2-by-6-inch strip of paper. Then, help her link the strips into a chain. She can read her chain and imagine how changing one link would affect the story ("If the lady didn't swallow the pail, she wouldn't swallow sand to fill it").

Tip: To find more circular or cumulative stories, ask a librarian, or check out *The Read-Aloud Handbook* by Jim Trelease. ♥

Play and learn

Many toys and games that your youngster enjoys every day can help him read and write. With these ideas, you can encourage him to learn while he plays:

- During a game like Candy Land or Operation, ask your child to read the words on the board ("Peppermint Forest," "wish bone").
- Suggest that your youngster use writing toys to make letters and words. If he draws with sidewalk chalk or on a magnetic "doodle" toy or dry-erase board, he can label his pictures ("house," "car").
- Have your child tell stories when he plays with dress-up clothes. Ask questions to spark his imagination and build his language skills ("What does your pirate ship look like?"). ♥



Sounds all around

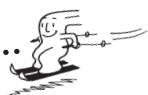
Familiar letter combinations and patterns let your child unlock unfamiliar words. Try these activities that can increase the number of words he knows how to read:

- Have your youngster draw a large outline of an object such as a snowman. Together, brainstorm words that begin with the same letter or letter combinations as the picture. For snowman, he could think of *sn* words (*snail*, *snap*). He can write the words inside his picture and display it on the refrigerator.



appeared frequently throughout the book (consonant, vowel, consonant). Go back through it together, and look for words that contain it (*pet*, *cup*).♥

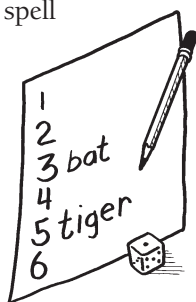
- Find things around the house that have words printed on them, such as clothing catalogs and game instructions. Take turns picking a pattern (*a*, consonant, silent *e*) and having the other person find five words with that pattern (*made*, *game*). You can also do this activity after you've read a story to your child. Name a pattern that



Fun with Words Roll and spell

Stretch your youngster's word skills with this game that will encourage her to think of—and spell—shorter and longer words.

Each player writes the numbers 1–6 in a column down a piece of paper. Then, take turns rolling a die and spelling a word with the number of letters shown. *Example:* Roll a 5 and spell “tiger” next to the number 5 on your paper. The object is to spell one word for each number. If you roll the same number again, your turn ends.



Variation: For an older player or a more advanced speller, number your paper 1–12 and roll a pair of dice.

On each roll, the player writes a word, phrase, or sentence with that number of letters. For instance, roll an 8 and write, “I love you.”♥

Q&A From TV to books

Q My daughter loves to watch TV. I'd rather she spent time learning. Is there a way she can do both?

A Your child might enjoy reading books about her favorite TV characters. Help her type the name of a show into a library database or bookstore Web site. Some children's book series (Olivia by Ian Falconer) have been turned into shows while some programs (*Dora the Explorer*) have inspired books. After reading several stories, you might suggest that your daughter write or draw ideas for new episodes about the characters.

You can also help your youngster research TV show topics. Perhaps an episode takes place in Egypt, the characters rescue a monkey, or a family celebrates Chinese New Year. Check out a library book to learn more about the subject.

Note: Experts recommend that children watch no more than one hour of TV per day.♥



Parent to Parent My best work

Every Friday, my son Zach brings home finished classwork. We can't save all of it, and sometimes it's hard for him to decide what to keep.

Luckily, my middle schooler gave me an idea. He keeps a portfolio of work as part of his final grade. I realized that Zach could collect his best papers, too. Now when he brings work home, he chooses one or two favorites—stories he

wrote, spelling tests he did well on, drawings, and art projects. We hole-punch them and put them in a binder. Like his older brother, Zach includes a cover sheet for each item where he writes why he chose it (“My letters are very neat”).

At the end of the year, he can look back and see what he has learned. We plan to keep a new binder each year. Then, when Zach is older, he'll have a collection of his favorite work.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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