

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

October 2005

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ Why Do Leaves Change Color?

With simple words and detailed pictures, Betsy Maestro explains why leaves turn color and fall from the trees. This book includes activities and a list of places to visit in the United States that are known for fall foliage.



■ Nuts to You!

A busy city squirrel has one adventure after another. In search of nuts, he climbs trees and even visits a boy's apartment. Lois Ehler's collage art makes the book enjoyable to look at and read.



■ Runny Babbit: A Billy Sook

Shel Silverstein's latest story helps children learn rhyming words while having fun at the same time. Youngsters will get a kick out of the letter-switching found in each poem. Ideal for reading together.



■ Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse

Lilly is a mouse whose new purse causes trouble at school. When her beloved teacher takes it away, she draws a mean picture of him. A lesson is learned in this touching story by Kevin Henkes. (Also available in Spanish.)

"Just right" books

Choosing the right book for your youngster can make you feel like Goldilocks in *The Three Bears*: You want one that's not too easy, not too hard, but just right.

Try these tips for selecting books based on your child's reading ability.

Emergent readers know some sight words and can sound out short words. Choose books with large print and few words per page. Illustrations should go with the words. *Example:* If the text says, "My dog is red," look for the picture of a red dog. Try Scholastic's *Hello Reader* Level 1 and Level 2 books.

Books for **novice readers**, who already know many words or can sound them out, will have smaller print. There will be a picture and a paragraph on every page or so. Look for short sentences and familiar, everyday words. David Adler's *Young Cam Jansen* mysteries and Arnold Lobel's *Frog and Toad* books are good choices.

The five-finger test

How can your child pick out a book on her own? Use the "five-finger test."

Open a book to the middle, and ask your youngster to read a page. Tell her to hold up her hand and fold one finger down every time she misses a word. (At first, have her read out loud to be sure she's counting the words correctly.) If all five fingers are down, the book is too hard. One or two may mean the book is too easy. Three or four probably mean it's just right.

Tip: If your child has trouble understanding what she reads and can't tell you what a story is about, try choosing an easier book. ♥



Independent readers can read smoothly and with expression. They understand most of what they read without help. Print is smaller, sentences are longer, and plots are more complex. There are several paragraphs per page. Consider the *Junie B. Jones* series by Barbara Park or Marc Brown's *Arthur* series.

Note: Regardless of your youngster's reading level, expose him to all kinds of books. You can read higher-level books aloud to him or along with him. ♥



Use what you know

Reading new words

Can your youngster read a word like “supercalifragilisticexpialidocious”? Maybe not! But did you know that your child can use words she already knows to read new words? Here’s how:

- Start with your youngster’s name. Trina, for example, might have an easier time learning “tr” words such as “train.” You can use the “tr” consonant blend at the beginning of her name



to teach her other blends as well, such as “cr,” “pl,” and “st.”

- Point out patterns in sight words your child recognizes. *Example:* If your youngster knows “they,” he can learn “then,” “this,” and “that.” “Could,” “would,” and “should” are three common sight words that also share a pattern.
- Break down syllables in a longer word, such as “yesterday.” Cover the entire word with an index card. Then, slowly slide the card to the right to show each syllable one at a time (yes-ter-day). This works especially well for words with several syllables, such as “supercalifragilisticexpialidocious!” ♥

Fun with Words

Rainy day riddles



“I have a sense of humor. I’m a good writer and thinker, and I’m learning lots of words. Who am I?” A child who writes riddles, of course! Creating “Who am I?” and “What am I?” riddles can improve your child’s thinking and writing skills and build his vocabulary.

Ask your youngster to think of an object, such as a banana, and write three things about it on the front of an index card. *Example:* “I am yellow. Monkeys love me. I enjoy hanging around in bunches. What am I?” Have him write the answer on the back of the card.

Take turns writing and guessing more riddles. Then, store them in a recipe box or shoe box for playing on a rainy day. ♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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Parent to Parent

The never-ending list

While making a grocery list one day, I mentioned to my son how time consuming it is to write down items like “milk” and “peanut butter” each time. Then, he came up with an idea: “Let’s make one list and just mark what we need each week.”

So together, we wrote every grocery item we could think of on a sheet of paper. Then, I covered the list with clear plastic laminate. Each week, I use a washable marker to underline everything I plan to buy, then pass the list around to everyone in the family. They underline the items they want, using a different colored marker. If they want something special, they add it to the list.

My children can’t wait to have their turn because they get to help choose foods they want. They’ve even learned to read and write words like “cereal,” “macaroni,” and “yogurt.” ♥



Q&A

Commas, commas everywhere

Q My child is proud that she has learned how to use punctuation. However, now she uses commas and periods too often in her writing—and not always in the right places. How can I help?

A The best place to find examples of proper punctuation is in your youngster’s favorite books. The next time you read aloud to her, read a page or so without pausing for periods or slowing down for commas. Ask her if she

noticed anything funny about the way you were reading. Then, read it again using the punctuation in the correct way.

If your child reads her own writing out loud, she’ll begin to hear where the punctuation should be. Try having her clap once each time she reaches a place that should have a comma, and twice for a period, to exaggerate the pauses. ♥

