

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Mexico Academy & Central School District

Everyday activities provide engaging opportunities for reading

To encourage your elementary schooler's interest in reading, mix it into family activities. Make reading part of the fun when you:

- **Visit local sites of interest.**

Then, read a book about your area's history together to learn something new about your town.

- **Talk about foods you love.**

What would be fun to make? Let your child pick a recipe from a cookbook to follow together.

- **Watch or play sports together.**

Then, find books and articles about famous athletes, statistics and training tips.

- **Go for a walk.**

Bring a nature guide. How many flowers, animals, bugs or trees can you both identify?

- **Select a fun craft project**

that requires following instructions. Put your child in charge of reading the directions and leading the activity.



Stand up to the 'fourth-grade slump'

Interest in reading often drops as students move from early elementary school to the upper grades. Some experts say fourth grade tends to be when this starts.

To maintain your child's interest, keep irresistible reading materials around the house, such as:

- **Novels** related to your child's interests.
- **Kid-friendly news articles** and comics.
- **Biographies** of role models.
- **Magazines** about your child's favorite topics.
- **High-quality graphic** (comic) novels.
- **How-to books** about skills your child wants to learn.
- **Books and articles** you'll enjoy—so you can set an example!

Ask your child 'What if?' questions

When children write regularly, they strengthen their vocabulary and reading skills. Try this fun writing challenge to boost your child's literacy skills and creativity:

Ask a few "What if?" questions. Then, have your child write short stories that explain the answers.

To start, ask your child questions like:

- **What if oranges** were purple?
- **What if dogs and cats** could talk?
- **What if everyone** had the same name?



Make reading a late-night treat

Consider letting your elementary schooler stay up at least 10 minutes later at night sometimes to read. Make this treat even more exciting by reading together or giving your child a flashlight to use. You may be surprised to hear, "Please, Mom! Just five more minutes!"



Check in with your child's teacher to learn ways to help

To best support your child's reading progress, talk to the teacher and ask questions such as:

- **Is my child** progressing as expected?
- **What are my child's** biggest strengths and challenges with reading?
- **How can I help** my child at home?



Word games make vocabulary-building fun!

Strengthen your child's vocabulary by having some fun with the dictionary. You can use one that is printed or online. For younger kids, start by explaining how a dictionary works: The entry word is in bold letters. It's followed by one or more definitions and perhaps a sentence or phrase that includes the word.

Then, take turns leading these games:

- **What's the Word?** Read just the definition of a word. Have the other player or players try several times to guess the word. If no one can guess, then tell the word.
- **Guess the Definition.** Find an unusual word in the dictionary. Say the word. Then, read its definition and the definition of another word. Ask the players to guess which is the correct definition for the word you read.



Three steps to strengthen research skills

Elementary students need to learn how to conduct online research safely and effectively. The next time your child needs to research something for a school assignment, share these steps to simplify the process:

1. **Identify key words.** Using specific words (*Mars discovery*), rather than vague ones (*space*) will help your child get more focused results.
2. **Use reliable sources.** Help your child determine if a source is current, appropriate and factual. Websites ending in *.gov* or *.edu* are generally reliable sources.
3. **Take notes.** Whether your child writes key facts on index cards or on a piece of paper, keeping track of information and sources used will help when it's time to write up the research.



Q: My child is not very confident when reading aloud. What can I do to help build my child's confidence?

A: Encourage your child to keep practicing! Regular reading practice can help build elementary schooler's confidence. Offer praise and encouragement for your child's efforts. Focus on progress not perfection by celebrating small victories and avoiding negative criticism. The ultimate goal is to make reading a fun and enjoyable activity for your child.

Enjoy ranking book titles

The next time you visit the library, encourage your child to explore the shelves and find books with interesting titles.

What are your child's top picks and why? Suggest checking them out to see if they live up to your child's expectations!



For lower elementary readers:

- ***A House for Hermit Crab*** by Eric Carle. Hermit Crab outgrows his shell and finds a new home. Kids will relate to the discomfort and value of change.

- ***The Library Gingerbread Man*** by Dotti Enderle. The Gingerbread Man runs away from his home at the library, causing the librarian and several book characters to chase after him.



For upper elementary readers:

- ***A Movie in My Pillow: Una película en mi almohada*** by Jorge Argueta. This collection of poetry is the poet's reflection on his life after he moved from El Salvador to San Francisco.
- ***Bread and Roses, Too*** by Katherine Paterson. During a mill-worker strike in 1912, a young girl must live with another family.

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