

# BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Chilton Elementary School

## Make reading routines part of your child's back-to-school success plan!

The beginning of a new school year is a time to gather supplies and get organized. It's also a time to establish routines that help students do their best—especially when it comes to reading.

To help your child develop strong reading habits:

- **Set aside time for daily reading.** Kids who read at least 20 minutes a day (in addition to their regular homework reading) are more successful in school and develop larger vocabularies.
- **Make your routine special.** Read favorite books at the breakfast table. Visit the library every week and fill a bag with new books to read. Do whatever it takes to keep your child excited about reading!
- **Stick to a regular bedtime reading routine.** Allow time for getting ready for bed, reading a bedtime story and saying good night.



### Talk about prefixes and suffixes to expand your child's vocabulary

Learning about prefixes and suffixes can help children comprehend new words in almost every subject. Remind your child that:

- **Prefixes appear at the beginning of words.** For example, the prefix *pre-* means “before.”
- **Suffixes are found at the end of words.** Words that end in *-able*, for instance, relate to “being able.”
- **Prefixes and suffixes are clues.** They can help students figure out the meaning of new words. For example, the word *predetermine* means “to determine before.” *Measurable* means “able to be measured.”

Together, have some fun with prefixes and suffixes. Can your child guess the meaning of *predate* or *excusable*? Can he name words with prefixes and suffixes for you to define?

## Set limits on screen time

Too much recreational screen time is linked to problems with sleep, learning and socializing. So, if you relaxed screen-time rules over the summer, it's time to get back on track.

Experts recommend that parents:

- **Establish screen-free times**, such as during meals.
- **Set a technology curfew.** Make sure your child turns off screens at least one hour before bedtime.
- **Offer fun alternatives.** Suggest your child read, play outside or do a craft.



## Retell fairy tales in unusual ways

Read a favorite fairy tale together. Then, ask your child to change the characters and details to create a new version of the story. For example, how would *The Three Little Pigs* differ if told from the wolf's perspective?



## Help your child read fluently

*Fluency* is the ability to read smoothly, accurately and with expression. To improve your child's fluency:

- **Encourage her to listen** to an audio recording of a book while she follows along.
- **Reread favorite books.** Repetition of familiar books improves fluency.
- **Remind your child** to pause between sentences.



## Share tips for writing assignments

Reading and writing are closely-related skills. But even great readers sometimes have a tough time with writing assignments. Good writing involves everything from understanding a subject to organizing thoughts, and checking spelling and punctuation.

When your child has a writing assignment:

1. **Have him talk through some ideas** before starting to write. Clear writing starts with clear thinking.
2. **Encourage him to take notes** or make an outline before writing.
3. **Offer positive feedback.** Be specific. Say, “I really like the way you’ve described what led up to this event.”
4. **Don’t criticize.** If your child thinks you always look for what’s wrong, he won’t want to share his writing with you.
5. **Remind him to edit his work.** He should check for any spelling, punctuation or grammar mistakes.
6. **Be patient.** Good writing takes time!



## Preview textbooks with your child

It’s exciting when your child gets her very first school textbook. When she brings the book home, preview it together:



- **Look for the author’s name** and the date of publication.
- **Read over** the table of contents.
- **See which chapters** look most interesting.
- **Look at pictures,** graphs, maps and other illustrations.

## For lower elementary readers:

- *The Youngest Marcher: The Story of Audrey Faye Hendricks, a Young Civil Rights Activist* by Cynthia Levinson. This moving story will teach children that they are never too young to make a difference!

- *My Kite Is Stuck! And Other Stories* by Salina Yoon. Vibrant illustrations and repetition make these silly stories about three friends a fun experience for early readers.



## For upper elementary readers:

- *Bugs: A Stunning Pop-Up Look at Insects, Spiders and Other Creepy-Crawlies* by George McGavin. Learn about bugs’ growth cycles and more in this pop-up book.
- *The True Blue Scouts of Sugar Man Swamp* by Kathi Appelt. Follow two raccoon brothers on their mission to save Sugar Man Swamp.

## Make reading aloud a special family time

Reading aloud as a family can strengthen your child’s vocabulary, improve reading scores—and allow everyone to enjoy books and reading together.

For successful read-alouds:

- **Read the book** yourself before you read it aloud. You’ll be more comfortable reading it aloud if you’re familiar with the text.
- **Read books everyone enjoys.** Your enthusiasm will show on your face and in your voice if you like the book.
- **Leave them wanting more.** Stop reading when the story becomes exciting and your child can’t wait to hear what will happen next.



**Q:** My child’s teacher wants students to “think critically” about what they read at home. How can I help?

**A:** All elementary students—even kindergartners—can practice critical thinking. After your child reads something, ask questions that help her analyze information. For example, “What happened in the story?” “Why did it have a happy ending?” “Does the book remind you of anything in real life?” “What did you learn from reading it?”

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