

BUILDING READERS

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Butner Elementary School
Home of the Bears

Boost your child's memory with these tricks

Research shows that *mnemonic devices*—tricks used to remember information—can help students recall facts more quickly when taking tests. Help your child use common mnemonics like:

- **Songs.** Turn on the radio and note how many songs you've memorized. It's amazing! To help your child memorize a long list of terms, make up a song about it. (No wonder singing the ABCs is so popular!)
- **Names.** Another way to remember a list is to make a name out of first letters. For example, the colors of the rainbow are red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet. Their first letters spell a name: Roy G. Biv.
- **Rhymes.** It's fun to write rhymes that include important information. Many adults still recall rhymes they learned as kids, such as "In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue." Brainstorm with your child about creative ways to remember facts.



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Source: D. Congos, "9 Types of Mnemonics for Better Memory," The Learning Center Exchange, www.learningassistance.com/2006/january/mnemonics.html.

Five-finger rule makes book choice easier

You want to set high expectations for your reader, but you don't want to frustrate her with books that are too difficult. Use the "five-finger" rule to find books that are just right for your child. Simply:

1. **Have your child open a book** that interests her (to any page) and read silently to herself.
2. **Ask her to hold up** a finger each time she encounters a word she doesn't know.
3. **Count how many fingers** she holds up after finishing one page.
4. **Rate the book's difficulty.** Four fingers means the book might be a bit of a challenge. Five fingers means she should choose another book for now.

Source: "Use the 5 Finger Rule to determine if a book is 'just right,'" Portland Library and Brownstone Intermediate School, www.portlandlibraryct.org/PDF/Summer2009/SchoolLists2009/bis2009.pdf.

Ask for reading instruction details

Working with your child's teacher is one of the best ways to support your child's reading progress. Be sure to ask:

- **How** are my child's reading skills developing?
- **Is** my child reading at grade level?
- **Does** my child enjoy reading in class?
- **Is** my child showing any signs of reading difficulties?
- **How** can I help at home?

Source: "Put Reading First: Helping Your Child Learn to Read," The Partnership for Reading, <http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/PRFbrochure.pdf>.



Library experts suggest online sites

You want your child to read, but he wants to play games online. Maybe you can compromise. Visit the Association for Library Service to Children online. It lists "Great Web Sites for Kids" at www.ala.org/greatsites. See which ones interest you and your child the most.



Review reading assignments



To succeed in school, children need to read well in every subject. Help your child by discussing what she reads in science,

history and other classes. Ask questions that check understanding, such as:

- **"What** did you learn? How does it relate to what you already know?"
- **"How** would you summarize that idea in your own words?"
- **"What** can you teach me about this subject?"

Boost comprehension with some simple techniques

It's important for your child to read, and it's even more important for him to understand what he reads. How can you tell if your child struggles with comprehension? He should be able to summarize readings in detail. To boost comprehension, discuss:



- **Parts.** Instead of focusing on the whole book, talk after each chapter or section.
- **Material.** What happened in the book? Why? How did the characters feel?
- **Connections.** Can your child relate the material to other things he's read or experienced?
- **Vocabulary.** Check the definitions of new or difficult words.

Source: "Comprehension," Reading Rockets, www.readingrockets.org/helping/target/comprehension.

Learn from signs of spring

March 20 is the first day of spring. Encourage your child to look for signs of spring around your neighborhood—like new leaves on trees or flowers beginning to bloom. Have him make notes or draw pictures about what he sees. Then head to the library to find out what kinds of plant life are blooming around your area!



For lower elementary readers:

- **Marshmallow** by Clare Turlay Newberry (Harper Collins). What if a rabbit came to live with a cat? Could they get along? Find out in this picture book based on a true story.



- **Mars Needs Moms!** by Berkeley Breathed (Philomel). Milo doesn't see what's so great about moms. His makes him eat vegetables and do other horrible things. But when Martians kidnap the moms, will Milo discover why he needs his?

For upper elementary readers:

- **The Secret Zoo** by Bryan Chick (Greenwillow). There's something strange happening at the Clarksville City Zoo—and it's up to Noah and his friends to find out what!
- **Five Children and It** by E. Nesbit (Puffin). Five children find a Sand-fairy that grants wishes! But making wishes isn't as easy as it seems.

Check out this recipe for book report success

During her elementary school years, your child will most likely have to write at least one book report. You can introduce this concept at home with a simple conversation.

In order to write a book report, your child will need to know how to find important information such as:

- **The book's title** and author.
- **The main character.**
- **The setting** (where the book takes place).
- **The plot** (what happens in the book).

Next time you and your child share a book, ask her to tell you this information. Can she think of any other details she'd like to add (like her favorite part of the story)?



Digital Vision/Katy McDonnell

If she has trouble summarizing the story, try to help her out. Soon she'll be able to do it on her own!



Q: How can I help my child remember the difference between synonyms and antonyms?

A: Remind your child that *synonyms* have the same, or similar, meanings (such as *happy* and *cheerful*). Point out that synonym, same and similar all start with s. *Antonyms*, on the other hand, are words with opposite meanings (such as *fast* and *slow*).

Do you have a question about reading? Email readingadvisor@parent-institute.com.

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