

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Windom Elementary School

Don't forget about reading when making family New Year's resolutions

A new calendar year offers an opportunity to think about the past and set goals for the future. This includes family reading goals.

Take time to talk with your child about books or stories you've enjoyed together in the past year. If the books are nearby, look through them. Have your child choose his three favorites. Ask, "What was the best part of this story? Why?" Or, "What is your favorite picture in this book?"

Next, discuss future reading plans. Are there ways you can refresh or improve your reading habits? Could you read more often? Could you read new things together, such as children's magazines? Could you listen to some audiobooks in the car?

Build daily reading time into your family's schedule and make 2020 your family's best year ever for reading exciting materials!



"Reading brings us unknown friends."

—Honoré de Balzac

Take time to talk about prefixes and suffixes with your child

Help your child learn to look for easily recognizable parts of a word. Teach her that when a word starts with a certain prefix or ends with a particular suffix, she will get a clue to the word's meaning.

- **A prefix is at the beginning** of the word. Adding a prefix to a word changes its meaning. Common prefixes are *bi-*, *hemi-*, *un-* and *in-*. Together, learn what they mean.
- **A suffix is found at the end** of the word. It often tells the part of speech, which will help your child understand how that word is being used. Common suffixes are *-tion*, *-ize*, *-able* and *-er*.

Read and write about science experiments

Hands-on learning is a fun way for your child to strengthen his reading and writing skills.

Look online for simple science experiments you and your child can do at home. Then, read the directions, gather materials, write predictions and conduct the experiment together. Have your child take notes on the outcome.



Encourage your child to use a dictionary

When your child isn't sure of what a word means or how to spell it, help her look it up! She can use a dictionary online or one in book form.

Show your child how the dictionary includes the word's definitions, its part of speech and other forms of the word.



Enjoy the benefits of the library as a family

Libraries are wonderful places for children to learn. To enjoy everything the library has to offer:

- **Help your child** get his own library card.
- **Schedule regular visits.** Try to go at least once every two weeks.
- **Explore a new section** of the library each time you visit.
- **Sign up** for fun children's activities.



Thinking aloud improves comprehension

One major factor in understanding what you read is *thinking* about what you read. When your child thinks as he reads, he's more likely to connect the story to other things he knows.

Help your child strengthen his comprehension skills by modeling these “think-aloud” strategies:

- **Discuss the book.** Connect it to an experience your child understands. “This story reminds me of the time when”
- **Talk about books** with similar settings, characters or themes. “What other books that we’ve read does this story remind you of?”
- **Help your child** make a connection between the story and something similar that may be happening in the real world. By talking about your thoughts on the book, you’re helping your child learn to make these important connections himself.



Challenge your child to be a book critic

Suggest that your child keep a list of all the books that she has read. She should include the title of each book and its author. She can also create a rating system. Encourage her to write a short review of each book, as well.

Offer your child sentence starters to help with her reviews, such as:

- **I really liked this book** because
- **My favorite part** of this story was
- **I wish the author** would have

Help your child compile her reviews into a “Book Reviews” notebook. Keeping track of completed books will give your child a sense of accomplishment.



Q: My child gets frustrated when he struggles to read a word. How can I help?

A: Suggest that he become a reading detective. He can look for clues, such as chunks of the word that he recognizes or nearby pictures. You can also discuss similar words he knows. Sometimes it helps to reread

the sentence or to skip the troublesome word and keep reading. Then say, “What word would make sense there?”

Use magazines to create poems

Encourage your child to create a collage poem. Follow these steps:

1. **Help her cut** out a variety of words and phrases from old magazines.
2. **Have her arrange** the words into a poem and glue them onto a piece of construction paper. Remind her that poems don't always need to rhyme.



For lower elementary readers:

- **Stalling** by Alan Katz. Even though it's time for bed, Dan has plenty of things to do. He devises several ways to stall bedtime for just a few more minutes.
- **Stars** by Mary Lyn Ray. It's easy to forget the beauty of stars. But this book inspires readers to imagine and appreciate them.



For upper elementary readers:

- **Moon Runner** by Carolyn Marsden. Mina is nervous when she must start track at school, until she discovers that she loves it—and excels.
- **Stars in the Shadows** by Charles R. Smith, Jr. In 1934, the Negro League's All-Star East-West Game was played. This book provides all the fascinating details.

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