

What Can I Do to Help My Student Be a Successful Reader?

A Helpful Guide for Parents

Read Everyday

Bedtime Routine

The most single important thing you can do is to foster your child's reading and writing skills is to read to him/her everyday. Read as often as you can to your child, even if just for 20 minutes a day, and do your best to make reading time a fun experience that both of you enjoy.

Develop Your Child's Curiosity for Books

Bedtime Routine

Before you actually start to read a new book to your child, read just the title and look at the picture on the cover or first page. Ask, "What do you think this book is about?" or "Tell me what you know about..." These questions will help your child develop curiosity about books.

Read Non-Fiction Books

Bedtime routine

Make sure to include non-fiction books in the titles you choose. Early elementary students are fascinated by the world around them and learn a lot about how it works from non-fiction books (i.e., animals, dinosaurs, trucks, outer space).

Sing Songs with Your Child

Cooking dinner, riding in the car, getting dressed in the morning

Reading to your child isn't the only way to insure that he becomes a strong reader as he gets older. Singing songs is a great way to learn new information and help develop language skills.

Play Word Games

Riding in the car, waiting at the doctor's office

Play simple word games like "I Spy", seeking out things that begin with a certain letter.

Play Vocabulary Word Games

Anytime throughout the day

Make a game out of broadening your child's vocabulary. Choose five unfamiliar new words for your child to learn each week and see how often everyone in the family can use those words in everyday conversation. This will help improve your kindergartener's vocabulary, reading comprehension, and speaking skills.

Encourage Writing and Drawing

Anytime throughout the day

You can do so much to help your child feel like a writer. Encourage drawing scribbling, and writing. Successful and fluent writers are confident in their abilities and writing every day, in whatever form, will help your child gain that confidence.

Share Reading With Your Child

Bedtime routine

Even when your child is in 1st grade, read to and with him/her. For example, take turns reading pages of a book, which gives him/her a chance to show off his/her skills.

Visit the Local Library

Can be used at any time

Make visits to your local public library part of your regular routine. The library is a fun place, especially if you present it to your student as a place of discovery, with unlimited books to read and borrow and activities like story time, author readings, and more.

Allow Easy Access to Writing Supplies

Can be used at any time

Make sure that your child has easy access to the tools and supplies he/she will need to practice the writing skills she is learning (colored pens, colored pencils, crayons, colored paper, dry-erase markers and boards).

Encourage Writing Through Lists

Can be used at any time

Encourage your child to practice writing by making lists (i.e., shopping list, Christmas or birthday list of presents he/she wants, or chores that he/she is responsible for).

Don't Correct All Spelling Mistakes

Can be used at any time

Don't go overboard in correcting your child's early efforts at writing. In the same way that, when she was learning to talk, you didn't correct every pronunciation error or grammatical mistake, now that she's learning to write, you don't want to inhibit her by focusing too much on what she's doing wrong. If you correct every error, beginning writers will start to close up, so by allowing them more latitude encourages them to view writing as a fun activity and not work.

Always Have Reading Material on Hand

In the car, waiting at the doctor's office

Never leave home without reading material for you and your child. By always having a book or a magazine with you, helps your child understand that reading is an enjoyable activity that can be done at any time.

Listen to Audiobooks

Riding in the car

Play a CD of an audiobook to help build oral fluency and comprehension skills.

Encourage Questions

During homework time, bedtime routine

Encourage your child to ask for help when he/she doesn't understand a word. If a character in a story is described with words that your child doesn't recognize, work with him to figure out their meaning from other clues in the text, rather than simply providing the definition for him/her.

Play Letter Match

Riding in the car, cooking dinner, walking in your neighborhood

Select a category, such as animals, foods, or places. Call out a letter of the alphabet and give your child 10 seconds to think of an item in the category. It's then your turn to think of another item in the category that begins with the same letter. Keep going until one of you misses. For example, if the category is "animals" and the letter is B, he/she might say bear, then you say beaver, then buffalo, and so on.

Keep a Dictionary and Thesaurus Accessible

Can be used at any time

Keep a dictionary and a thesaurus accessible in the house or bookmark some dictionary sites online, so that when an unfamiliar word comes up your child can easily consult these handy references.

Play “Another Way to Say...”

Riding in the car, waiting in the doctor’s office, in line at the grocery store

The goal is to find words that have a similar meaning to the selected word. So if you choose the word “big,” your child can take turns with you or siblings finding similar words, such as “huge,” “enormous,” or “large.” This helps build vocabulary and memory skills, and discussing how exactly the chosen words differ from each other adds another dimension to the game.

Say Silly Tongue Twisters

Riding in the car, waiting in the doctor’s office, in line at the grocery store

Sing songs, read rhyming books, and say silly tongue twisters. These help kids become sensitive to the sounds in words.

Play Sound Games

Riding in the car, waiting in the doctor’s office, in line at the grocery store

Practice blending sounds into words. Ask "Can you guess what this word is? m - o - p." Hold each sound longer than normal.

Once is Not Enough

Can be used at any time

Encourage your child to re-read favorite books and poems. Re-reading helps kids read more quickly and accurately.

Tell Family Tales

Riding in the car, waiting in the doctor's office, in line at the grocery store

Children love to hear stories about their family. Talk about a funny thing that happened when you were young.

Create a Book Together

Can be used at any time

Fold pieces of paper in half and staple them to make a book. Ask your child to write sentences on each page and add his or her own illustrations.

Teach Your Child Some "Mind Tricks"

Riding in the car, waiting in the doctor's office, in line at the grocery store

Show your child how to summarize a story in a few sentences or how to make predictions about what might happen next. Both strategies help a child comprehend and remember.

List compiled from resources on
www.readingrocket.org and www.parenttoolkit.com