

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Thomaston Bears

Take advantage of free summer programs at a public library

Has your child joined a library summer reading program yet? Children who participate in these types of programs not only have fun, they also keep their reading skills strong. Library programs:

- **Offer** exciting activities. Your child may be able to participate in a book club, do art projects and meet authors.
- **Encourage** the use of all types of reading materials. Your child will be exposed to magazines, graphic novels and audiobooks.
- **Provide** reading motivation in a safe environment. Library events also give kids opportunities to socialize with other readers.
- **Foster** positive reading habits, such as visiting the library often. And once your child finds that he likes summer reading events, he may want to keep coming back during the school year!



Help your child choose irresistible books

Summer's relaxed pace makes it a great time to read the same book as your child—and to have fun discussing it, too. Let your child choose the book you'll read so that she'll be excited about the idea. Encourage her to pick from books with elements such as:

- **Humor.** Young readers giggle at pictures and wordplay. Older kids understand jokes that play out through dialogue and scenes.
- **Personality.** Look for main characters who are similar to your child in feelings and experiences.
- **Excitement.** Reluctant readers like short chapters with lots of action. Even the first paragraph should be fascinating!
- **Quirkiness.** Sometimes a book's cover draws readers in. Stand-out topics (like "gross bugs") attract readers, too.

'Show and tell' isn't just for school

A simple way to build your child's oral language skills is to do "show and tell" at home. Think of something your child would love to describe, such as a favorite toy or book. Then ask him to tell you all about it.



Encourage him to use descriptive language. Offer prompts if necessary: "Wow, that truck is a vibrant red!" The more your child talks, the more he will develop confidence and communication skills.

Spice up those bookshelves!

Looking for a rainy-day reading activity? With your child, rearrange your family's books in a fun way. Show off gorgeous covers, or add small toys in front of the books. The new look at old books can spark your child's interest in revisiting the fun stories inside.



Ask questions for comprehension

Help your child reflect on the stories she reads. To improve her comprehension, ask questions such as:

- **Who are the main characters?** What do you like or dislike about them? Do they remind you of people you know?
- **What happened in the story?** Has anything like that ever happened to you?
- **If you were the author,** would you change anything about the book? What plot would make a good sequel?



Newspapers inspire reading games

Reading with your child is one of the most important ways to help him in school. For a change of pace to your regular reading routine, read a newspaper—either in print or online—and play a few games.



For example:

- **Recreate cartoons.** Read a comic strip with your child. Then cut apart the squares. Can he put them back in order? Let him give you the same challenge.
- **Go on a scavenger hunt.** Make a list of things for your child to find in the pages. He might look for a recipe, a food coupon, a sports statistic, a picture of an animal and the name of your town.
- **Retell stories.** Read a short, simple (and interesting!) article aloud. Can your child summarize what it says? Then switch roles with a new article.

Learn one new word every day

This summer, introduce your child (and yourself!) to one new word a day. Try doing it in ways that feel more like games than learning. Then be sure to use the words several times to reinforce them.

To have fun with words:

- **Open** a children’s dictionary and pick a random word. Have everyone in your family take turns guessing its definition before reading the definition out loud.
- **Sign up** for a “word of the day” app or email. Read the words together and see who can come up with the funniest sentence using the word.
- **Read** an interesting magazine article aloud. Choose one unfamiliar word and look it up. Challenge each other to use it in a conversation!



Q: I’ve heard that if kids don’t keep reading over the summer, they may lose important skills. Is this true?

A: Yes. Research shows kids’ reading skills can weaken significantly over the summer without practice. So it’s critical to do fun reading activities all summer long. Take books on picnics, read by

flashlight, make up family stories and write them down. Ask your child’s teacher for additional reading activity ideas.

Confidence is key in reading

To boost your child’s confidence in his reading ability:

- **Ask** him to read out loud to you. Avoid criticizing, and praise his efforts.
- **Discuss** what he is reading. Your child will get to be the expert and share what he has learned.



For lower elementary readers:

- *Picture Day Perfection* by Deborah Diesen. A boy tries his hardest to make picture day great, but between a bad hair day and a wrinkly shirt, his efforts don’t go exactly as planned.
- *Ling & Ting: Not Exactly the Same!* by Grace Lin. Ling and Ting are twins. But does that mean they’re alike in every way?



For upper elementary readers:

- *Big Whopper* by Patricia Reilly Giff. Destiny tells a lie about an ancestor. What if other kids at the Zigzag Afternoon Center find out the truth?
- *Pay It Forward* by Catherine Ryan Hyde. Trevor receives an assignment to do good deeds for three people—who must pay those good deeds forward to three more people.

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