

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

September 2019

Book Picks



Read-aloud favorites

■ *The Day You Begin*

(Jacqueline Woodson)

The students in this story feel alone for different reasons, whether it's because of what they look like, how they talk, or what they eat. But the children discover that when they share their differences, they begin to see just how well they *do* fit in. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ *Night Night, Groot*

(Brendan Deneen)

In this bedtime comic book, Baby Groot is ready for bed after a long day. But his friend Rocket Raccoon has other ideas. He snatches Groot out of bed, and the two zoom across the universe with their superhero friends. Will Groot ever get to sleep?



■ *Tigers & Tea with Toppy* (Barbara Kerley and Rhoda Knight Kalt)

To Rhoda, her grandfather is "Toppy."



To everyone else, he's the famous wildlife artist Charles R. Knight.

This biography tells the story of a weekend adventure Rhoda and Toppy enjoy together. Tag along to the museum and the zoo to see many of the artist's drawings and paintings.

■ *The Cloud Book* (Tomie dePaola)

Can your youngster predict the weather by looking at the clouds?

Has she ever thought that a cloud was shaped like an animal? This nonfiction book teaches readers about common cloud types and the weather they typically bring.



Fill your home with words

Your child learned to talk by hearing many words every day. Now that she's learning to read, *seeing* lots of words will make them familiar to her when she comes across them in books. Use these ideas to surround your youngster with words.

Label

On sticky notes, help your child label furniture, toys, and appliances with their names. She could put each note on the correct item, then walk around the house and see how many words she can read. *Idea:* Let her create a nameplate for each person's door—and even put one on the dog's food bowl or the fish tank.

Post

Use colorful tape to mark off a "bulletin board" on the refrigerator. Your youngster can post all kinds of things to read. *Examples:* The school cafeteria menu, notes from you, a joke. Then, make time daily to read the board. For instance, before



school, help her check the menu to find out what's for lunch.

Collect

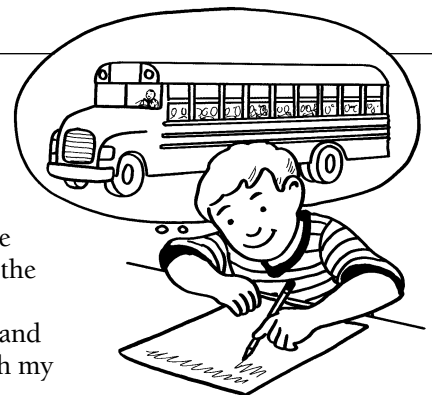
Cut construction paper into fourths and staple the pieces together to create word books. Your child might title one "Food Words," then cut words like *cereal* and *rice* from food packages and glue them all over the pages. She could put her books on a shelf or on the coffee table to pull out and read whenever she likes.♥

My school story

"What did you do in school today?" Instead of having your child *tell* you, encourage him to write it down. He'll work on putting events in order, and you'll learn all about his day.

Ask your youngster to write a sentence about what he did first. *Example:* "I rode the school bus." Then ask, "What happened next?" He might write: "We had reading and writing time. I went to lunch and ate with my friends. We did math."

Tip: If your child isn't writing yet, let him dictate his story to you.♥



Books and the great outdoors

Reading can be a quiet indoor pastime for your youngster—or a playful outdoor adventure! In your backyard or at the park, read stories that take place outside. Then, try these suggestions for helping your child make connections between books and his world.

Recreate a picture. Let your youngster choose an illustration from a book and use props to make his own real-life version of it. If the picture shows a pond with



the sidewalk after a rainstorm to see how they wriggle. Or after reading about a windy day, he may want to make a colorful wind sock to see which way the wind is blowing.♥

lily pads, he could float leaves on a puddle. Or if there's an illustration of a bear in a cave, maybe he'll use sticks and rocks to build a miniature hideaway for his teddy bear.

Explore science. Do a science activity related to a book. Say the main character in a story is an earthworm. Your child might observe worms on



A back-to-school recipe

Your youngster can practice writing instructions as she whips up a recipe for a great school year!

Together, read recipes for favorite dishes so she sees how they include an ingredients list and step-by-step instructions. Then, suggest that your child write her own list of ingredients for a great school year. *Example:* "1 friendly teacher, ½ cup reading, a dash of recess."

1. Combine 1 friendly teacher with ½ cup reading.
2. Sprinkle in a dash of recess.
3. Add ½ cup math games.



Next, she should write a step for each ingredient. Encourage her to use cooking words like those in the recipes she read (*stir, combine, blend*).

Finally, listen while your youngster reads her finished recipe to you.♥

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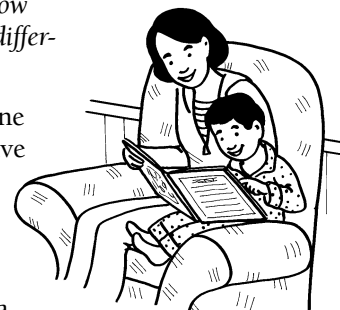
Q&A Read-alouds for new readers

Q My son loves it when I read to him. Now that he's learning to read on his own, what should I do differently at story time?

A Simply continuing to read aloud to your son is one of the best ways to support his reading. Kids who have pleasant experiences with books tend to become better readers.

Try following your child's lead at story time. If he points out words he knows, offer encouragement. ("You're right, that word is *blue*.") Or if he asks what a word means, give a quick kid-friendly explanation. ("*Locomotive* is a big word for *train*.")

Also, share your reactions to the book, and let your son do the same. *Example:* "I was really hoping the train would make it up the hill. Did you think it would?" You'll find that talking about stories is a natural way to boost his comprehension.♥



Parent to Parent

Let's do research!

My daughter Kara asks a lot of questions. During a recent trip to the library, we read a non-fiction book that answered her most recent one: "Why do we get the hiccups?"

Now Kara keeps a list of questions she thinks of. When we visit the library, we look up the answers. Our research is turning out to be far more educational—and more fun—than asking

my phone to answer Kara's questions. For instance, I help her type her topic into the library database, and we look at the list of suggested books. Then the librarian points us toward the section where we can find what we need.

Kara is learning her way around the library, and she's even learning to use a book's index to locate the information she's looking for.♥



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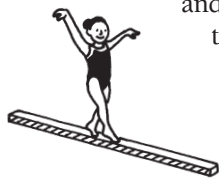
Book Picks



Read-aloud favorites

■ **Gymnastics Time!** (Brendan Flynn)

This nonfiction book takes readers inside a gym to see gymnasts in action. It explains basic facts about the sport, such as how to get started and what equipment the athletes use.



Part of the Sports Time series.
(Also available in Spanish.)

■ **We Don't Eat Our Classmates**

(Ryan T. Higgins)

Penelope Rex is a little dinosaur who ate her classmates on the first day of school. (Could she help it if they were delicious?) Now no one wants



to be friends with her. It takes a lesson from the class goldfish to put Penelope on the right track.

■ **Space Taxi: Archie Takes Flight**

(Wendy Mass and Michael Brawer)

Archie Morningstar is excited to spend Take Your Kid to Work Day in his dad's taxi. But when he climbs in the car, he discovers that his dad is a taxi driver for aliens from outer space. Instead of a trip around the city, Archie is on an intergalactic adventure! The first book in the Space Taxi series.

■ **A Full Moon is Rising**

(Marilyn Singer)

Poetry, geography, and culture come together in this volume. Each poem is about a full moon in a different part of the world. A special section offers interesting facts about each place mentioned in the poems.



Writing is practical

Show your youngster how useful writing can be by giving him real-life reasons to put pencil to paper. Here are a few ideas.

To-do lists

What does your child want or need to do this week? Help him make lists to keep track. He might list Lego structures he plans to build (castle, rocket) or chores he needs to complete (water plants, dust). Or maybe he'll list upcoming events, such as going to the book fair and eating dinner with Grandma. He can check off each item as he finishes it.

Reminders

Let your youngster be your secretary and write reminders for you. *Examples:* "Buy milk." "Sign field trip form." Provide a pad of sticky notes (and a little spelling help) for him to jot them down. Then, set up a place to leave the notes where you will see them. Encourage reading practice by leaving notes for him, too.



Memory book

Suggest that your child start a notebook of favorite memories. Each night before bed, he could write and illustrate three things he wants to remember about the day. *Examples:* Jumping in a pile of leaves, listening to his teacher read a good book, learning a funny joke.

Note: If your youngster is just learning to write, ask him to write letters or words he knows, and help him fill in the rest. ♥

A record of my reading

These ongoing craft projects will help your child keep track of books she reads this year—and show her how she's progressing as a reader.

● **Paper chain.** Help your youngster write each book title on a strip of construction paper. She can link the strips together to form a colorful chain that will get longer the more she reads. *Idea:* Suggest that she use different-color strips for different types of books (green for animal tales, purple for poetry).

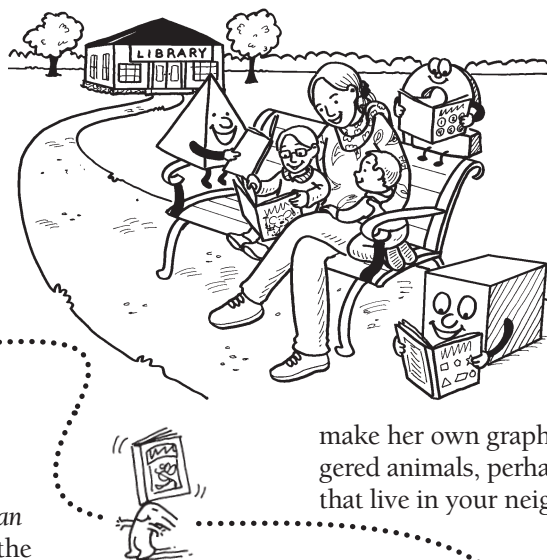
● **Patchwork quilt.** Have your child write book titles on separate construction-paper "quilt" squares. Encourage her to decorate each one—maybe she'll make a red-and-white striped square for *The Cat in the Hat* (Dr. Seuss). Now help her tape or staple the squares together in rows and columns for a quilt that grows throughout the year! ♥



I can learn from nonfiction!

Nonfiction books are fun for your youngster to read—and they build knowledge she needs in school now and later. Help her become a fan of nonfiction with these tips.

Explore school subjects. Let your child check out nonfiction library books that are related to topics she studies in school. As she learns about



numbers and shapes, for example, read math picture books. Or she could find a biography of a historical figure she's studying. She'll learn new facts and gain a deeper understanding of the topic.

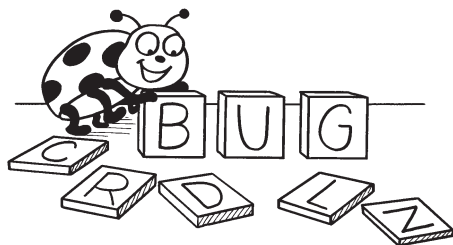
Read graphics. Many nonfiction books include charts, tables, maps, and diagrams like those your youngster will see in textbooks. When you read together, be sure to read the graphics, too, so she becomes comfortable with them. For instance, she'll learn to read the titles, captions, or data they contain. *Idea:* Suggest that she

make her own graphic. After reading a chart about endangered animals, perhaps she'll draw a chart showing animals that live in your neighborhood.♥



Real or nonsense?

How are the words *fan* and *can* related? They both belong to the *-an* word family! Give your youngster's reading and spelling skills a boost with this word family game.



1. Get a set of magnetic letters or letter tiles. Set aside the vowels, and mix up the consonants in a bowl.
2. Let your child choose a word family, such as *-an*, *-op*, *-ug*, or *-et*, and find the magnetic letters or tiles for his "family."
3. Take turns drawing a consonant from the bowl and saying it with the word family. Does it make a real word or a nonsense word? For instance, adding *b* to *-ug* makes *bug* (real). But adding *g* makes *gug* (nonsense).
4. If it's a real word, the player writes it down. When all the consonants have been used, the person with the longest list picks the next word family so you can play again.♥

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Autumn fine-motor play

Your child's hands need to be strong and coordinated for tasks like writing and cutting with scissors. Try these fall-themed activities to give his little fingers a workout.

Pumpkin pincushion. Let your youngster stick pushpins all over a small pumpkin. Then, he could stretch colorful rubber bands between the pins to create designs.

Apple tree. Have him draw the outline of a tree on paper. He can place red pom-pom apples on his tree and then use tweezers to "pick" them up.

Leaf rubbing. Together, gather leaves from the ground outside. Encourage your child to tape one to a table, place a sheet of paper on top, and rub the side of an unwrapped crayon over it. The leaf's outline will appear!

Seed signs. Ask your youngster to create a sign for your door by gluing apple or pumpkin seeds onto paper to spell "W-E-L-C-O-M-E."♥



Working with the reading specialist

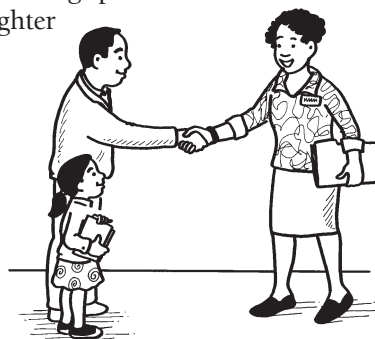
Q My daughter meets with the school reading teacher each week. How can I work with the teacher to help my child do her best?

A Start by asking the reading specialist what you and your daughter can do at home. For example, the teacher might suggest specific cues to give your child when she reads a word incorrectly. Or maybe she'll have ideas for word games that are

especially helpful for students who struggle with reading.

The specialist may also tell you what your daughter is doing well and where they're working on ways to improve.

Finally, be sure to attend all IEP (Individualized Education Program) meetings. The teacher will answer your questions, explain anything that you don't understand, and help you plan for your daughter's reading success.♥



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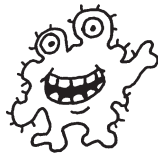


Read-aloud favorites

■ *Do Not Lick This Book*

(Idan Ben-Barak)

The title of this picture book offers good advice—since, as the pages explain, germs are everywhere. A little microbe named Min gives readers a humorous introduction to germs, explaining where they live and what they do.



■ *Froggy Gets Dressed* (Jonathan London)

Froggy should be hibernating through the winter, but playing in the snow is more exciting. Soon, he's outside and ready to play—but he's not dressed for the weather. Early readers will love predicting what Froggy has forgotten each time his mother calls him back inside. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *Katherine Johnson* (Thea Feldman)

Even as a little girl, Katherine Johnson knew she wanted a job using her favorite subject—math. But she didn't know that one day she would help NASA calculate flight paths for astronauts. This biography describes her life and work. Part of the You Should Meet series.

■ *The Treasure* (Uri Shulevitz)

In this retelling of a classic folktale, Isaac keeps dreaming about hidden treasure under a bridge near a castle. But when he goes in search of it, the treasure is not there. Where will he find it in the end?



Playing with ABCs

Recognizing the letters of the alphabet is one of the first stepping-stones on the exciting path to becoming an independent reader. Try these activities as your child learns her ABCs.

Alphabet train

All aboard! This playtime project encourages your youngster to write and play with letters. Let her collect small cardboard boxes. She can cover each one with construction paper and label it with a different letter of the alphabet (uppercase and lowercase). Then, punch holes in the boxes, and use yarn to string them together like cars in a train.

Alpha-doodles

Calling your child's attention to loops, lines, and curves helps her tell similar letters apart. Pick two lowercase letters, perhaps *p* and *q* or *v* and *w*. Have her print a big version of each letter and turn them into doodles. She might draw a



smiley face in the loop of the *p* and make the straight line into a ponytail by drawing a ribbon around it.

Letter search

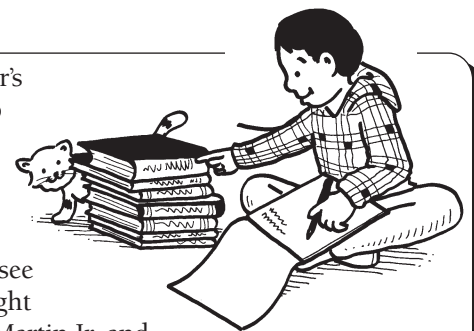
Choose a word, and see if your youngster can find its letters on signs or labels. She'll learn to recognize letters with different fonts, which will help her read the print in various books. Before dinner, you could say, "We're having tacos. Go find *t-a-c-o-s*." Maybe she'll spot *t* on the package of tortillas, *a* on a jar of salsa, and so on.♥

I found a poem!

A pile of books next to your youngster's bed or at the library could inspire him to write a "found poem."

A found poem uses words your child finds in print—in this case, on book spines. Have him choose several books with fun titles and stack them so he can see all the spines. For example, his stack might include *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* (Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault) and *Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin!* (Lloyd Moss).

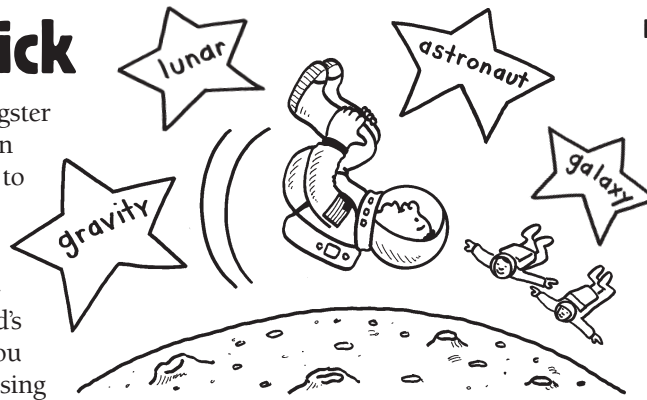
Now he can use the words to write a poem. It's fine for him to add words of his own, too. His poem might begin: "Chicka chicka zin zin / I like to play the violin."♥



Make words stick

To truly learn new words, your youngster needs to use them over and over again in different situations. Use these strategies to make new words a permanent part of his vocabulary.

See. Attaching words to something concrete helps to cement them in your child's memory. When you're out and about, you might point out construction workers using a *crane* to lift a load, or say the wind is *blustery* because it's blowing hard.



Explain. Ask your youngster to teach his little sister or his grandpa a word he learned today. *Example:* "Prefer means you like something better than something else. I prefer blue to red." Explaining the definition in his own words helps him make sense of it in a way that works for him.

Repeat. Look for opportunities to use new words in various contexts. For instance, if your child learned *gravity* while reading about space, you could take turns naming something that might happen if we didn't have gravity. ("Without gravity, it would be really easy to do flips in the air!")♥



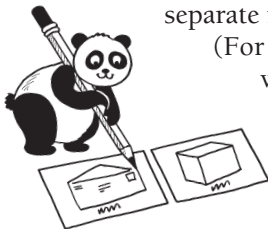
Compound combos

Thanks + giving = Thanksgiving!
Here's an idea that lets your child learn about compound words, or longer words made up of two smaller words.

Make cards

Together, think of a dozen compound words (*mailbox*, *playground*). Have her write and illustrate the two words from each compound word on separate index cards.

(For *suitcase*, she would write *suit* on one card and *case* on another.)



Mix and match

Ask your youngster to form other compound words. She might think, "A *housefly* is a *fly* in the *house*. I could make *firefly* by using *fire* from *campfire* and *fly* from *housefly*." Or maybe she'll form *sunflower* by putting together *sun* from *sunrise* and *flower* from *flowerpot*. How many combinations can she find?♥

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Parent to Parent

Getting the most out of audiobooks

My daughters love audiobooks. I mentioned this to one of their teachers and asked if listening to them counts as "real" reading. Mr. Jackson said audiobooks are great for readers of any age. Then he gave me an idea for using them to build the girls' comprehension skills.

Mr. Jackson suggested that I listen to audiobooks with my daughters. We could follow along in a print version so they make the connection between the words they hear and the words they see. He also recommended that we stop sometimes to talk about the book—just like we would if I were reading it aloud. We might discuss the characters, predict the ending, or go over a confusing part, he said.

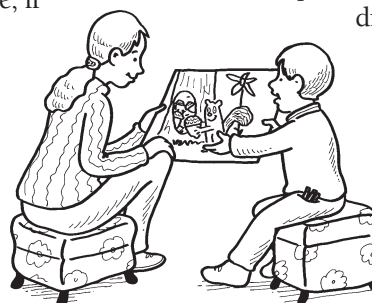
Since then, the girls and I have checked out several audiobooks from the library, and I think they're helping them become stronger readers.♥



Q&A Tell me about your drawing

Q While volunteering in my son's classroom, I noticed the teacher asking students to tell stories about pictures they drew. What's the purpose of this?

A Drawing a picture is one way your son tells a story. For instance, if he draws a squirrel with its cheeks full of nuts, he's communicating that the squirrel is collecting nuts. Describing the picture out loud encourages him to think it through and perhaps add more information.



After he finishes telling you about a picture, take the conversation a step further by asking questions. For example, you might say, "Where will the squirrel hide the nuts?" Or maybe you'll ask about the process that went into his drawing: "How did you choose the colors?"

Tip: Suggest that he write a story about his drawing—or offer to write down his story as he dictates it to you.♥