

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

January 2009

Dahlgren School
Mrs. Alice Herring, Principal

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ Peter's Chair

Peter is sad because his baby things are being given to his new sister.



He hides his old chair before his parents can paint it pink. But when he realizes he has outgrown it, he's faced with an important decision. A touching sibling story by Ezra Jack Keats.

■ Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

On "the darkest evening of the year," a man in a horse-drawn sleigh stops in the woods to feed forest creatures and visit family. Black-and-white drawings with splashes of color capture a snowstorm's magic in this picture-book version of Robert Frost's classic poem.

■ Hairs/Pelitos

The characters in this story belong to the same close-knit family, yet each is unique. In both English and Spanish, author Sandra Cisneros describes the family members' hair. The narrator, a little girl, has unruly hair, and her mother's smells warm and comforting.



■ What Do You Do with a Tail Like This?

Does your child know that a lizard's tail grows back if it's cut off? This nonfiction book by Steve Jenkins and Robin Page reveals fascinating animal facts. Youngsters will read about four-eyed fish, elephants using their noses to shower, and crickets with ears on their knees.



Planning to write

Mark likes to draw a picture as he plans the story he'll write. Carly lists ideas and then picks her favorite. And Evan prefers to tell his story out loud before writing it down.

Each of these youngsters has a different way to develop a story. Share these suggestions with your child so he can find one that works well for him.



Draw

A beginning writer might draw a picture and then write a story about it. Encourage your youngster to add lots of details to his drawing so he'll have more to write about. Or suggest that he fold a paper into thirds and label the sections "beginning," "middle," and "end." He can draw three pictures in a sequence and write about each one.

Observe

Ask your child to choose a place to sit, maybe by a window, and divide a paper into two columns: "See" and "Don't See." In the first column, he jots down 10 things he sees (birds, clouds,

cars). In the second, he writes 10 things he doesn't see (beach, moon, train). He can use an idea from either column to write a story.

Talk

Give your youngster a tape recorder and suggest that he tell a story. He may find it's easier to keep his thoughts flowing when he isn't concentrating on forming letters. Listen to the tape together. Then, play it one sentence at a time as he transcribes his tale.♥

Reading field trips

Where is the best place to read? Everywhere! Your youngster may read mostly at home or school, but here are other places she can sharpen her skills:

- Signs, boxes, cans... grocery stores are full of words. Before you go shopping, help your child make a word list by cutting words from food packages and gluing them to paper. As she finds each one, she can cross it off.
- Carry along books to read when you go out. You can grab a few minutes of reading in a doctor's waiting room, during a shopping break, or at the park playground.
- Share reading with others. Find a few books your child can read independently. Visit a younger neighbor or a grandparent, and let your youngster lead story hour.♥



Hands-on phonics

Letter sounds and rhymes are building blocks of reading. Play these games with your child to encourage her to practice both:

- * Choose magnetic or foam letters that spell a word, and put them in a lunch bag. Ask your youngster to pull them out one at a time, say the sound each makes, and arrange them to create a word.
- * Use a board game with a path that you can move tokens along. On index cards, write simple words that are easy to rhyme (sit, top). Take turns drawing a card and saying words



that rhyme with it. Move your token one space for each rhyming word you say. Reach the end of the path first and win.

- * Gather objects that share a common short or long vowel sound. For short i, you might lay out a nickel, lid, and lipstick. Have your child try to guess their shared sound. Then, she thinks of a vowel sound and gathers items for you.♥

Parent to Parent Musical books

At a recent holiday party in school, my daughter played a great game—it was like musical chairs, but with books. I decided to use the game at home to motivate my kids to read.



We set chairs in a row, one per player, and put a book under each. I play music while we circle the row. When the song stops, everyone sits and reads the book beneath their seat. After a minute or two, I restart the music and we walk again (we don't take away chairs). If a player gets a new chair, she starts a new book. If she gets the same seat, she picks up where she left off.

Afterward, I add the books to a box labeled "Musical Books." My kids are so curious to find out how all the stories end that I find them reading between games!♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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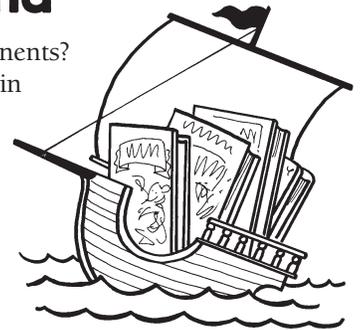
Reading around the world

Would your child love to explore all seven continents? Let him do just that by discovering the continents in the pages of fascinating stories.

You can make it a family challenge to find books that take place on each continent. First, hang a world map on the wall (you can print one from www.world-map.nl/maps/political-world-map-2007.gif).

Then, each time you visit the library, ask your youngster to type a different continent into the database of children's books. He might find *The Perfect Orange* by Frank Araujo (Africa), *The Empty Pot* by Demi (Asia), *Something to Tell the Grandcows* by Eileen Spinelli (Antarctica), and *The Biggest Frog in Australia* by Susan Roth.

After you read each book, your child can put a sticker on the continent on the map. He'll learn more about geography, and he'll also learn to appreciate all kinds of literature.♥



Q&A Learning disability?

Q My first-grader frequently writes words backward. Sometimes they look just like mirror images! Could he have a learning disability?

A When children first learn to write, they sometimes write backward. Most kids outgrow this. But if your son often does it, talk to his teacher.

Ask if she sees any other signs of a learning disability. Is he performing below grade level? Does he struggle to spell new words? Are his skills uneven (he reads well but

struggles with writing, for instance)? If you or the teacher suspect a disability, schedule a meeting to discuss the possibility of testing your child to see if he needs extra help.

In the meantime, work on writing correctly at home. Show him that we write the way we read—from left to right. If he writes backward, ask, "Do you notice anything unusual about that word?" Then, help him correct it.♥

