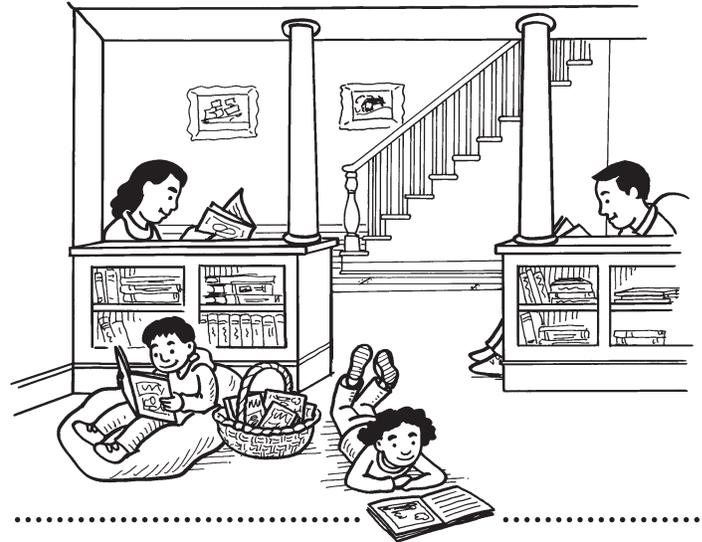


We're a Reading Family!

Your child's teacher knows the secrets to turning little ones into readers. She probably fills classroom shelves with inviting books, reads aloud to the children, and sings songs with them. At home, you can use reading routines to boost your youngster's skills, too. Here are some suggestions.



Sing-alongs

Sing together in the car, during walks, and while you do chores. The rhymes and rhythms of music will help your child notice different sounds in words and make him a better reader. He might like to create silly songs by making up new words for familiar tunes. For example, "I've Been Working on the Railroad" could turn into "I've Been Playing on the Playground." And at the library, look for illustrated songbooks such as *The Itsy Bitsy Spider* (Iza Trapani) or *Five Little Speckled Frogs* (Priscilla Burns). You can sing the song with your youngster as he looks at the pictures. After you finish, ask him to point to words that rhyme and tell you which letters they have in common (*frog* and *log* both end with *og*).

What we're reading

Make a bulletin board called "What Our Family Is Reading." As each person reads a new book, she can write the title and the author's name on a slip of paper and add it to the board. Your child might draw a picture showing what happened in her story. Then, show interest by asking her questions such as "Which character would you like to be?" or "Which one would you want for a friend?" Be sure to tell her about your book, too.



Reading together

Set aside time each evening for silent family reading—you'll help your youngster see reading as a relaxing activity that he can enjoy all his life.

You could read a magazine or novel while your child reads a picture book or chapter book. Or listen to an audiobook together (you can find these at the library or download them from the library website). Encourage your youngster to follow along in the book while everyone listens to the recording.



Read-aloud time

When you read to your child, she learns to associate books with special time with a loved one. Read to her every day as part of an after-school or a bedtime routine. Some nights you might have her choose the story, and other times you can decide. Don't be surprised if she wants the same book over and over—it's comforting for youngsters to hear familiar stories. Plus, she may discover a new word or notice a detail in the story that she overlooked the first or second (or sixth!) time.

continued



The nonfiction habit

Does your child like lizards? Is he curious about knights? During each trip to the library, explore the nonfiction section as well as the fiction area. Your youngster will see that nonfiction is fun, and he'll learn to read for information. At home, let him take his time turning the pages and looking at the different features. You might find that he wants to read every fact box and graphic—that's great! He'll delve into the book's subject, and the habit will help him get ready for textbooks when he's older. *Tip:* Biographies are nonfiction, too, and they're usually in their own section of the library.

Author talk

Before you read a book to your child, read the author's name. Then, try to comment on the person's writing. You could say, "This author picked interesting words" or "I wonder why she told the story from the elephant's point of view." Thinking about

the choices an author makes can teach your youngster techniques to use in her own writing. *Idea:* Suggest that your child check out several books by the same author. She may notice ways the stories are similar and perhaps discover a favorite author or two.

A houseful of books

Putting books in every room of your house shows your child how important you think reading is, and it ensures that there's always something available to read. Have your youngster pick out books to keep beside his bed. These might include favorite bedtime stories, chapter books he can read by himself, and volumes of nursery rhymes and poems. Also, place a basket of books near the kitchen table for reading during snack time and another in the family room to enjoy after school or dinner. *Tip:* Just as you might change household decorations with the seasons, switch the books, too. In autumn, for instance, your child can pick out library books about harvest time or football.

Word of the day

When your youngster reads a book, have her try to find a word she doesn't know. Together, look it up in the dictionary. Then, ask her to write the word and its definition on an index card to hang on the refrigerator. Encourage family members to use the word during conversations. As your child posts a new word, she can put the old one in a jar. At the end of the month, take turns pulling words out of the jar for each other to define and use in a sentence.



Let's spell f-u-n

No matter where you are, it's fun to play word games—and they can make your youngster a better reader. Consider these.

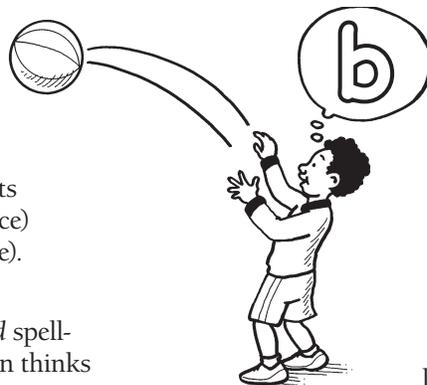
Menu mix-up

When you order food from a restaurant, use this tasty activity to encourage your child to read the menu. Challenge each person to invent dishes by mixing and matching ingredients from menu items. Your youngster might make up combinations that he thinks sound yummy (chicken nuggets topped with melted cheese and spaghetti sauce) or silly (sweet potato fries dipped in hot fudge).

Hoop letters

Your child can practice shooting hoops *and* spelling with this variation of HORSE. Each person thinks

of a five-letter word (*beach, apple*). Pick a spot to shoot from—if you make the basket, say the first letter in your word (*b*), and then the next player shoots from your spot. If she makes it, she gets to pick a spot and say the first letter in her word (*a*). The winner is the first person to spell her word.



License-plate words

In the car, take turns saying the letters on a license plate you see (REH). Together, think of words that contain all of those letters (*her, there, herb*). *Tip:* If you say a word your youngster doesn't know, build his vocabulary by explaining what it means ("An *herb* is a plant we use to add flavor to our food"). Spot a new license plate, and play again.