

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

January 2006

Renton School District

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ Owl Moon

A father and daughter search for owls on a winter night in this beautifully written story by Jane Yolen. When they finally spot one of the giant birds, the little girl realizes that all their waiting in the cold moonlight was worth it.



■ If You Take a Mouse to School

In this book from Laura Numeroff's series, a little mouse wants to participate in every aspect of school life, including lunch and recess. Your youngster will probably recognize activities from her own day. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ The Dancing Dragon

Learn about the Chinese New Year with Marcia Vaughan's rhyming story. The book includes an eight-page foldout picture of a dragon like the ones that are carried in traditional parades.



■ The Emperor's Egg

Explore the unusual habits of emperor penguins in Martin Jenkins's book. Readers may be surprised to find out that a father penguin keeps an egg warm on top of his feet while the mother goes off in search of food.



Writing 1-2-3-4

"Where do books come from?" Your child may wonder how an author takes an idea and turns it into a finished product. She might also want to try creating her own story. Here is a simple version of the writing process that even the youngest writer can use to get started.

1 Plan it.

A writing plan can be as simple as a picture. For example, if your youngster wants to write about what she did at recess, she could draw herself on the swings and slide. She can use her drawing as a reminder while she writes her story. An older writer might jot down a list of words or phrases to get started.

2 Rough it out.

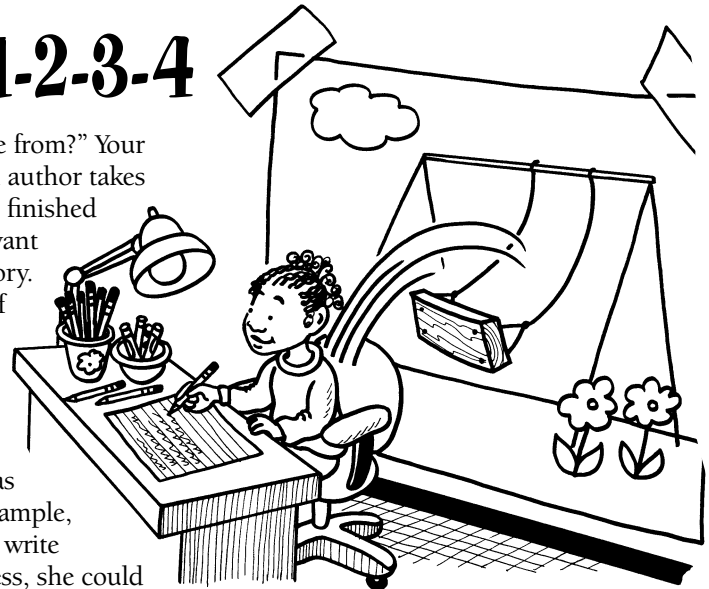
As your child begins to write, remind her that a rough draft of a story doesn't have to be perfect. At this stage, she should worry less about precise handwriting and proper spelling, and more about getting her thoughts on paper.

3 Make it better.

Once your youngster's draft is finished, have her read it out loud to be sure it makes sense. Then, she can use a dictionary to check her spelling.

4 Publish it!

A younger writer could rewrite her revised story neatly on lined paper. An older child may be able to type her story using a computer. ♥



Q&A

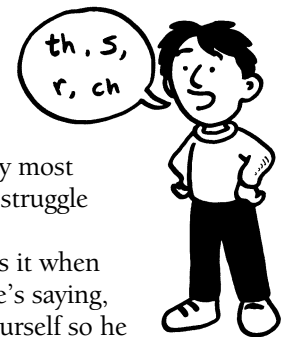
Speaking clearly

Q My son's speech is unclear sometimes. Is this normal?

A By preschool, a child's speech is usually understandable about 95 percent of the time. He should say most sounds correctly, although some youngsters may still struggle with "l," "s," "r," "v," "z," "ch," "sh," and "th."

Try to notice when your child is having difficulty. Is it when he's tired or nervous? If you can't understand what he's saying, ask him to repeat it. Then, clearly say his sentence yourself so he can hear the proper pronunciation.

Talk with your youngster's teacher about your concerns. If his speech doesn't improve over time, he may need to see a speech professional. ♥



Stories with a message

Most of us had a favorite storybook character while growing up, such as a clever princess or a brave superhero. Try introducing your child to characters with traits he can admire. You just might get him hooked on reading—and teach some values at the same time.

Strong role models

Surprise your youngster with a new kind of book: a biography. The *Picture Book Biography* series by David Adler uses real-life heroes like Abraham Lincoln and Amelia Earhart to teach children about honesty and bravery.

Different characters

Your child can learn to respect differences by reading stories that celebrate individuality, like *Whoever You Are* by Mem Fox.



She writes that although children around the world look and speak differently, they all “love, smile, laugh, and cry.” In Mary Hoffman’s *Amazing Grace*, a little girl learns that nothing can stop her from being whatever she wants to be.

Friendship lessons

Many popular books can help children learn to get along with one another. *The Rainbow Fish* by Marcus Pfister teaches a lesson about sharing. Paulette Bourgeois’ *Franklin Is Bossy* shows kids how to take turns. ♥

Web words

The Internet can be a real motivator for young children. You can get your youngster excited about learning to read and write with these Web sites:

Make word searches and crossword puzzles at www.puzzlemaker.com. Use this site to practice weekly spelling lists. Choose the kind of puzzle you want to make, type the word list, and the puzzle will appear.

At www.wordcentral.com, learn a word of the day, make up a poem, or even write secret messages in code. Encourage your child to look up the definitions of new vocabulary words at this site.

Choose from more than a dozen activities at www.funbrain.com/words.html. Unscramble words, practice parts of speech, or fill in the blanks to write a silly story.

Editor’s Note: Remember to monitor your children’s time on the Internet and review each site to determine its appropriateness. ♥

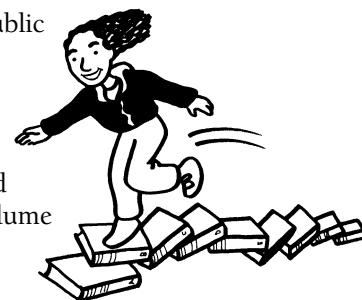
Parent to Parent

Introducing encyclopedias

My children and I go to the public library every week. Usually they check out a few books, and then we’re on our way.

Recently my daughter noticed the encyclopedias and asked me what they were. I thought for a moment and asked her to name anything in the world she was interested in. She chose flowers, so I took volume F off the shelf, and we read about flowers. Then, my son said he wanted to read about race car drivers, so we grabbed the R volume as well.

Now, on each library visit we choose a different topic to look up. My kids are always coming up with new subjects they want to learn more about. So far, we’ve read about Mars, saber-toothed tigers, and volcanoes. ♥



Fun with Words

Vowel shortcuts

Many children struggle with short vowel sounds. They’re not as easy to recognize as long vowel sounds, but they’re more common. If your youngster can identify their sounds, he’ll be able to spell many words. Try these activities:

Explain to your child that the first sound in “umbrella” is a short “u.” Say the sound that the letter makes (/u/),

not the letter “u.” Then, draw an upside-down umbrella, shaped like the letter “u.” Your youngster can write a few short “u” words inside, such as “cut,” “duck,” and “under.”

Short “o” (/o/) is the first sound in “octopus.” Draw an octopus, with the center shaped like the letter “o.” On each tentacle, your youngster can write a short “o” word, such as “hot,” “bottle,” and “sock.” ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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