

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Van Buren County Community School District

Help your elementary schooler overcome reading challenges with three strategies

Reading is a fundamental skill that serves as the foundation for learning in almost every subject. When students struggle with reading, it can hurt their overall academic progress.

If your elementary schooler is having difficulty with reading, try these three strategies:

- 1. Consult the teacher.** Ask about realistic expectations. Is your child reading at grade level? If not, what help is available? What can you do at home to support your child?
- 2. Use reading materials at home** that minimize frustration. Choose books that are easy to read and understand to help your child gain confidence.
- 3. Take turns reading aloud together.** This will give your child an opportunity to practice while you model fluency and proper reading techniques.



Play games to practice decoding skills

To read, children must first learn the sounds that letters make, both individually and in combinations.

The next step in learning to read is to *decode* written words. Children decode a word by sounding out each of its letters, then blending the sounds together.

To help your child have fun improving decoding skills:

- **Write words** on index cards. Take turns selecting a card and sounding out the word.
- **Place packaged foods** on your table. See if your child can sound out the words on the labels.
- **Have a treasure hunt.** Hide words written on slips of paper throughout your home. Have your child find the slips and sound out the words.

Have fun with acrostic poems

Looking for a creative challenge? Ask your child to write an acrostic poem. To create one, have your child:

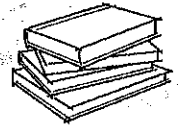
- 1. Pick a word or name** and write it in a vertical line.
- 2. Brainstorm words** that describe the topic and start with each letter of the original word.
- 3. Write the words** beside each letter of the original word.
- 4. Share the poem** with family members and challenge them to write their own acrostic poems.



Connect to the past by reading history books together

The next time you're at the library, browse the shelves for some:

- **Biographies** and autobiographies.
- **Books** about historic events.
- **Fictional stories** that are set during fascinating periods in time.



Bookmarks make reading special

Making bookmarks for friends and family can get your child excited about reading—and they make great gifts!

You'll need:

- **Construction paper**, cut into strips 6" by 2".
- **Colored pencils**, markers or crayons.
- **Small photos** of your child.
- **Glue and clear tape.**

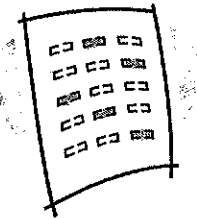


Have your child decorate bookmarks with photos and drawings. Or, your child can write a person's name and a message. Then, cover with clear tape.

Read for success on standardized tests

When students read well, they do better on tests. And certain reading skills are especially useful when taking standardized tests. Help your child work on:

- **Comprehension.** Standardized tests often ask students to find the "main idea." Practice this by reading news articles with your child. For each article, summarize the main idea together.
- **Speed.** Standardized tests are usually timed, so it's important for students to read at a reasonable pace. Reading speed improves naturally when children practice every day. Reading silently boosts speed, too, since whispering or mouthing words slows reading.
- **Vocabulary.** When students recognize a lot of words, it's easier for them to understand test questions. Introduce your child to new words daily. Look them up together and use them repeatedly to strengthen memory.



Try graphic organizers

Graphic organizers are diagrams that help students think about what they read. To make one, have your child:

1. **Draw a large star** with five points.
2. **Write the title** of the story or article in the center.
3. **Use the points** to write about the *who, what, when, where* and *why* of a reading passage.

Make your child the family reporter

Writing is an important part of reading. When practicing writing, your child begins to learn how authors put their thoughts together to come up with their stories.

Your child can find inspiration for stories in regular life. Ask your child to become the family reporter and write:

- **A sports recap.** It could be about a sibling's game or a professional game.
- **An interview** with a family member. Help your child think of questions to ask a relative.

After your child gathers the information, it is time to write. Remind your child to check spelling and grammar. Then, print the articles in a family newsletter.



For lower elementary readers:

- *The Cloud Spinner* by Michael Catchpool. A boy weaves beautiful fabric from the clouds. But there are consequences when a king demands too much clothing.



- *The Day the Crayons Came Home* by Drew Daywalt. A new bunch of crayons have a bone to pick with Duncan. Your child will delight in these crayons' gripes!

For upper elementary readers:

- *Romeo and Drooliet* by Nina Laden. This clever adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* features a cat and dog as the star-crossed lovers.
- *The Spaghetti Detectives* by Andreas Steinhöfel. Rico and Oscar are an interesting pair who take on a number of mysteries to solve.



Q: Part of my child's schoolwork is to read every day. What should I do if my child refuses to do it?

A: This is a concern to discuss with your child's teacher. Share your ideas about possible reasons for your child's refusal. The teacher will have suggestions that might make reading time easier, such as taking turns reading aloud. Work together and you'll find a strategy that will help your child.

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