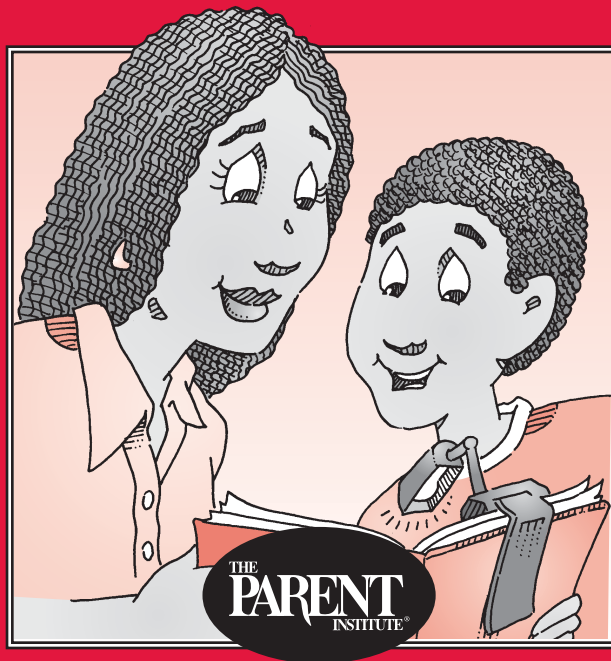


What Parents
Can Do at Home
to Help Students
With Reading

ACADEMIC
ACHIEVEMENT
Series



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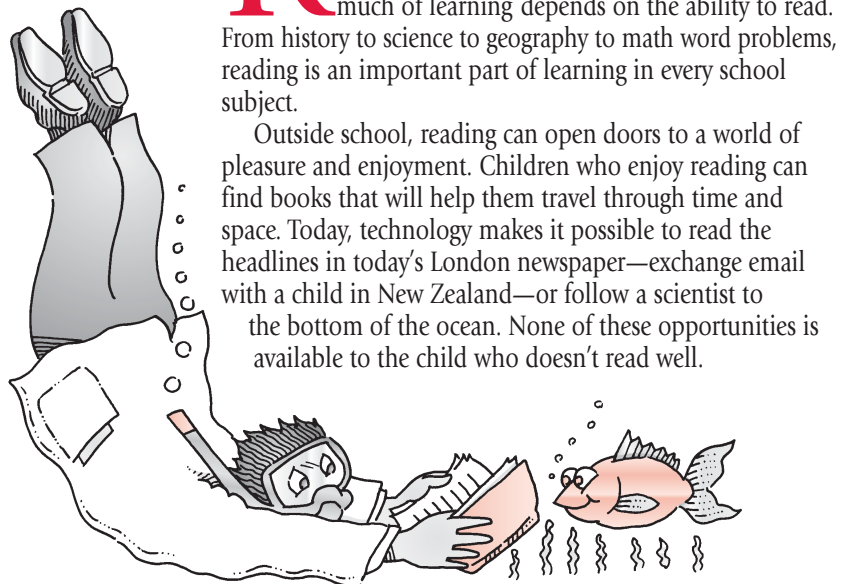
One of a Series of Booklets for Parents

Read Aloud

The single most important way to encourage a love of reading in your child is to read aloud. Set aside some time every day—try for at least 15 minutes—and read. Read things you enjoy—read books your child loves. Read funny poems, fairy tales or sports stories from the newspaper. But read!

Help Your Child 'Hear' The Excitement In a Book

Poor readers sometimes struggle so hard to figure out each word that they never catch the excitement of a book. If this describes your child, you might encourage her to read along with an audio book. Ask your child's teacher, the school librarian or the public library for recorded versions of the book. As your child hears the words and sees them, she'll start to understand why people get so excited about reading.



Reading is a key to success in school for students of all ages. Children who are good readers find it easier to do well in other subjects because so much of learning depends on the ability to read. From history to science to geography to math word problems, reading is an important part of learning in every school subject.

Outside school, reading can open doors to a world of pleasure and enjoyment. Children who enjoy reading can find books that will help them travel through time and space. Today, technology makes it possible to read the headlines in today's London newspaper—exchange email with a child in New Zealand—or follow a scientist to the bottom of the ocean. None of these opportunities is available to the child who doesn't read well.

This booklet includes games, activities and suggestions for ways you can help your child read at home. It is designed to help you teach your child how to master important reading skills. You'll also find tips for making reading fun and helping your child develop a lifelong love of reading. These tips come from parents, experienced reading teachers and specialists who work every day with students who have difficulty reading.

The ideas in this booklet will help your student develop a healthy interest in reading, an appreciation of why reading is so important, and a positive attitude about reading in and out of school.*



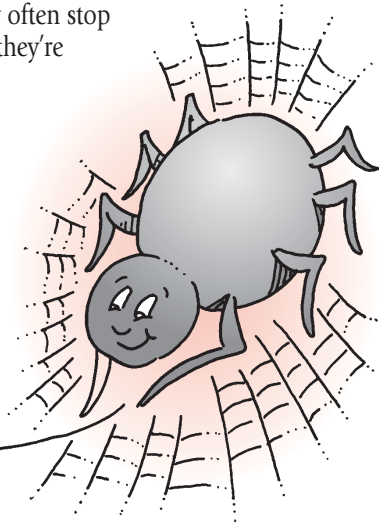
Every child is unique, so we often use the singular pronoun. We'll alternate using "he/him" and "she/her" throughout this booklet.

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Teach Your Child to Ask Questions

Good readers are curious. They often stop to ask questions about what they're reading. Here are some ways you can help your child learn to ask questions:

- Talk about *why* characters do what they do. If you're reading *Charlotte's Web*, you might ask, "Why do you suppose Charlotte decided to help Wilbur by writing words in her web?"



- Think of how the book is—or isn't—like your child's life. Ask, "Have you ever felt like that? Would you have done what this character did? How might you have handled this situation differently?"
- Wonder about the "what-ifs." Get your child to think about how *he* might have written the ending if he were writing the book. What if the ring Bilbo found (in *The Hobbit*) hadn't made him invisible—but instead had made him 15 feet tall? What if Jo had married Laurie (in *Little Women*)?

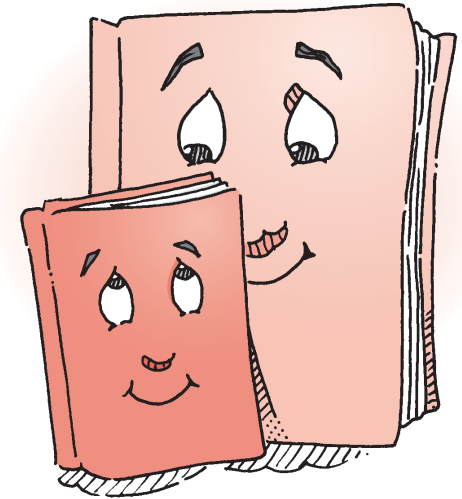


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Help Your Child Practice Reading Aloud

Children are frequently expected to read aloud in school. For many children it's a skill they must practice. It's easy to find ways to read aloud with your child. You can:

- **Ask your child** to read a recipe to you while you are cooking.
- **Ask an older child** to read to a younger child.
- **Take turns reading** aloud when you and your child read together.
- **Invite family members** to bring a book to the dinner table once a week and read a favorite section to the entire family.
- **Ask your child to read aloud from a library book** while you are riding in the car. Everyone in the family can take turns reading aloud on a long trip. It's good practice and the miles will fly by.
- **Have your child read you the weather report** from today's newspaper while you are getting her ready for school.
- **Encourage your child to present "newscasts"** or "special reports" to you, her friends or the whole family. Have your child read from the newspaper sports page, the fashion section, wedding announcements or even from a catalog or her favorite magazine.
- **Have your child read aloud from comic books** or strips while imitating what she thinks the characters might sound like.

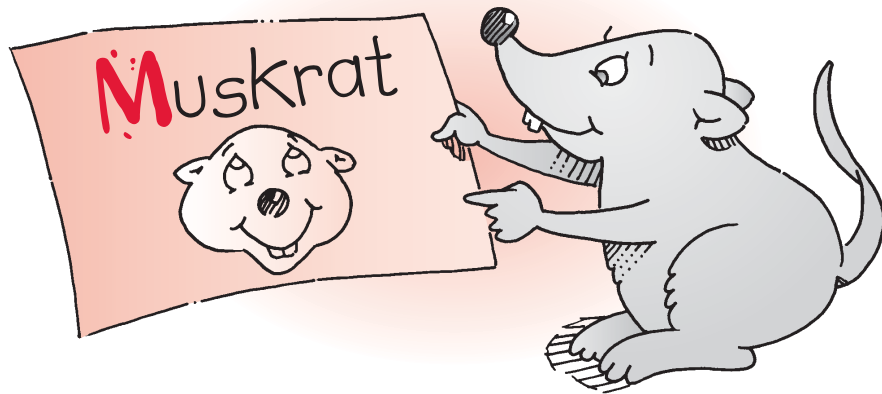


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Make Sure Your Child Understands Letter Sounds

Sometimes a child has difficulty reading because he has never learned to “unlock the code.” That is, he may not know that the letter *b* says *buh*, the letter *j* says *juh* and so on.

If your child isn't reading by second grade, see if he knows which letters make which sounds. Try having him read some easy but unfamiliar words—like *muskkrat*, *booklet* or *scatter*. If he can't associate specific sounds with specific letters, he may need help with phonics. Make a flash card for each letter. Hold up the cards one at a time and ask your child to say a word that starts with the letter. Make sure your child knows consonant sounds and long and short vowel sounds.



Late Readers May Have a Disability

If your child hasn't mastered reading by the end of second or certainly the beginning of third grade, he could have a learning disability. Ask your school how your child can be tested. Don't wait—children with learning disabilities can learn to read well, but they need help from teachers who know how to work with their special needs. The longer you wait, the more frustrated your child may become.

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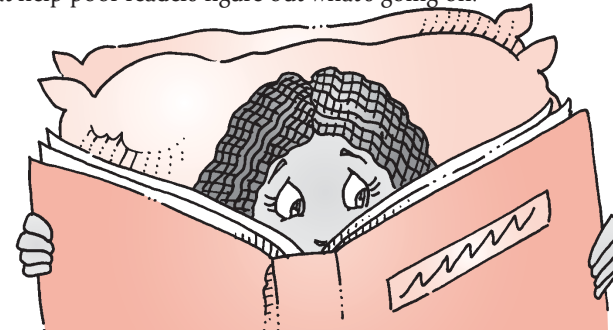
Look for High-Interest, Easy-Reading Books

A child's reading level doesn't always match her age. A 12-year-old who reads at the third-grade level will probably be bored with books most third graders would enjoy. She may even be embarrassed to carry around a “babyish” book when all her friends are reading more grown-up titles. That embarrassment may keep her from reading—exactly what you *don't* want.

If your child's reading level is more than one or two years below her age, you need to look for books she'll still find interesting. Ask a librarian or your child's teacher to suggest titles that will be of interest. In general, you should look for books that have:

- A small number of difficult words.
- Short passages that deliver clear messages.
- Helpful illustrations.
- Subheadings that will help your child understand the flow of ideas in the book.

The newspaper is also a good choice. Most articles are short, all have headlines that tell what the story is about, and many have pictures that help poor readers figure out what's going on.

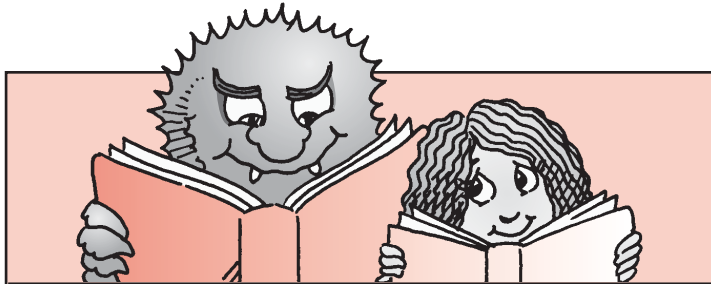


Reading in Bed Is a Great Idea

Help your child develop the reading-in-bed habit. You can encourage a younger child to read by pushing back bedtime by 20 to 30 minutes on a Friday or Saturday night if she's reading in bed.

Encourage Dads, Grandfathers And Older Brothers to Read

In the U.S., girls usually score better than boys on reading tests and are less likely to be in remedial reading classes. But the same is *not* true in other countries. Why? Some think it may be because in the U.S., mothers do most of the reading to their children. One way to encourage boys to read more is by having men—dads, grandfathers, older brothers and friends—read to and with them. This provides an important role model for boys.



Don't Worry If Your Child Isn't Reading 'Serious' Books

Most good readers go through a period of reading books like the *Goosebumps* series. As children devour these books, however, their reading gets faster and better. At the same time, they're learning to ask the kinds of questions that good readers always ask: What is causing the strange noises coming from the big house on the hill? And why doesn't anyone in town want to talk about it?

Try the 20-Minute Miracle

Offer your older student a small reward for reading 20 minutes a day. That's what experts say it takes to develop reading speed, stamina and comprehension. Average students who read 20 minutes a day will finish more than 25 books a year! Any reward you offer will more than pay for itself in improved grades. As an added plus, your teen's scores on the verbal section of college entrance exams will probably go up. There is a direct relationship between reading and verbal scores.

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Don't Make It Easy to Watch TV

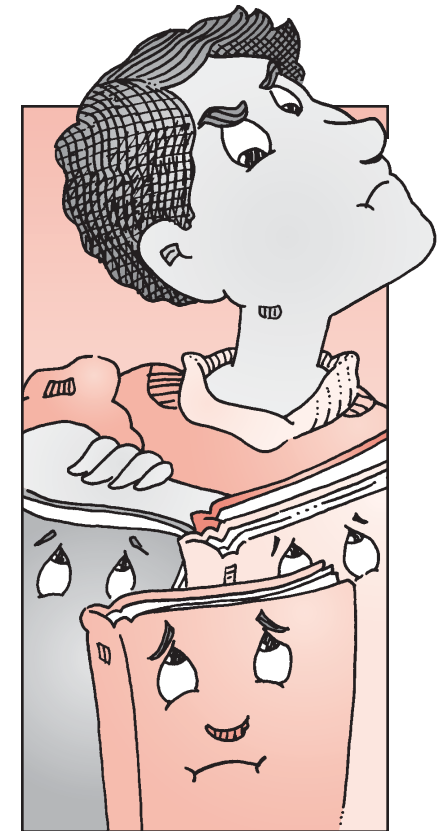
Too much television takes time away from reading, so don't make it too easy for your children to watch TV. For example, don't have a television in the kitchen. Instead, put a bookcase there. Keep it filled with comic books, magazines and other things that are easy to read. Make *and enforce* a rule that all snacks must be eaten in the kitchen. Your child can read a short magazine article while waiting for the microwave to heat up a snack or check out the sports page while downing a bowl of cereal.

Help Reluctant Readers Get Into the Reading Habit

Some older students seem to turn off to reading. It isn't that they *can't* read, but that they *don't* read. Their reading skills get rusty, reading takes longer and they avoid it even more.

If your student is a reluctant reader, you might try these tips:

- **Start** small. Find a single article that your child can finish in a 15- or 20-minute sitting.
- **Match** your child's interests. A sports fan may enjoy reading a sports magazine or a biography of a favorite athlete. A horse lover can find a wealth of books, from fantasies to mysteries to science fiction.
- **Ask** for suggestions. Your local librarian can tell you about books that appeal to older students.
- **Think** funny. Humor books can make even the most reluctant reader see that there's a payoff to reading.

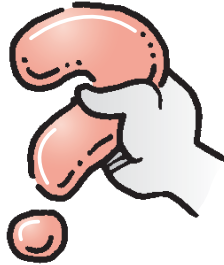


Use 'Active Reading' to Boost Comprehension

There's a big difference between learning to read and reading to learn. Often, children finish reading an assignment and do not understand what they've read. Here are some techniques to help your student become an active reader and comprehend what she has read:

■ **See the big picture.** Before starting to read an assignment, have your child think about what she's reading. What is the title of the chapter or assignment? Does it give any clues as to what the reading assignment may be about?

Now look for other clues—chapter headings or subheadings, words in **boldface**, pictures or graphs. All these should help your child have an idea of the "big picture" before she starts reading.



■ **Take notes.** Most good students take at least some notes on what they read; most poor students don't—it's that simple. Taking notes while reading will make it easier to study and review. But it will also make reading more active and engaging. Your child should write down the most important ideas in the reading assignment (these are usually in **boldface** or *italics*). She should also write down and look up any words she doesn't know. Notes don't have to be long—the purpose isn't to rewrite the textbook—and they don't have to be neat, since only your child will ever see them.

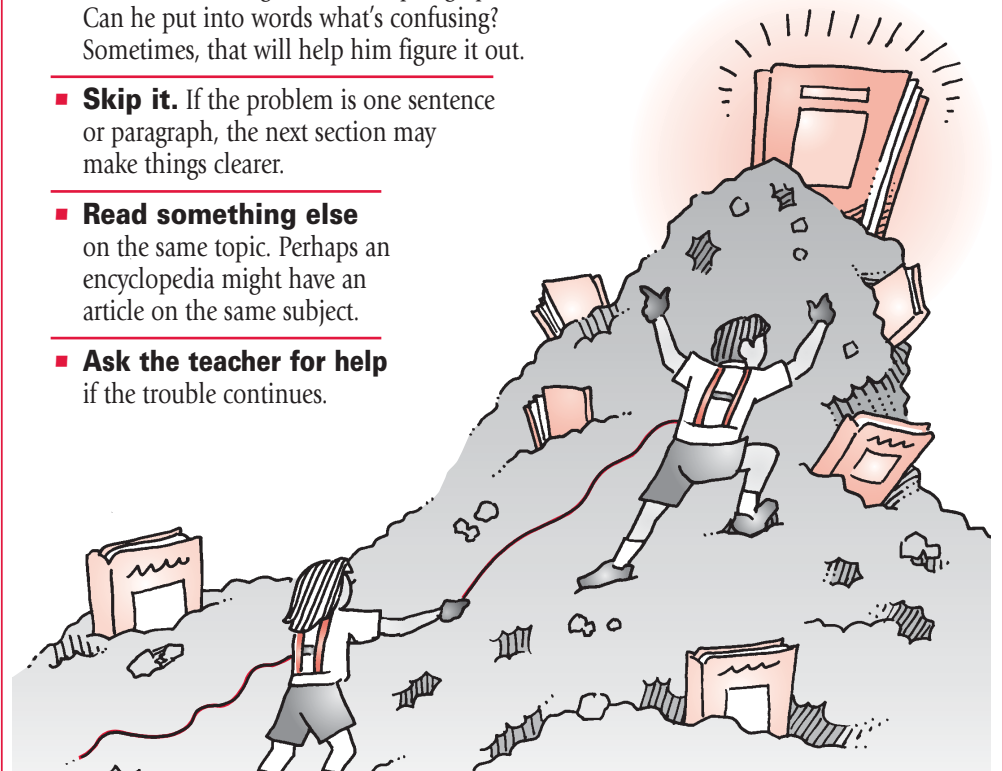
■ **Relate the reading to previous knowledge.** The best way to remember new information is by relating it to something a student has already learned. When your child finishes a reading assignment, have her write a short paragraph answering questions like these:

- What was the main topic of this chapter? How is it similar to something else you have learned?
- What key ideas or points did you already know?
- What did you learn that was completely new to you?

Help Your Child Make Sense of Reading Textbooks

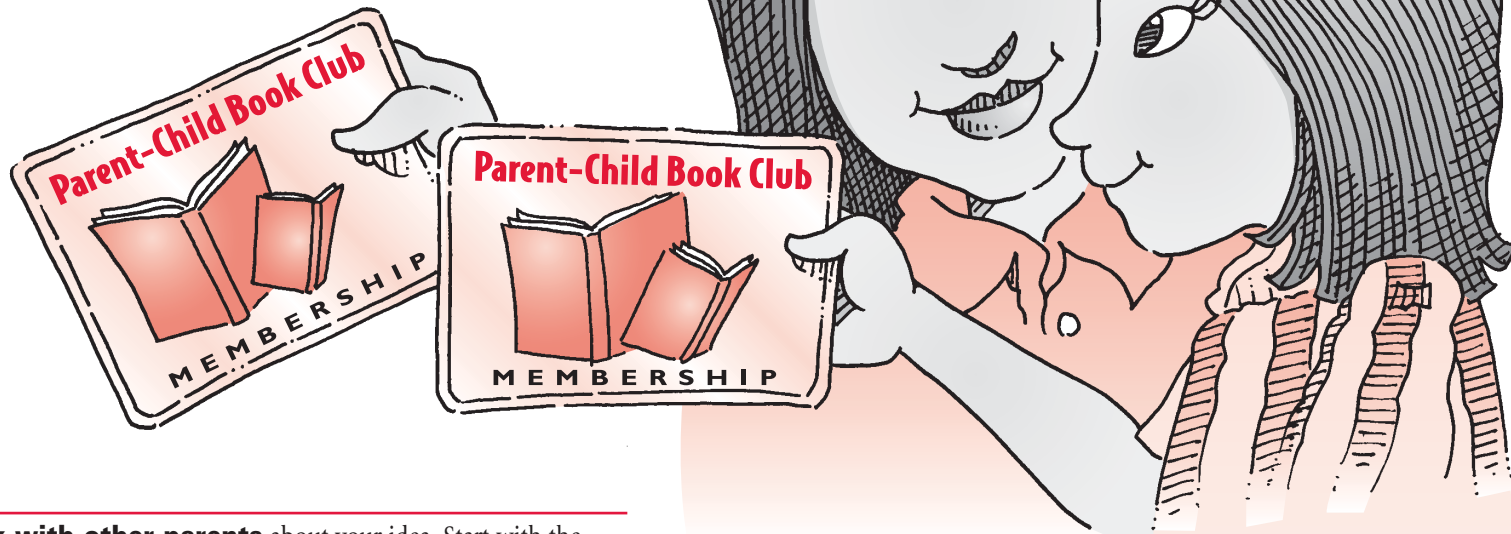
Maybe it's a science chapter that just doesn't make sense. Maybe it's a history lesson that seems confusing. At one time or another, most kids have trouble understanding something they read. And while your child's first reaction may be to quit, suggest these ideas instead:

- **Look up unfamiliar words.** If your child doesn't understand one or two words, this may be all it takes.
- **Look for clues.** What is the chapter about? (Check the headings and subheadings.) Do the pictures illustrate key ideas?
- **Reread.** Have your child go back and read the confusing sentence or paragraph. Can he put into words what's confusing? Sometimes, that will help him figure it out.
- **Skip it.** If the problem is one sentence or paragraph, the next section may make things clearer.
- **Read something else** on the same topic. Perhaps an encyclopedia might have an article on the same subject.
- **Ask the teacher for help** if the trouble continues.



Start a Parent-Child Book Club

Looking for a way to share some special times with your child—while encouraging a love of reading? One way might be to start a parent-child book club. This is a great way to stay in touch with children as they grow—book clubs work well for children of all ages. Here are some tips on starting a club of your own:



- **Talk with other parents** about your idea. Start with the parents of your child's friends, but also look for ways to meet other people who might be interested. Perhaps the mother and daughter you always see in the library would like to be a part of a group.
- **Plan a first meeting.** Many public libraries make meeting rooms available free of charge. Schools or churches may also have rooms you can use. If the group is small enough, you could take turns meeting in one another's homes.
- **Choose a reading list.** Ask everyone to suggest a book or two that they have read and enjoyed, or a book they would like to read. Ask your school librarian for suggestions. Your child's teacher may also have recommendations.

- **Open discussion** by asking some general questions such as:
 - What is the main idea of the story?
 - Are there similarities between the characters' lives and your own? How are they similar? Different?
 - Who is your favorite character? Why?
 - Can you think of a different ending for the story?
- **Be good role models.** Book clubs offer children a chance to see how to disagree respectfully, how to share thoughts and ideas clearly, how to relate what's in a book to their lives and how to think deeply about what they've read. Parents can help children develop those skills by modeling them in the group.



Make Reading An Important Family Activity

Make Sure Your Child Sees You Reading

Setting a good example is always the best way to teach children to do anything. If you want to encourage your child to read, make sure he has plenty of opportunities to see you reading books, magazines and newspapers every day. Make it a point to talk with your child about what you are reading. Share a funny story you've just read. Talk about something you've read that surprised you. Ask your child what he thinks about something in the newspaper and pass it along for him to read. When you make it clear that reading is part of your everyday life, you'll find that reading soon becomes part of his life, too.

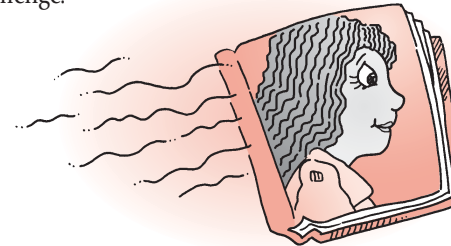
Make Reading a Part of Your Family Traditions

Holidays, birthdays, anniversaries and other special occasions offer great opportunities for the entire family to sit down and read something special together. Reading about a holiday together can make the holiday more meaningful. Reading a child's favorite story together on her birthday is a fun way for the whole family to celebrate year after year. And best of all, when you read together you are making family memories as well as building reading skills.

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Help Your Child Keep a Positive Attitude

If your child is struggling with reading while her classmates are not, she may start to believe she will never learn to read. You need to help her focus on what she is doing right—practicing regularly, giving her best effort. You also need to help her see that she is making progress. Above all, make sure she knows you're proud of her and you have confidence that together you'll meet this challenge.



Of all the things you can ever do to encourage school success and achievement, none can compare in importance to helping your child develop good reading skills!

What Parents Can Do at Home to Help Students With Reading is one of six titles in "The Academic Achievement Series" of booklets for parents published by The Parent Institute®, P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474. Call (800) 756-5525. www.parent-institute.com
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