

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

St. James School
Reading Specialist

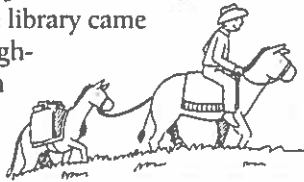
Book Picks



Read-aloud favorites

■ *Biblioburro: A True Story from Colombia* (Jeanette Winter)

What if the library came to your neighborhood on the back of a donkey? This is the



true story of a Colombian schoolteacher's traveling library, which brought books to children in remote villages. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ *Dragons Love Tacos* (Adam Rubin)

When a little boy discovers that dragons like to eat tacos, he decides to host a taco party for them. But if a fire-breathing dragon accidentally gets a bite of spicy salsa, look out! A silly



story about a dragon party that turns into a disaster.

■ *Just a Second* (Steve Jenkins)

In just 1 second, a bumblebee flaps its wings 100 times and the earth travels 18½ miles. This nonfiction book will help your child think about time in fascinating ways. She'll also discover different methods of measuring time.

■ *Bedtime Is Canceled* (Cece Meng)

Maggie and her brother write their parents an official-looking note: "Bedtime is canceled." Somehow, the note blows out the window, lands in a newspaper office, and ends up in a headline. Soon, bedtime really is canceled, and exhausted children quickly discover the importance of sleep.

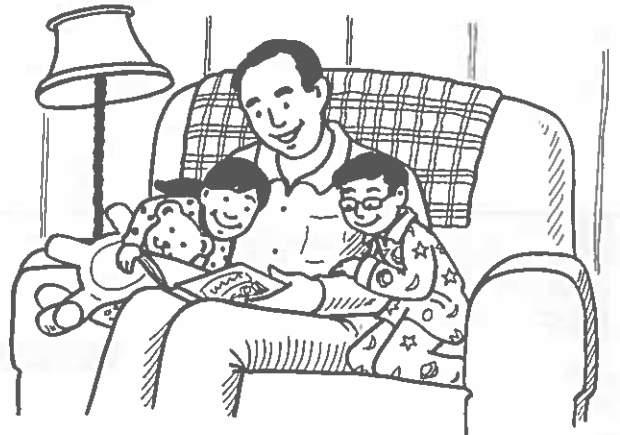


Time for a story

Want to spend time with your youngster, build her reading skills, and help her learn to love books? You can do all three when you read aloud to her. Here are some suggestions.

Read regularly

Try to read to your child every day. You might aim for 10–15 minutes of bedtime reading for a peaceful end to the day. Bring along a book, and read to her during a sibling's sports practice. Or curl up together with a book when you get home from work.



Take turns choosing books

Your youngster may want to hear old favorites again and again. Use your turn for new titles and variety (nonfiction, poetry).

Let her participate

Ask your child to turn the pages while you read. Also, she can finish sentences that rhyme or fill in words she knows.

Go slowly so she has time to understand the story and look at the illustrations. She'll enjoy read-aloud time more if she plays an active role.

Be playful

You can use different voices for different characters (a high, squeaky voice for a mouse or a deep, booming voice for a horse). Or substitute your youngster's name for the main character's name, and use family members' names for other characters. *Note:* You don't have to be an expert reader—your child will love it when you read aloud because it's you. ♥

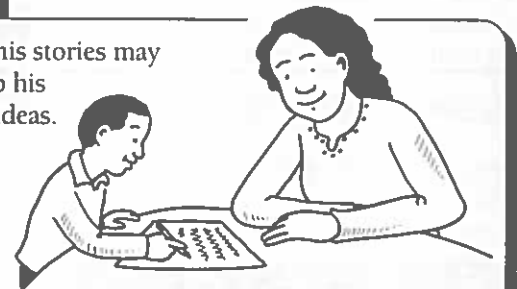
Writing that makes sense

When a child first learns to write, his stories may not always make sense to others. Help his writing flow logically with these two ideas.

1. Even if your youngster isn't writing sentences yet, he can tell you stories. As he describes the new class pet or something funny that happened at lunch, you can jot down his tale.

He'll practice relating events in a logical order, and that can help when he puts his thoughts and ideas down on paper himself.

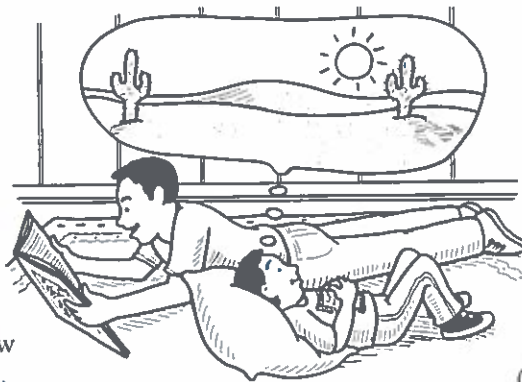
2. Let your child read his stories to you. Ask questions to encourage him to add information ("What did you do with your friends at recess?") or to clear up a confusing part ("Who said, 'Let's go home'—you, or your brother?"). ♥



Read between the lines

Learning to infer, or “read between the lines,” is one key to good reading comprehension. Consider these tips for helping your youngster make inferences when he reads.

Describe the setting. Pick a book, and read a few sentences to your child (without him looking). Leave out words that name the setting. *Example:* “Sand stretched in all directions...cacti dotted the landscape.” Can he infer where the story is set? If he isn’t sure, give him a hint. (“Where do you see lots of sand and cacti?”)



Look for lessons. Fables are great for reading between the lines. Read one by Aesop, and help your youngster figure out the lesson. For instance, *The Tortoise and the Hare* teaches that even if you’re slow, you can win if you just keep going. Have your child point out parts that he used to make his inference. (“The tortoise never stopped, and he took one good step after another.”)

Use prompts. Questions that start with “Why do you think...?” or “How do you know...?” can encourage your youngster to infer. You might ask why he thinks a character behaved the way he did or how he knows it’s going to snow. Together, look for clues in the book that may help him answer the questions.♥

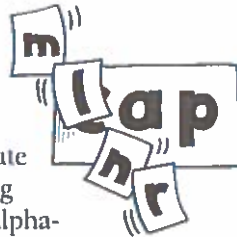


Fun with Words

Wordplay

Use these activities to build your child’s phonemic awareness—her ability to hear sounds in words:

- Choose a three-letter word, such as *cap*. Have your youngster substitute different beginning sounds from the alphabet to make new words (*lap, map, nap, rap, sap, zap*). How many can she think of?



- Pick a long word, and tell her to clap once as she says each syllable. For *mozzarella*, she would clap four times: *moz-za-rel-la*.

- Ask your child to say a word without the first sound. *Example:* “Can you say *sit* without the *s*?” (*Answer: It*)

- Think of a word, and give your youngster a “sound” clue to figure it out. For instance, “I’m thinking of a word for something that you chew. The word has an *uh* sound in the middle.” (*Answer: Gum*)♥

Vocabulary boosters

A large vocabulary can turn your child into a better reader and writer. Try these everyday ways to help her learn new words.

Keep your ears open. When you and your youngster go places, point out words that people use. Maybe a waiter describes an *entree* or the dentist talks about *molars*. Encourage your child to figure out what they mean by the way they’re used.

Go beyond nouns. Help your youngster add verbs and adjectives to her vocabulary. Sports and games offer opportunities to use action words. Let your child hear you comment on the softball that *soars* or the runner who *sprints*. When she sends thank-you notes or greeting cards, suggest descriptive words (a *polka-dot* shirt, a *fantastic* birthday).♥



Parent to Parent

Build, read, and write!

My son James loves to play with blocks. At our parent-teacher conference last month, his teacher suggested that we use blocks to fit in extra reading and writing practice.

We found books about things he could make, such as castles, skyscrapers, and monuments, and I put them with his blocks for inspiration. At first, I thought he’d just look at the pictures, but he has started pointing

out facts that he reads, like how moats kept enemies away from castles. I also encouraged James to write signs to go with his buildings. When he made an airport, for example, he wrote “Tickets,” “Bags,” and “Taxi” on slips of paper and taped them to the blocks.

I’ve noticed that James’s buildings are more creative—and I’m happy that he’s reading and writing while he plays.♥



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote their children’s reading, writing, and language skills.

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Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

St. James School
Nurse/Student Health Coordinator

BEST BITES

Math + fitness

Give your child a chance to combine math practice and exercise with daily "math breaks." Give directions that include a math problem and a fitness activity. For example, say, "Do $2 + 2$ jumping jacks" or "Do $11 - 2$ cartwheels."

Healthy shopping

When you go to the grocery store, "shop the perimeter" first. The outside aisles are where you'll usually find fresh produce, healthy dairy products (fat-free milk, yogurt, and cheese), and fresh meats, chicken, and fish. Fill your cart mostly with those items, and then get what you need from the middle of the store.

DID YOU KNOW?

Research shows that students who skip breakfast have shorter attention spans and don't do as well on tests. Make sure your youngster gets up in time to have a nutritious breakfast either at home or at school. *Tip:* If he's having trouble waking up early enough, move his bedtime back.

Just for fun

Q: What's the worst thing about being an octopus?

A: Washing your hands before meals!



Snack attack

"I'm starving!" When your child bursts through the door after school or activities, she's probably hungry. Try these tips for healthy snacks that will give her the energy she needs to play and do homework.

Stock the kitchen

Whatever is in the house is what your youngster will eat—so shop with that in mind. Get interesting fruits and vegetables in different colors. Buy mango or peach salsa, and let your child dip in veggie sticks (carrot, celery, jicama). Stock popcorn to air pop (rather than getting less healthy microwave popcorn). Then, offer her choices. She'll have a say in what she eats, but she'll be choosing only from healthy foods.

Have a mini-meal

Breakfast or lunch foods can make a good snack. You could serve oatmeal with bananas and cinnamon or tuck scrambled eggs into a pita pocket. Or try individual pizzas on whole-wheat English muffins. Top each half with a little tomato sauce, shredded low-fat mozzarella cheese,



and vegetables (sliced mushrooms, chopped onions), and bake until the cheese melts.

Build your own

Let your youngster get creative in the kitchen, and she'll be likely to eat the results. She can make kebabs by threading fruit (grapes, melon chunks) and low-fat cheese cubes onto toothpicks. Put out cookie cutters for her to cut sandwiches into fun shapes. Or she could spread low-fat cream cheese on rice cakes or apple slices, and decorate them with raisins or dried cranberries. ●

Feeling good about sports

Participating in sports can build your youngster up... or drag him down. Make athletics a positive experience for him with these strategies:

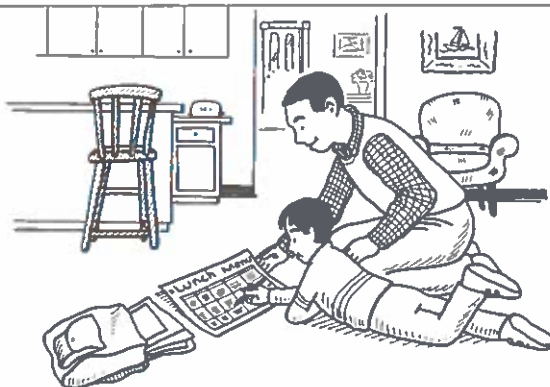
- Keep games in perspective. At this age, sports should be about having fun and developing skills. Ask about his favorite part of practice or the most interesting play in the game, rather than focusing on his performance or the score.
- Encourage your child to set goals—but make sure the goals are realistic. He might aim to touch the ball three times during a game or to try a move that he's been working on.
- Avoid comments about your youngster's size or body. Concentrate on the friends he is making, the places he is playing, and the effort he is putting forth ("I love how you tried to get the rebound"). ●



Cafeteria plan

Why should your child buy school meals? Cafeteria meals are healthier than ever because of new national nutrition standards. Plus, if he gets lunch at school, you can knock “pack lunch” off your to-do list! Consider these two suggestions.

1. Go over the school menu together. He could circle his favorite items and decide what he will put on his tray the next day. Talk up the menu items (“The pork burrito sounds really good!”). If you’re excited about the choices, he’s likely to share your excitement.



2. Discuss what he eats at school. What does he like best? What does he throw in the trash? You might suggest that he write to the cafeteria manager to tell her about his favorite meals. He could also mention what he doesn’t like and make recommendations for new foods to serve.

Note: If your youngster has food allergies, alert the cafeteria manager, as well as his teacher and the school nurse. Give each of them a list of foods he’s allergic to, possible reactions, and what to do if he accidentally eats one of them. ●

O&A How much juice?

Q: My children love to drink juice. Should I try to limit how much of it they drink?

A: The short answer is “yes.” While juice has nutrients, it also has a lot of sugar. Believe it or not, a 12-ounce glass of apple juice can contain 10 teaspoons of sugar—the same as in a can of cola—and a glass of grape juice can



have 15 teaspoons of sugar. Encourage your children to eat fruit rather than drink juice. They will consume fiber along with more nutrients.

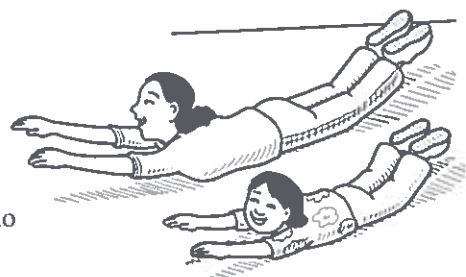
If your kids do have juice, try to limit it to a glass a day. Choose varieties marked 100 percent juice, and stay away from those labeled “fruit drink” or “fruit cocktail.” The best bets are orange or grapefruit juice since they have more natural vitamin C and less sugar. ●



ACTIVITY CORNER

Exercise = fun

When children are young, exercise isn’t exercise—it’s just plain fun! Try these ideas for putting more physical activity into your youngster’s day.



Superman

Lie on your tummy with your arms straight out in front of you (as if you’re flying). Lift your arms and legs off the ground at the same time, and hold for five seconds. Put your arms and legs back down. “Fly” 10 more times.

Bubble jumping jacks

Have your child do jumping jacks as you blow bubbles toward her. How many bubbles can she catch as she jumps? Switch, and let her blow the bubbles as you do jumping jacks.

Freeze dance

Play music, and dance up a storm. When you stop the music, everyone freezes. Hold your poses for 10 seconds, and start the music back up. ●

IN THE KITCHEN

Rice bowls

For a quick and healthy meal, borrow this idea from Asian cuisine. Cook brown rice, divide it into bowls for each person, and add toppings.

Breakfast: Scrambled eggs, chopped tomatoes, diced green bell peppers, and shredded Monterey Jack cheese

Chicken: Cubed, cooked chicken (use last night’s leftovers), microwaved frozen

vegetables like corn, peas, and carrots, and low-sodium teriyaki sauce

Taco: Ground beef (browned and drained), canned kidney beans (drained), shredded cheddar cheese, and salsa

Note: One-half cup of brown rice provides one serving of whole grains (three servings a day are recommended). Also, rice is gluten-free, so it’s a great choice for children with celiac disease or wheat allergies. ●



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Recipes for Success

Practical Activities to Help Your Child Succeed

St. James School
Title I/Parent Involvement Coordinator

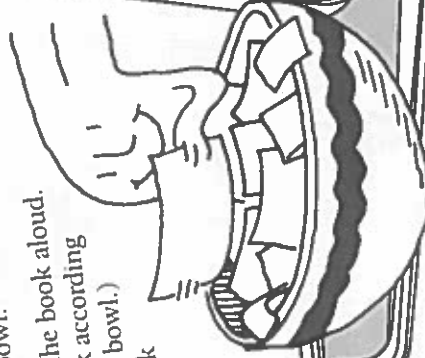
READING Pass it on

Everyone in the family takes a turn reading with this fun activity.

Ingredients: storybook, paper, pencil

Choose a book the entire family will enjoy. Then, brainstorm 15 instructions with your child. Examples: Pass to any other reader; sing a song while passing to your left; pass to your right while standing on one leg. Write each instruction on a slip of paper and put the slips in a bowl.

Next, pick someone to read the first page of the book aloud. That person draws a slip and passes the book according to the instructions. (Return used slips to the bowl.) Continue drawing slips and passing the book until you finish the story.



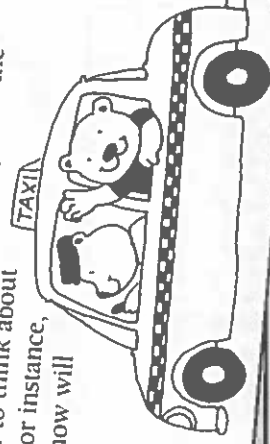
WRITING Stories with a twist

Encourage your youngster to stretch her writing muscles by giving stories a new twist.

Ingredients: favorite story, paper, pencil

Together, read one of your child's favorite stories, such as "Goldilocks and the Three Bears." When you finish, work together to rewrite the story with a different setting. Perhaps it could take place in another country or in the middle of a big city. Ask your youngster to think about how the setting will change the story. For instance, Goldilocks live in an apartment, how will Goldilocks get inside?

Invite your child to share her new story with the rest of the family at dinnertime.



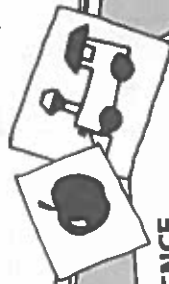
SPELLING Picture this!

Your child can practice spelling and phonics by making these spelling pictures.

Ingredients: spelling list, old magazines, scissors, paper, glue or tape

Let your youngster cut out magazine pictures that start with each letter of his spelling words. For "cat" he could use a (c)ar, an (a)pple, and a (t)rain. Have him glue the pictures on a piece of paper and write each letter of the spelling word under the pictures.

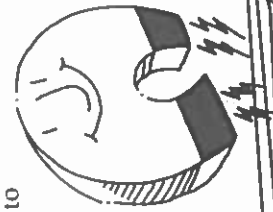
Variation for older children: Glue the pictures on separate pieces of paper. Then, scramble the pictures for letters that spell a word and have your youngster put them in order.



SCIENCE

Have your child pretend she is a magnet. Can she find three things she would stick to (soup can, paper clip)? Can she think of three things she wouldn't stick to (crayon, comb)?

She could use a refrigerator magnet to check her answers.



SOCIAL STUDIES

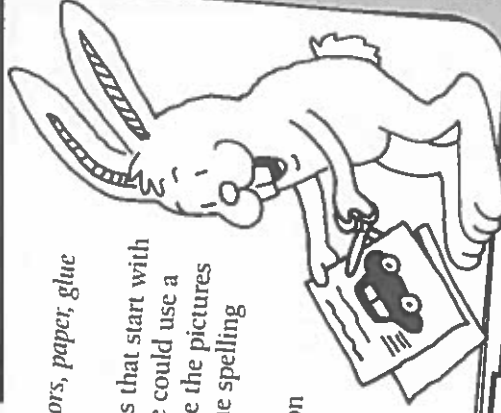
Ask your youngster to look up your state flower in an encyclopedia. Let him draw the flower on paper and cut it out.

Tape on a drinking straw "stem." He can make a bouquet by adding flowers from states he would like to visit.



Refrigerator Poster

Just hang your *Recipes* poster on the refrigerator and sneak in an activity when you have a few minutes. These fun activities will help develop school success and positive behavior. Check off each box as you complete the "recipe."



Recipes for Success

Practical Activities to Help Your Child Succeed

MATH

Pocket change toss

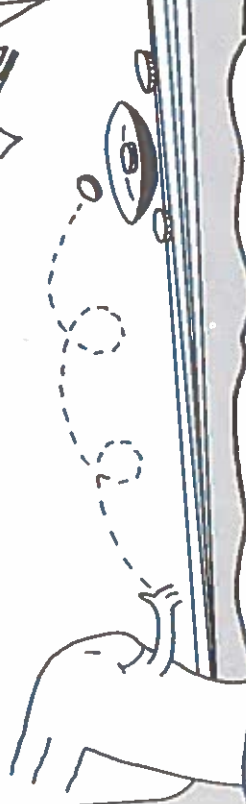
Here's a way for your child to learn about addition and subtraction using money.

Ingredients: 4 coins (penny, nickel, dime, quarter), small plastic plate or bowl, paper, pencil

Each player starts with 25 points. Take turns tossing the four coins at the plate. The values of coins that land on the plate are added to a player's score. If any coins miss the plate, players subtract the coin with the largest value from their scores. **Example:** If your youngster missed with the dime and the penny, she subtracts the dime's value (10) from her score.

Whoever has the highest score after three rounds wins.

Variation for younger child: Don't subtract coins that miss the plate.



Congratulations!

We finished _____ activities together on this poster.

Signed (parent or adult family member)

Signed (child)

DIVISION

A newborn elephant weighs about 240 pounds. Ask your child how many of him it would take to equal an elephant's weight. Let him weigh himself, and help him divide his weight into 240. Also, have him compare an elephant's weight to other objects. For example, how many 5-lb. bags of sugar equal a baby elephant?

PATTERNS

Understanding patterns helps kids with basic math skills. Try this. Ask your youngster, "What comes next in this pattern?" The pattern is paper clip, pencil, paper clip, pencil." Have her line up the objects to check her answer.

HISTORY

Go to the library together and check an almanac for facts from the year you were your child's age (the cost of a stamp, who was president). Look through old pictures for toys and other things you used. What does your youngster have that wasn't around when you were her age?

Character Corner

RESPONSIBILITY

Have your child list his responsibilities. **Examples:** "Do my homework." "Feed the dog." Then, discuss the duties of others, such as teachers or policemen. Talk about what happens when responsibilities aren't taken care of. What if the policeman decided not to direct traffic when the traffic light broke?

INDEPENDENCE

Teach your youngster a new skill, like how to fix her own lunch or lay out her clothes for school the next day. She will gain a sense of accomplishment when she doesn't have to ask you for help.

GIVING

Instead of buying gifts, encourage your child to give "tickets." They can be good for things such as playing a game with a sibling or helping a parent with housework. He can draw the tickets on paper and decorate them with markers.

VOCABULARY

Start with a short sentence, such as "I went to the store." Toss a ball back and forth with your youngster. With each toss, change one word of the sentence without changing its meaning ("I jumped rope to the store"). See how long you can keep going without getting stuck.

