

TOP STUDENTS/TOP PARENTS

GOOD STUDENTS ARE MADE AT HOME, NOT AT SCHOOL

Tools to teach your child to read



**“You have tangible wealth untold.
Caskets of Jewels and coffers of gold
Richer than I you can never be.
I had a mother who read to me.”**

Strickland Gillian

TEACHING WHILE READING

INFANCY UP TO AGE 12

Reading to your child is not only one of the most pleasurable, loving contacts a mother or father can have with their child, but it is also the surest way to make them excellent readers and good students.

Rethinking the Brain: New Insights into Early Development

Families and Work Institute, New York, N.Y. 1997 Rima Shore

Educators report that 35% of American Children arrive at school unprepared to respond to the instruction and interaction they encounter in their classrooms. Only 50% of infants and toddlers are read to consistently by their parents.

According to a study conducted by Pamela High, M.D., April 2000, at the Rhode Island Child Development Center Hospital comparing two groups of eight months old babies, the group who were read to often had their “receptive” vocabularies (number of words they understand) increase forty per cent since babyhood, while the non-reading group increased by only sixteen per cent.

Make up your mind that other than major priorities such as eating and safety, with some exceptions, reading thirty minutes a day to your child will be a given, no matter what, even if the kids have to go to bed dirty and the dinner dishes are still on the table. If you ardently read and apply my suggestions while you read to your child, you will be teaching him far more than all of his teachers combined. This will carry over into his higher learning and adult success.

Getting Ready for the Bedtime Story

My three little ones were born within four years of each other, so they pretty much liked the same stories. Getting them ready for bed when

they were preschool age was quite a chore...by the time I got them to put their toys away, bathe, put their “jammies” on and brush their teeth, many times it was past bedtime, and I could hardly wait to get them to bed, much less spend another thirty minutes reading to them. But it was worth it. The memories we have are priceless.

As they got older and more self-sufficient, I devised a plan to encourage them to get ready for bed at least a half hour before bedtime: I would first announce it was time to get ready for bed; then I would start counting to twenty very slowly. They understood that by the time I got to twenty, I would begin reading. The first one ready got to pick out the story. We read a bedtime story just about every night until the kids were twelve years old, with some exceptions when I was too tired, or some other event interfered. **Most importantly, we would not have had time to read if I let them watch television.**

Following are the skills that I have incorporated into this “Reading Section,” **beginning with preschool age and graduating to the upper elementary ages.** Don’t become overwhelmed...you already know what they are; you just need to concentrate on teaching them, and don’t try to teach them all at once. It may help you to read through them before you read a story, or once a week to help you remember which ones you wish to concentrate on teaching. Before you know it, you will automatically recognize the opportunities the text provides and the relevant skills you can teach. Relax and enjoy this story time with your child, knowing that you are paving the way to his future success.

Colors/Shapes/Counting

Listening/ Retelling a story

Speaking in complete sentences

Left to right, top to bottom

Understanding emotions

Manners/Social behavior

Character building

Word/sound association

Letter recognition and sounds

Sounding out words.

Vocabulary building

Abstract words

Sight words

Predicting outcomes

Recall/Sequence

Detail/Main idea

Inferences (drawing conclusions)

Critical thinking/Fact or opinion

While reading, you need to get the child involved in the story. **You can greatly enhance the quality of reading by teaching various concepts and by encouraging the child's interaction with the story and the characters.** You can create enthusiasm and excitement just by asking questions that will stimulate her thinking. It may take a while, but eventually the questions will easily come to you. You'll be able to devise intriguing ones from the material on nearly every page, ranging from very simple for infants and preschoolers to those that will lead the older child to analyze, compare, guess, judge, and rationalize, all critical thinking

skills basic to being an excellent reader. If you have more than one child, you can read to them together, and let them take turns answering questions. If their age span is too great, you may have to find the time to read to each one individually, or let the older child take turns with you while reading to the younger one.

Do not:

- worry about asking questions the child is not old enough to answer; just casually help her answer them yourself and then go on reading.
- let the number and type of questions I suggest intimidate you. The more you read to your child the easier the questions will come to you.
- feel that you must ask all the questions which I suggest. I have merely listed examples of the types of questions that may be asked; any of them will contribute to developing the child's comprehension.

Infancy to Approximately Age Three

Do not make the mistake of assuming your baby is too young to enjoy listening to you read to her. I remember a surprising experience with my twelve-month-old grandchild. Her mother had been reading to her since she was six months old. Bedtime, before she had her bottle, was also designated as story time. I read a simple picture book to her, showing pictures of animals while pointing out features, such as colors, the nose on the bear, animals feet, trees, and so on. She thoroughly enjoyed looking and listening, and cried when I stopped reading to give her the bottle. If the baby will sit quietly and look at the pictures, then she's enjoying the session.

Remember that language development begins in infancy. Babies who are spoken to and read to often will have a large comprehension vocabulary long before they are able to speak, so don't wait until they're toddlers to introduce them to books.

While you are reading, regardless of the age of your child, concentrate on **how you sound**. Do you speak in a monotone? If your reading is flat and expressionless, your child won't enjoy the story as much and may very

likely be bored. **The tone of your voice and the expression you use helps to determine your child's comprehension and enjoyment of the story.** So learn to ham it up... make the words sound exciting! This is so important that you really should practice. Don't feel silly...your baby will love it when you moo like the cow, cry like the baby, or chug, chug like the tractor. Change the sound of your voice to imitate characters, such as the ogre in *Three Billy Goats Gruff*, make it squeaky like a mouse or heavy and loud like a giant. Your child will love it.

Twelve months and Up

There's much to do and teach when the baby is a bit older:

- Say the names of objects, animals and people.
- Ask where objects are, such as the ball, doggie, little girl, a fence, or the sun.
- Imitate sounds of animals and objects: "bow-wow," "meow," "quack-quack," "knock-knock," "varoom."
- Ask the baby to point to the object or person such as the doggie, wagon, or little boy.
- Play pretend while looking at pictures: pretend you're smelling the flower and ask her to smell it; pretend you're grabbing a cookie, taking a pretend bite, and ask her if she wants some. Then call the doggie, and make sounds as if you were calling it. Kids love this and will pretend right along with you as soon as they catch on.

Two-to Five-Year Olds

Mother Goose Rhymes is one of the most popular first books. Little ones never

tire of the rhyming stories, even after they have memorized and dramatized almost every one. **Hearing poems read aloud is the child's introduction to the sound/letter connections. Being able to rhyme syllables helps the child to decipher unfamiliar words, thus expanding her comprehension and fluency.**

By the time she is out of the *Mother Goose* stage, you will most likely have read the poems hundreds of times, and she will know most every one by heart, bringing her closer to actual reading. Following are some ideas about how to utilize reading rhymes to the child's advantage:

- When beginning to read rhymes to the child, emphasize the rhyming words. After reading the poem several times, begin asking the child to say the rhyming words for you. For example:

“To market, to market, to buy a fat pig,
Home again, home again, jiggety _____.(jig)”

- While reading a familiar rhyme to your child, give her one of a pair of rhyming words and ask for the word that rhymes with it, such as “Ding Dong Bell.” “What rhymes with Bell?” (well)
- Teach your child to say and act out rhymes, such as “*Eentsy-Weentsy Spider*,” “*Where is Thumbkin?*” and “*I’m a Little Teapot.*” Show her how to use her arm for the handle and the other one for the spout, then to bend over and pretend to pour the tea out. What fun!
- Read the rhyme to the child. Through repetition she will begin to memorize it. Let her read it with you. Ask her to recite the last line. Ask her to fill in the rhyming words. When she learns a rhyme or poem, let her recite it for aunts, uncles, and grandparents. Applaud for her.
- Play rhyme games while cooking, cleaning, or driving. Ask her what rhymes with words like rug, spoon, floor, day, or cook.
- Playfully tell her you bet you can trick her. Read a poem she knows by heart, and replace a rhyming word with one that does not fit. Tell her to stop you if she hears an incorrect word. An example would be “Humpty

Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great egg.” When she stops you, clap, laugh, and praise her for being so alert.

- Engage in impromptu rhyming games. While driving, you may see a child playing with a ball. Ask what rhymes with ball. If you see a child riding a bike, ask what rhymes with bike.

- Throughout your contact time, recite or sing the rhyming songs. Occasionally pretend that you forgot a line, and ask her to help you remember.

- Say, “I’m thinking of something that rhymes with fat. It’s furry and says meow,” or “I’m hungry for something that rhymes with sandy. It tastes sweet.” Always ask him what he liked or disliked about a story, or how he would change it.

Three-to-Six-Year Olds

- After reading the same story several times, make a deliberate mistake, and see if your child will catch you. Make a game of it.

- Take turns while reading a familiar book. You read a page, and let the child read the next page, using her own words (of course), or tell you about it.

- If your child knows the book by heart, read half a sentence and let her finish it.

- Change the name of a main character to your child’s name. She’ll love it!

- Keep her on her toes while you’re reading by throwing in a foreign word every now and then, one that doesn’t make sense. For example, when the ogre in the *Three Billy Goats Gruff* says, “Who’s that tapping on my bridge?” say, “Who’s that driving on my bridge?” This is a good way to know if she comprehends the story, or if she’s paying attention.

- Always ask her what she liked or disliked about the story, or how he would change it.
- As you read, occasionally run your finger below the words to help the child develop left to right direction of the printed material. Point your finger from the bottom of the left side page to the beginning of the page on the right side.
- Alphabet books are excellent for teaching the child the letter recognition and sounds.
- Teach the child to associate the printed word with the oral word by pointing to a word every now and then and saying its name. The child needs to understand that all spoken words have a printed partner. For ex. Mommy, when spoken, reads M-o-m-m-y, in print. When you come to Mommy again, spell it, while pointing to each letter.
 - Whatever you read, ask the child these five questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? For example, while reading *The Three Little Pigs*, ask, “Who built his house of straw?” “From what did the second pig build his house?” “When did the third little pig build his house?” “Where did the first pig run after the wolf blew his house down?” and “Why couldn’t the wolf blow the brick house down?”
- Before you begin reading, look at the title and raise questions about the story. For instance, in the book, *Muddy, the Absent-Minded Moose*, ask the child if she knows what a moose is. Show her the picture and call her attention to the strange horns and its hooves. Compare it to a picture of a horse. Ask questions such as, “I wonder what absent-minded means?” “Why do you suppose his name is Muddy?” “Do you think it may be because he likes to play in the mud?” Once she learns how Muddy became absent-minded, call your child or yourself absent-minded whenever either of you forgets something.

- Always question in a playful manner. Pretend that you, too, are wondering about the answer. Never act disappointed, or irritated if she cannot answer the questions. Help her, and praise her responses.
- Play pretend when you come to a picture of something that can be put into an acting episode. For example, if you see a toothbrush, stop and act out the whole process of brushing your teeth. Say something like, “Let’s pretend to brush our teeth.” Put paste on your make-believe brush and brush your teeth, complete with filling your mouth with make-believe water, and rinsing it out into a make believe sink. Then set your brush back in the make-believe rack, and dry your mouth on the make-believe towel. Then let her do the same. You will get other ideas as you read, such as peeling and eating a banana, pouring a glass of milk and drinking it and so on. Do the same with nursery rhymes. Kids love pretending!

Five-to Ten-Year-Olds

(Some questions may be too difficult or too easy.)

- Look at the pictures on the cover and read the title. Then ask her to guess what the story will be about. This will give her a purpose for reading and strengthen her comprehension.
- Talk about feelings. Ask how she thinks particular characters feel.
- Play, How Would You Feel? with characters in the stories, such as an insect in a flower, a worm basking in the sun, a tree towering over the forest, a puppy on a leash, or a broken toy. You will have to help the child empathize by creating conditions in which the creature or object is involved. For instance, the insect may be eating nectar, the puppy may want to play, or the toy may be broken and sad because it’s unwanted.
- Ask questions that make her reason and give her own interpretation, such as, “Why did the other goslings make fun of the ugly duckling?” “How do you think the little duckling felt?” “What would you do if you were the duckling?”

- Teach counting whenever you come to several items that are the same, such as apples, birds, children, or trees. This will help her understand the counting concept in math when it is taught in school.
- Help the child identify circles, squares, triangles, and rectangles. Let her point them out.
- Be aware of pictures you can use to give the child visual practice in comparisons, such as tall, taller, tallest, and small, smaller, smallest. By using people and objects in the pictures, you can also teach abstract concepts, such as near, far, next to, and between. Use the lists of words in Chapter 14, “Abstract Words” to help you.
- Teach emotions such as happiness, sadness, anger, excitement, and disappointment. Look for situations that would cause the characters to feel these emotions. Ask the child to identify the situations and to relate to the feelings.
- Teach cause and effect questions, such as:
 - “Why couldn’t the children play outside?”
(Because it was raining).
 - Why did the puppy get out of the yard?”
(The gate was left open).
 - “If you were the father, would you allow the boy to get a puppy? Why or why or
why not?”
 - “Why was the little girl sad?”
(She lost her doll.)
 - “How do you think the little boy felt when the children wouldn’t let him play?”
(He was sad.)

“What would you have done if they wouldn’t let you play?”

(I would play with someone else)

“How did the kitten get wet?”

(He got sprinkled by the hose)

Ten-to Fourteen-Year-Olds

At this age the child should be well into the critical thinking skills, yet this is when most parents let up on the one-on-one reading. The following examples of books are excellent for family reading, whether you have teenagers or children in elementary school. They provide a wonderful opportunity to work on vocabulary words, as well as comprehension, compassion, empathy, responsibility, and sadness. First, give the child the opportunity to answer your questions; then discuss them together.

The story, *Old Yeller*, by Fred Gipson, takes place in the Texas hill country. Travis, a fourteen-year-old boy, was placed in charge of protecting his mother and little brother, providing food for the family, and doing the family chores while his father was away. His responsibilities were more than what most grown men have today (highly recommended reading).

Following are some possible points for discussion:

- comparing the responsibilities of a fourteen-year-old boy today with the boy in the story
- the feelings the boy may have entertained when his father left
- why Travis didn’t want another dog when his dog, Bell, died
- how Travis’ mother showed him that she thought of him as a man
- what Travis accomplished that made him feel confident
- what bad habit the mule had
- how Travis broke the mule of this bad habit

- other ways he could have chosen to break the mule
- why the mule obeyed the father, but not Travis
- a comparison of the mule's behavior with your pet's behavior
- why your pet obeys your father or mother better than you
- what you would have done if you found out your dog was killing the neighbor's livestock
- how Travis felt when he found out he had to destroy his dog

From Mother to Teachers' Aide

When your child enters school, your role will change from that of mother to teacher's aide. When she brings books home to read, sit with her, and listen to her read her assignment. Teachers want parents to listen to their child read at home. Many schools require the parents to sign a note indicating how much time they read with their child each night. Following are several suggestions to follow when helping the school-age child read her school books, as well as when you read bedtime stories together:

- Before the child begins to read the story, flip through the pages and look for words that may give her difficulty. Have her sound them out prior to reading the story, so she can read it without too much frustration.
- Ask her to make predictions throughout the story, such as what she thinks will happen next and what makes her think so?
 - While reading, don't let the child struggle too long before you help her. She'll lose the meaning of the entire story, and then she won't enjoy it. If the word has more than one syllable, slowly sound out each syllable. Then have her sound the word out a few times before going on.
- Story clues are also helpful. Before you pronounce a word that she cannot read herself, show her how to use the pictures to figure it out. For example, the story is about a dog and his bone. The picture shows the

dog digging a hole for his bone, and the sentence reads, “The dog is digging a hole for his bone.” The child reads, “The dog is bigging a hole for his bone.” Tell her to look at the picture and ask if bigging makes sense. Ask her what the picture shows the dog doing. Then ask, “Is the dog bigging or digging a hole?”

- If the child is confused with b and d, and p and q, make some large drawings of each pair and point out the differences with her. This will help immensely. Let her trace them and draw them. An easy way to point out the difference is to show her how the d and q face the same side as her left hand and the b and p the same side as her right hand.
- Sometimes it helps to tell the child to skip a word she can't sound out, and then go back to it. Usually, when she goes back to it she says it correctly, because by reading ahead she has more meaning to associate with the word.
- If the word is a sight word that cannot be sounded out, just say the word for her. Then have her look at the word and say it several times, so she will know it.
- Be certain to praise her when she figures out a word. Keep encouraging her by telling her she's doing great, and is well on the road to becoming a good reader.
- When in a learning situation, such as reading with a parent or teacher, the child needs to have a book that is challenging. If she knows every word, then the book is too easy and she's not progressing. However, if she must struggle with every other word, then the book is too difficult. By struggling too much, she will lose confidence and motivation. This is when she begins to think that reading is too hard for her, and that she cannot learn to read.
- If the child is reading a book assigned by the teacher and you think it is too difficult, call it to her attention and ask her to test her again. Sometimes a child is placed at the wrong reading level. The teacher should appreciate your help.

Helping the Child Select His Own Books

Until the child is confident in selecting library books to read independently, you should be available to help him. Sometimes when a beginning reader selects his own books to read, the titles and pictures attract him, but the content is at a reading level that is too advanced. When the child can't read the book, he automatically begins to think he can't read and loses confidence. Imagine how you feel when trying to read a book that is over your head. If an adult does not intervene, and lead the student to interesting books that he is capable of reading, his ability and desire to read well may be permanently ruined.

I still get a warm feeling when I remember little Terry, one of my fourth grade students. He was reading two years below level and wanted desperately to be able to read big books. While in the bookmobile looking for books to check out, Terry latched onto *The Rise and Fall of the German Empire*, a four inch thick book, with an ugly dark blue cover, and no pictures. I tried my very best to talk him out of it saying, "Look, Terry, there aren't any pictures, and the print is almost too small to read. Besides, it's way too hard for you. Let me help you find another book," but he insisted to the point of having tears in his eyes. So I allowed him to check it out, on the condition that we read it together. He lost interest before I finished the first page, and resorted to books that I helped him select. If I hadn't been there to help him, the book may have ruined what little confidence he had.

The Three Word Rule When Selecting Books

When helping a child select books to read by himself, use the three-word rule: Open the book to any page, and have him read it. If there are more than three words that he cannot read by himself, then the book is too difficult for him to read independently. If you will be available to help him, or if you will be reading the books together, then the rule would not apply. You may help him select books that are of his interest level, yet

have more challenging words that you can help him sound out and understand, so he may increase his vocabulary.

Reading to your child is about the most important way you can help him learn to read and do well in school, so you absolutely must find the time to read, read, read - thirty minutes every day. I know it is difficult. Sometimes you're too tired, you have other really important things that must be done, or you have to get things ready for work the next day. That's okay once in a while, just so excuses don't crop up every night until, before you know it, you may read just once or twice a week, if at all. Reading can be fit in at other times and by other people, but don't forget how important it is to the child to have Mom or Dad do the reading. You really can find the time if you just look for it. You must make it a priority! Your child will be "little" for just a few years. Don't waste those precious years for less important priorities. Following is a list of suggestions for reading opportunities and people who may become involved in reading to and with your child.

Preschool and Early Elementary School Children

- Try reading to your toddler or preschool child when she's in the bathtub. My little ones loved to spend time in the tub, so I would sit next to it and read to them, pause and show pictures, ask questions, and keep on reading. This takes the pressure away from rushing the kids through their beloved bath, so there would be time to read before their bedtime.
- Have older brothers and sisters read to their younger siblings. This is beneficial for both children.
- Enlist an older neighbor child to read to your little one for a short while when he comes home from school, or during the summer vacation. Pay him or her a few dollars an hour and some ice cream, or popcorn when finished.
- Ask the babysitter to read to your child, rather than watch television. This would make the child look forward even more to being with the babysitter.

- Put audio books on your gift list to purchase for your child. They're great to listen to when traveling, or those few nights before bed when you have to pass up your reading session. The library should have an ample supply from which to choose. Save them for times when the kids are bored and want to be entertained.
- Prerecord some stories for those nights when you are too tired, and just want to put your child to bed. Let her listen to a taped story and follow it in the book while she's in bed, as well as to pass time when driving a long distance. This is also a great way for you to refine your own oral reading skills.
- Take books to the doctor and dentist to read while waiting.
- Let your child invite a friend over for buddy reading. Supply the popcorn and a surprise cache of library books. Refreshments will add to the enjoyment.
- A great habit to get into is having your child read orally to you while you're preparing dinner. This is excellent practice for the child. You'll be close by to help with words he's having difficulty with and, if you concentrate, you can ask him questions about the story.
- Another excellent practice activity is to have him read into the tape recorder. He can challenge himself to read smoothly and with expression. If he doesn't sound good, erase what he read and read it again. Encourage him to play the taped story to you after practicing.

READING COMPREHENSION

There's more to reading than decoding words. Many students learn to sound out words quite fluently by the age of ten, but they don't understand the meaning of the text. With some, this problem extends even into high school. When the child is too intent on sounding out the words and trying to relate the letters to the rules, he forgets to concentrate on what the story is about. A common concern of teachers

is, “He can read the words, but he doesn’t know what he is reading.” The most important and effective way children can be helped to comprehend what they read is through one on-one instruction.

This is not a simple process; it involves mastery of a combination of skills which takes several years to accomplish. When the teacher has twenty to thirty students in her classroom, it’s very difficult to give them all the individual attention they need. Here is where parents’ help is invaluable. They can help their child considerably by reading to and with him, by talking to him, and by encouraging him to discuss his own feelings and experiences. This needn’t be that difficult.

Conversations can take place during breakfast, while driving, while eating dinner, cleaning up the kitchen after dinner, or shopping, and much can be taught during nightly bedtime reading. Some of the suggestions in this chapter are repetitious of what has been described in previous chapters on “Home Environment,” “Language,” “Sight Words,” and “Vocabulary:” however it will be beneficial to go over them again. There are a lot of new suggestions as well.

Decoding

This skill is taught extensively in elementary school. It’s the first formal step to learning to read. Decoding begins even before school age when parents teach the child the letters and sounds of the alphabet at home.

- While listening to the child read, help him sound out the letters of the words he has difficulty reading.
- Keep showing him how to sound out words as you read to *him*, and *when he begins to read himself*. *When he comes to you with a word he cannot say*, don’t just say it for him; rather, help him sound it out.
- There are numerous fun and challenging books and games sold in book stores and on the Internet that will help the child along.

Main Idea

- Being able to know the main idea of the story will improve as the child’s comprehension develops. Usually, the title will give the main idea of the story.
- Look at the picture on the cover of the book and read the title to your child before you begin to read. That is what the book will be all about. For example, in the book, “Bears Like to Dance,” the main idea would be about bears.
- As you read, every now and then stop and ask the child to tell you about what you have already read, and what he thinks will happen next, or predict how the story will end. This will sharpen his focus on the story. Help him along if he stumbles in his replies.

Vocabulary

An extensive vocabulary is needed for comprehension. What good is it for a student to decode words because he knows the sounds of the letters, but does not understand the meaning of the words? Do you remember times when you attempted to read an article or book that was “over your head” because you didn’t understand many of the vocabulary words?

- You don’t need to teach your child vocabulary words. Your child will repeat what he hears from you. If you use plain, simple, over-used words like big, little, or pretty, he will use those words. If you use more sophisticated words like attractive, enormous, and trivial, he will use them also. Following are a number of word pairs. Try making a list of several pairs and tack them to your kitchen wall. Challenge yourself to use the words when talking to your child or other family members. Create conversations in which you would use them. A good example could be when your child is late coming home from school; you would ask him for his alibi, instead of excuse. In time, your child will have an extensive vocabulary. Simple!

excuse	alibi	alone	isolated
start	embark	ask	enquire
dry	arid	beg	plead

alone	isolated	dig	excavate
family	clan	hot	torrid
shout	bellow	busy	occupied
fang	tusk	mud	mire
odor	essence	ring	peal
fat	stout	thirsty	parched
stink	reek	zoo	menagerie l
look	gaze	noise	uproar
storm	tempest	sharp	keen
warm	tepid	smell	whiff
trick	prank	thin	scrawny
speedy	rapid	corner	niche
home	abode	large	vast

Sequence of Events

Mastering the sequence skills is crucial to reading comprehension. It helps us break down past events into logical order of how they happened. It is also needed to give directions and to remember the steps to perform certain tasks that need to be done in a specific order. We need sequencing skills to help us organize ideas and information, to help us solve problems, and to understand scientific information.

The ability to understand sequence takes a long time and will develop as the child matures and becomes a more proficient reader. Meanwhile, here are suggestions to help its development while reading and talking to him.

- Have him tell you about his experiences in the order in which they happened, such as at a birthday party: did they play games first, when did the child open his presents, when did they have refreshments. Whenever your child goes somewhere, ask him to tell you about what he did, in order. If he goes to a movie, ask him to tell you about it. Ask him to tell you about what he did in school.
- Read an old story book to him, then tear the pages out, mix them up and let the child put them in the order in which they took place. Do the same with the newspaper cartoons. Then let the child show you the pictures one at a time, and tell you about the story or cartoon in his own words. Help him if needed.
- While reading, keep going back to events that happened before. Have him recall parts of the story already read. Ask him what happened first, then next, and then after that, up to where you are presently reading. This keeps him thinking, helps clarify situations and parts characters play in relation to others.
- While reading, emphasize words that indicate time of events, such as then, first, last, now, finally, and next.
- Use these words when telling him to perform certain tasks in the order of which they must be done, such as getting ready for bed: first take off your dirty clothes and put them in the hamper, next wash up and brush your teeth, then put on your pajamas, and finally pick out a book for your bedtime story.
- Purchase some of the delightful, reasonably priced sequencing games and activities found in book stores and online.

Drawing Conclusions

Asking the child what he thinks will happen next in a story will not only encourage comprehension, but he'll have to give it some serious thought, and weigh his answer on what he has already read. If his comprehension is not good, he won't be able to answer the question. Have patience... remember, he doesn't already have these skills, he's learning them.

- While reading, pause often to ask the child what he thinks will happen next. To keep the question from becoming monotonous, make a game of it. Both of you take a guess. Fake it so you will be wrong some of the time. Praise your child when he's right. Make comments such as, "You're right again!" "You're getting pretty good at this!" "Hey, you're really paying attention!"
- "Why" questions have a strong influence on comprehension. Questions such as, "Why is it thundering?" "Why is the dog barking?" "Why did the bird fly away?" "Why is your hair mussed up?" and, "Why is the monkey chattering?" are all thought-provoking questions based on what happened previously. The child will love to answer these questions and will consider it a game. At first he'll probably hem and haw, not knowing what to say. But with encouragement and practice, he'll soon be giving answers every time, some accurate, some just guesswork. Accept any sensible answer. Have fun!
- "Because" statements stimulate the brain in a similar fashion. The child has to make inferences in order to answer logically. His answer must be the result of reasoning. Instead of beginning with why, make a partial statement, and wait for the child to complete it with the right answer. For example, "We could not go for our walk today, because...it started to rain." "The puppy soiled the carpet, because... we forgot to take him outside." "The soup tasted bland, because... mother forgot to put in the salt." "The ice cream melted, because... it wasn't put back in the freezer." Initially, you would ask the why part and your child would supply the answer. When the child catches on, you can switch roles and let him ask the why questions. Very challenging. Keep it fun!
- While reading together, help the child identify emotions. Anger, sadness, jealousy, happiness, hurt, disappointment, and frustration are all emotions the child either has already experienced or soon will. Being able to identify them in characters he is reading about will help him understand the feelings when he experiences them himself. Ask him what caused these particular feelings, and what the character could have done to prevent them if they were negative. Discuss how healthy people

control their negative emotions, and what the child could do when he feels that way. The child who comprehends is able to relate to the feelings of the characters or animals with regard to the situations that caused the feelings. At the same time, you can help the child empathize with people in real life situations, such as a crying baby, an elderly person who is cranky, handicapped people, street people, children who are made fun of by their peers, and animals that are mistreated. Many adults never do acquire this skill, which is very dependent upon comprehension.

READING INCENTIVES

Learning to read is very tedious. It takes students years of struggling to learn the alphabet, decode words, and comprehend well enough to be an independent reader. Although they may be learning to read as well as expected, you still have to give them one-on-one assistance, and keep nagging them to read, read, read. They resist reading because it's difficult, and it's no fun. But they won't get better unless they read a lot. Rather than continuous nagging, you can help your child reach the enjoyable and independent reading stage by enticing her to read more with fun and rewarding activities.

Below are a number of incentives you can use. When she becomes bored with one activity, substitute another one that will keep her motivated. Whatever activity you select, be sure you set some rules about the size of the books she must read, so she's not tempted to read short, unchallenging ones. It's very important for an adult to be available to help the child with words she can't pronounce or doesn't understand. If she's reading independently, be sure to verify she's actually reading the books rather than just breezing through in order to claim another book read. To make certain she's benefiting, have her tell you about each book she reads. Kids can be very tricky. If she's cheating, then take away the incentives for a while.

Book Chains

Cut a number of 1 ½” x 5” strips of white construction paper. Each book the child reads will be a link of the book chain. Have her write the title of the book on the strip, decorate or color the strip any way she chooses, and then staple the ends together to form a circle. Each subsequent link should be attached to the one before it in order to form the chain. Begin the chain anywhere she wants, dangling from her bedroom ceiling or on the kitchen wall. If there’s more than one child, let them work together, even get the entire family involved. Give each member a different color so everyone can see at a glance how many books each has read. Children who are reading larger or more difficult books that take longer to complete may get to add a link for reading 10 or 20 pages. Parents may participate also with their own chains, or add their color to the child’s chain. Decide what counts besides books, such as newspapers and magazines.

Reading Quilt

The more people involved in this activity the more fun it is. For each book completed, the person gets to add a patch to the quilt, which would be an 8 ½” x 11” piece of white paper, or if you have a way to cut it into an even square, that would be better. Color and decorate it in some way that is related to the story or characters, such as a dog, sailboat, etc. On the back write the title. Have the family members sit together, and listen to the child tell about the story before she attaches her section to the quilt, which can be on a wall, perhaps in the hallway, or even the front room. A good time to tell about a story is when the family is together having dinner.

Stickers

These are great to use as motivators and also rewards for any type of good work or behavior. Give your child a sticker for each book he reads. When he completes the book, let him draw a picture related to the story and tell you about it. Put the sticker on the picture and pin it on a wall. Stickers may be purchased at book stores, dollar stores, or Wal-Mart. I

could get my 4th grade students to do anything for a sticker. Imagine 25 students tip-toeing down the school hall (so they wouldn't bother students in other classrooms) to the restroom and back without talking, just to get a sticker for being quiet when they got back.

Hole Punch

For the beginning reader, give him a strip of construction paper to use as a bookmark and let him punch a hole in it for each fifteen minutes he reads or each book he reads. Chances are, he won't want to quit after fifteen minutes; however, insist that in order to punch a hole, he must read in a fifteen-minute block. If he passes fifteen minutes, and reads another five, it doesn't count for another time. Encourage him to read just ten more minutes, and he will get to punch two holes in the bookmark. After reading four hours in bits and pieces he should receive a reward of some kind, perhaps a sticker, a new pencil, or eraser.

Calendars

Calendars are versatile motivators. Give the child a star or smiley face to put in the day's square, or let him color in the box for each block of fifteen minutes he reads. Give him a treat or small reward when he fills in a week or more, a larger reward for the month. For the older child who is capable of reading more, the requirement should be perhaps a half hour or an entire book.

Apple Tree

With colored chalk, draw a picture of a tree with branches on the wall. Let your child cut out a number of apples from red construction paper, or she can make her own and decorate it. Let her tape an apple on the tree for each book she reads. This, too, can be a family project and may include reading the newspapers or a magazine.

Bookworms

Draw the head of a bookworm and make a number of segments for its body. The child would write the title of her completed book on a segment

and attach it to the worm. Small children really enjoy this when they can stretch the worm's body across the wall.

Fish Tank

Draw a large fish tank on the wall about 3' x 6'. Let the child draw and color a fish to add to the tank for each book she reads. This can lead to a nice art project for the child. Look up tropical fish on the Internet or check out a library book about fish. The child will read even more to learn about the aquatic life of fish before she completes her project. Fill in the name of the book on the back of the fish.

Footprints

Let the child make a footprint for each book she reads by tracing her tennis shoe on a piece of white construction paper. Then copy the design on the bottom of the shoe onto her paper copy. Print the title on the other side. Color the pattern and then cut it out. Place markers representing a starting point somewhere on the wall, and another for a finish line somewhere on the ceiling, perhaps in another room. Let the child place her footprints heading toward the finish line. Determine how far apart they may be. I did this with my students. We had footprints on the ceiling going out the room, down the hall to the office. What fun!

Read-a-Thon

Suggest charitable reading to earn money to donate to unfortunate people, or to raise money for a good cause. Help your child decide. Make him aware of articles in the paper about unfortunate families or beneficial programs, such as Friends of the Library, Muscular Dystrophy Foundation, or animal shelters. He would ask family and friends to sponsor her and pay so much towards the charity for each book she reads. Consider allowing her to get two or three friends involved, as well. This would be a nice project for siblings.

Tickets

This is a great motivator. Give your child a clear, plastic jar, such as one from peanut butter or salad dressing. Give him a ticket each time he

reads a book. You can purchase tickets from the dollar store or make them yourself. When he gets several, give a promised reward.

Money Bank

Giving money is one of the greatest motivators, especially if your child is old enough to understand its value. A dollar for a book that takes several sessions to finish sounds about right and twenty five cents for 15 minutes sessions. Be sure you take the child to the dollar store to select a small toy when he has enough money to spend. You might feel your way when it comes to rewards. I would be inclined to first try having a special pizza party with friends after he reads perhaps twenty books, or ten if that's too many. But make him work for it. If that isn't incentive enough, then consider a material reward that he would like to have.

Utilizing just a few of these motivators will keep your child reading for hours. You can even use them for other behaviors, such as family chores, good grades, keeping the bedroom clean, not fighting or arguing with siblings, or whatever habit you want her to break or establish. Just the fun and challenge your children will get from reading with these incentives will keep them reading for as long as they would be watching television. And before you know it, you won't have to nag them to read anymore. As soon as they're able to read fluently they'll catch the "reading bug" and you'll be nagging them to put their books down instead of to turn off the *television*.



“Children are made readers on the laps of their parents.”

Emile Buchwald

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Top Students/Top Parents

Good Students are Made at Home, Not at School

A Manual for Parents Who Want to Help Their Children Become All they Can Be