Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

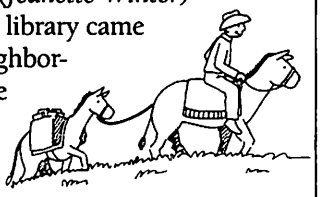
Beginning Edition

Harmony Elementary School
Ms. Barbara Griffieth, Principal

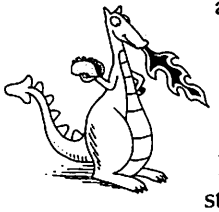
Book Picks

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 that brought books to children in remote villages. (Also available in Spanish.)



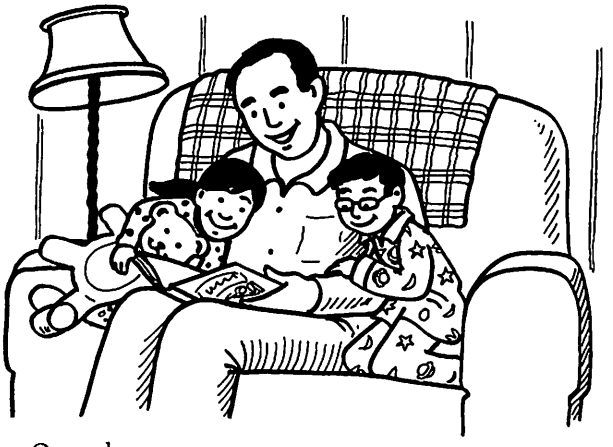
■ ***Dragons Love Tacos*** *(Adam Rubin)*
When a little boy discovers that dragons like to eat tacos, he decides to host a taco party for them. But if a fire-breathing dragon accidentally gets a bite of spicy salsa, look out! A silly story about a dragon party that turns into a disaster.



■ ***Just a Second*** *(Steve Jenkins)*
In just a single 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. Here are 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, such as nonfiction or 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

As your 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?").♥

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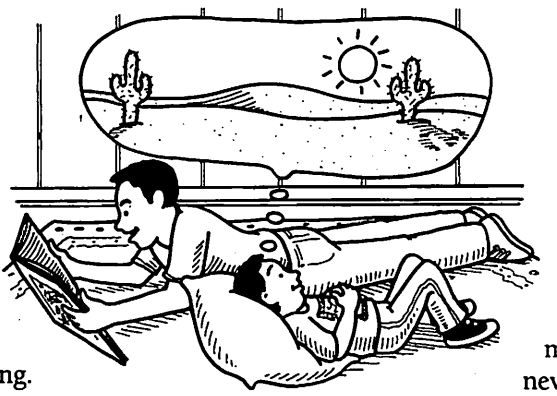
Read between the lines

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



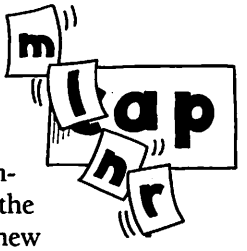
Describe the setting. Pick a book, and read a few sentences to your child (without him looking). Leave out words that name the setting. *Example:* "Sand stretched in all directions...cacti dotted the landscape." Can he infer where the story is set? If he isn't sure, give him a hint. ("Where do you see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

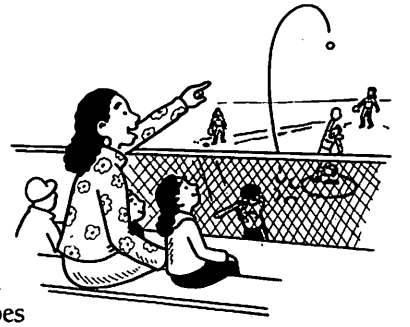
Fun with Words — Wonderful wordplay

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, tap, 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 but don't swallow. 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 the words mean by the way they're used.

Go beyond nouns

Help your youngster add adjectives and verbs 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-dotted* 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 build, 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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