

Build Reading Skills - Tips For Reading With School-age Children

Your major objective should be to devise a way to make your child want to read at home. You need to find a way to make reading time more of a "family thing" instead of just "more school stuff." Struggling readers are many times turned off by school and certainly don't want to do more school stuff at home. Here are my suggestions:

Use reading as a bonding time (even for older children).

- Most children like to have special time with a parent. Reading can be a special time for you and your child, thus holding an attraction for your child.
- Read the same book as your child. It is best if you both have a copy of the same book (strange but true!). If this isn't possible, share your child's book, but stay one chapter ahead. Have book talks. This can be done while you are doing household chores (Your child can help you while you are discussing the book!).
- Learn along with your child (For ex: prefixes, suffixes, roots) and discuss what you learn. For a workbook to help [learn prefixes, suffixes, roots, click here](#).
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Choose a book at his/her correct reading level.

- Ask your child's teacher for his/her reading level. If this isn't possible, ask your child what AR level he checks out of the media center at school (most children know).
- The AR level will give you a range like 1.9 - 2.8. That means 1st grade 9th month - 2nd grade 8th month. Go to the library and choose a few books within this range. The lower end will be books your child should be able to read totally on his/her own with little or no help from you. The higher the level, the more difficult the text and the more help your child will need. Let your child choose some easy books to develop reading fluency.
- Use the 5-finger rule: If your child has difficulty with 5 words on the page, it is too difficult and even with your help, reading that book will be a frustrating experience.

Take turns asking each other questions about what you both read.

- If you are reading the same book, your child can ask you questions about the chapter you just read together. Then, of course, it will be your turn to ask your child questions. This makes it more like a game.
- When you ask questions ask "why" questions and ask your child to predict what a character will do, or predict what might happen.
- Ask questions that your child must go back to the story and support his/her answer. For ex: ask, "Do you think _____ was mean? Why do you think that?" or "Do you think that was a smart move?"

When you listen to your child read, listen for:

- Fluency
 - Phrasing - Your child should read in meaningful chunks of information. S/he should:
 1. read smoothly pausing at periods and commas.
 2. not stop at the end of every line of text.

3. make his/her voice drop in pitch at periods and raise in pitch at question marks.
- Intonation - Your child should read like s/he speaks... with expression.
 - Instant decoding strategies - See if your child can figure words out quickly
 - To read fluently your child must know these high frequency words. Click here for [Dr. Edward Fry's Instant Words List](#)
- Mistakes
 - Does the substitution make sense in the sentence? If the word your child substitutes does not make sense, then you know s/he is not really thinking actively while reading.
 - If the word your child substitutes does make sense, then you know your child is really thinking about what s/he is reading. That's good! Point out the error and have him/her reread.

What you should do to help without sounding like a teacher.

- If your child makes a substitution that does not make sense, ask him/her about it. Say, "Wait, I don't think that makes sense. Look back and be sure you read all the words right."
- If your child stops reading and tries to figure out a word, you can make suggestions.
 - You could say: "That is a hard word. Why don't you just make the first sound and then read on. Maybe the right word will pop into your head." [This actually works many times.]
 - If the difficult word has a suffix (ing, ment...) you could say, "Why don't you cover the suffix and then read the word." [This helps children decode words quickly.]
- Ask your child to read it over after s/he figures out a word or if s/he does not pause at periods or drop his/her voice, or if s/he reads without expression.