

Reading for Success

Make reading fun!

Reading is critical to your child's success in school and in life, but no one said it couldn't also be a whole lot of fun. If you'd like to keep your youngster loving all things literary, try a few of these activities:

» **Form your own parent-child book club.**

Invite some friends to participate or keep it a simple family affair. Let your child select an age-appropriate title. Each of you read it. Afterward, talk about what you liked or disliked, then make plans for your next book.

» **Include at least one book** when giving your child birthday and holiday gifts. After a while, your child may even look forward to those flat, hard packages!

» **Don't stop reading together!** Although your child's reading ability will likely improve rapidly through the elementary years, set aside some special times to read aloud. To keep your child interested, pick an engaging chapter book that's at a slightly more advanced reading level.

» **Get cooking!** Let your child read the recipe aloud while you prepare a meal. Your child will learn some interesting food-related words—and pick up a few valuable kitchen skills.



» **Play "Alphabet Mix-Up."** Let your child choose a word. Together, put its letters in alphabetical order. Now put them back in the right order.

» **Get your child in the habit** of writing thank-you notes when receiving gifts.

Not only does it teach good manners, it also gives your child a chance to hone creative writing skills.



» **Have some extra snapshots** lying around? Let your child use them to illustrate a family story. Staple a few sheets of construction paper together to make a book, then encourage your child to write a tale about the family. As a finishing touch to the masterpiece, have your child glue in the old photos.

» **Make one dinner** each month a "Book Character Dinner." Have everyone come to the table dressed as a favorite figure from a book. With characters like Peter Rabbit and Madeline eating together, it's sure to be an interesting meal.

» **Get more involved** with your local library. Searching for books is wonderful, but many libraries also offer a host of programs to keep kids interested in reading. See what activities, contests and events your library has planned this month! Make plans to participate.

» **Read a book together.** Then see the movie based on the book. Compare the two.

» **Invest in a set of word magnets.** Look for a set with words geared specifically to children (featuring words like *dinosaur*, *magic* and *rainbow*). Stick them on the refrigerator. With each visit to the refrigerator to get a snack, your child will end up with a mind full of words.

» **Go on a long walk** around your neighborhood or through the park. Ask your child to write about it using some dried leaves, pine cones or feathers from your journey to illustrate the tale.



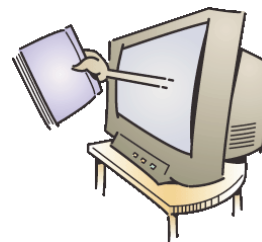
» **Take a trip down memory lane!** Think about the books you most loved as an elementary schooler and introduce them to your youngster. It will remind you why the classics got to be that way.

» **Have a goofy theme dinner!** Take one of your child's favorite book characters (like E.B. White's *Stuart Little* or Wilbur from *Charlotte's Web*) and serve a dish the character would eat. For example, little mice surely love cheese, and pigs—well, they'll eat just about anything!

» **Get your child hooked on a series!** These books are a wonderful way to keep your child interested in reading. Since they never really "end," (there's always another edition around the corner), your child will always be curious about what's going to happen next.

» **Have a "No TV Night"** once in a while.

Instead of the family zonking out in front of the tube, pop some popcorn, pour some juice and have everyone snuggle up on the couch with a good book.



» **Going on a long car trip?** Make sure your child has plenty of books to pass the miles. Old favorites are always a good choice, but a few new titles may postpone cries of "Are we there yet?" coming from the backseat.

» **Expose your child to different kinds of books.** If your child always runs straight to the sports section at the library, wander toward the photography aisle. If your child only has eyes for mythology, give a little nudge toward children's poetry and see what happens.

» **Make an ABC meal.** Write each letter of the alphabet on a slip of paper (leave out X and Z). Put the letters into a bowl, then with eyes closed, have your child select three (or more) of them. Together, think of a food that begins with each letter, then help your child turn them into a delicious literary menu.



- » **Make one corner of your home** a “reading and writing” area. Fill it with magazines, newspapers, books, crayons, paper and markers. Encourage your child to spend lots of time there.
- » **Surf the Internet with your child.** There are lots of terrific, kid-friendly sites for young readers. Not sure where to begin? You might start with *pbskids.org*.

- » **Have your child create new stories** by mixing characters from old ones. Pick a handful of standbys, such as *Pippi Longstocking*, *Harriet the Spy* and *Tom Sawyer*. Ask your child to choose two or three and weave a wild tale combining all the characters.



- » **Make sure your child spends** at least a few minutes in front of a book instead of the TV. Even past the age of nap-taking, children are never too old for some quiet book time each day—whether it’s right before bed or just after breakfast.
- » **Make up a secret code with your child.** A number might stand for each letter, for example. Use the code to write notes to each other.
- » **Cut out an ad from the newspaper.** Have your child cross out the adjectives and replace them with opposites. A *large* house with *fresh* paint would become a *small* house with *old* paint, for example.

- » **Play an animal alphabet game.** Try to think of one animal that starts with each letter of the alphabet. The only letter you can leave out is X. Have your child create an animal “encyclopedia.”



- » **Give an old story a new ending.** When reading your child a well-loved book, stop halfway through and ask your child to come up with a different (though still happy) outcome.
- » **Allow your child to stay up late to read** on a weekend. Think of ways to make this extra fun, such as reading by flashlight or making a favorite snack. Then let her sleep late, too.
- » **Switch things up a little!** Instead of reading to your child, ask your child to read to you. Whether you’re stuck together in traffic, fidgeting in the doctor’s waiting room or behind an endless line of carts at the grocery store, reading aloud is an excellent way to pass the time.

- » **Have your child tell a story** from an interesting point of view—*The Three Little Pigs* from the wolf’s perspective for example, or a birthday party from a present’s point of view.



