

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Chilton Elementary School

Everyday activities can strengthen your child's critical thinking skills

Analyzing information means examining and evaluating it instead of just accepting it. This is an important critical thinking skill for students—especially when it comes to reading.

To help your child enhance his thinking skills:

- **Look at a newspaper headline** together, then read the article. Ask your child if he thinks the headline did a good job of telling the reader what the story was about. If not, ask him how he would rewrite it.
- **Talk about *fact*** (established truth) and *opinion* (a person's beliefs). Ask your child to tell you whether a statement is fact or opinion, and why.
- **Ask your child**, "What do you think?" at least once a day. Encourage him to share his opinions and explain why he thinks as he does.



Three factors boost motivation to read

You want your child to spend her free time reading, but you're not sure how to motivate her. To get kids reading, experts recommend parents focus on these three factors:

1. **Confidence.** It's important for children to feel good about their reading experiences. Talk with your child about her reading successes and give her opportunities to practice reading aloud.
2. **Choice.** Children are more motivated when they get to pick what they read. Take regular trips to the library with your child. Visit several sections (such as fiction, nonfiction and magazines) and let your child choose what to check out.
3. **Interaction.** Model strong reading skills by reading aloud to your child on a regular basis. Have family discussions about books and articles you read.

Use social media to inspire your child to write short book reviews

Encourage your child to take reading to a new level by having him "tweet" a quick review of what he just read. Challenge him to write a short summary of a book's plot and themes—as well as whether or not he would recommend the book to a friend. Remember, tweets are limited to just 280 characters!



Graphic organizers offer clarity

Something as simple as a picture of a tree can help kids organize their thoughts about what they read.

Each large branch can represent a part of the story (such as the main character, plot and setting). Smaller branches—which grow from the big branches—can include details.



Fiction makes history come alive

Build your child's interest in social studies by introducing her to historical fiction. Ask your child's teacher or your local librarian to suggest books that:

- **Present** time periods accurately.
- **Are set** in real places.
- **Teach** the facts.
- **Include** helpful pictures.
- **Avoid** misconceptions about the past.



Write a special Valentine poem together

Throughout history, people have written poems to show their love. With your child, try writing a *cinquain*—a classic style of poem that has five non-rhyming lines. Here's how:

1. **For the first line**, write a noun that describes the topic of your poem.
2. **For the second line**, write two adjectives that describe the topic of your poem.
3. **For the third line**, write three action verbs ending in “-ing” that describe your topic.
4. **For the fourth line**, write a short phrase that describes your topic.
5. **For the final line**, write a noun that is a synonym or description of the topic of your poem.



To read some sample cinquain poems, visit www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson43/RWT016-1.PDF.

Explore a variety of reading materials with your child

Encourage your child to explore books about different people and different things. He doesn't have to finish a book if he doesn't like it, but reading a broad range of books will help him discover new things and new interests.



For lower elementary readers:

- *In the Trees, Honey Bees!* by Lori Mortensen. Learn some interesting facts about the daily life of a honey bee in this beautifully illustrated, informative book.
- *The One and Only Stuey Lewis* by Jane Schoenberg. Stuey Lewis has plenty of problems, including difficulty with reading. But that won't stop him from surviving second grade.



For upper elementary readers:

- *Every Day on Earth* by Steve Murrie and Matthew Murrie. What amazing things happen on Earth every day? This book provides fascinating details, such as how much air a person inhales each day.
- *Tales for Very Picky Eaters* by Josh Schneider. Is your child a picky eater? Then she'll love this collection of stories with titles such as “The Tale of the Slimy Eggs”!

Build your child's reading confidence

Does your child read too quickly? Guess at words? Avoid sounding them out? If so, she may have reading anxiety—which can ultimately lead to challenges in school.

To reduce your child's stress over reading:

- **Read to her every day** to foster her love of reading.
- **Don't force her** to read to you. If she wants to, great! If not, don't make her.
- **Extend her bedtime** by 30 minutes on weekends—but only if she spends that time reading for fun.
- **Make audio recordings** of materials she finds especially challenging so she can listen and read along.
- **Be patient and encouraging.** Talk privately with her teacher and ask about ways you can help.



Q: I want my child to enjoy reading, but he seems to prefer watching TV and playing video games. What can I do?

A: It can be difficult to motivate some kids to read—especially when there are so many entertainment options available. Place limits on recreational screen time. Keep irresistible reading materials around the

house. Many young readers love magazines and graphic novels. Look for materials based on your child's favorite shows or games.

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