

Making Reading Fun: Activities to Promote Reading

Brought to you by the editors of *Building Readers*

Reading is critical to your child's success in school and in life, but no one said it couldn't also be a whole lot of fun. If you'd like to keep your child loving all things literary, try a few of these tips:

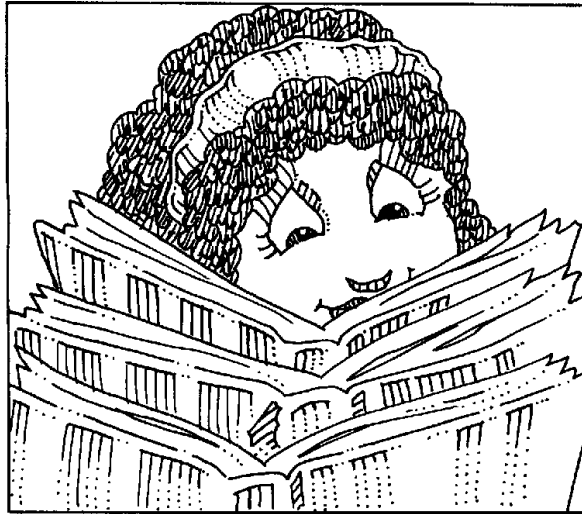
- **Form your own** parent-child book club. Invite some friends to participate, or keep it a simple family affair.

Let your child select a title appropriate for his age and ability, then each of you read it. Afterward, talk about what you liked or disliked, and make plans for your next book.

- **When giving your child** birthday and holiday gifts, try to include at least one book. After awhile, she may even look forward to those flat packages!
- **Don't stop reading** together! Although your child's reading ability will likely improve rapidly as he grows, set aside some special times to read aloud with him.

To keep him interested, pick an engaging chapter book that's slightly more advanced than his current reading level.

- **Have some extra** snapshots lying around? Let your child use them to illustrate a family story. Staple a few sheets of construction paper together to make a book, then encourage her to write a tale about the family. As a finishing touch to her masterpiece, have her glue in the old photos.
- **Make one dinner** each month a "Book Character Dinner." Have everyone come to the table dressed as a favorite figure from a book. With characters like Harry Potter, Laura Ingalls and Madeline all eating together, it's sure to be an interesting meal.



- **Don't let your child** see the movie until AFTER she's read the book!
- **Get more involved** with your local library. Searching for books is wonderful, but many libraries also offer a host of programs to keep kids interested in reading. So see what activities, contests and events your library has planned this month!

- **Invest in a set** of word magnets, especially one geared specifically to children (featuring words like Dinosaur, Magic and Rainbow).

Stick them on the refrigerator, and each time your child comes looking for a snack, he'll end up with a mind full of words.

- **Have a goofy theme** dinner! Take one of your child's favorite book characters (like Stuart Little or Wilbur from *Charlotte's Web*) and serve a dish the character would eat.

For example, little mice sure love cheese. And pigs, well, they'll eat just about anything!

- **Going on a long car trip?** Make sure your child has plenty of books to pass the miles. Old favorites are always a good choice, but a few new titles may postpone cries of "Are we there yet?" coming from the back seat.
- **Have a "No TV Night"** once in awhile. Instead of the family zonking out in front of the tube, pop some popcorn, pour some juice and snuggle up on the couch with a stack of good books.
- **Get your child** in the habit of writing thank-you notes when she receives gifts. Not only does it teach good manners, it also gives her a chance to hone her creative writing skills.

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- **Go on a long walk** around your neighborhood or through the park, and ask your child to write about it. Let him use some dried leaves, blades of grass or feathers from your journey to illustrate the tale.
- **Take a trip** down memory lane! Think about the books you most loved as an elementary schooler, and introduce them to your child. It'll remind you why the classics got to be that way.
- **Expose your child** to different kinds of books. If she always runs straight to the sports section at the library, steer her toward the photography aisle once in awhile.
If she only has eyes for mythology, nudge her toward children's poetry and see what happens.
- **Get cooking!** Let your child read the recipe aloud while you prepare a meal. Not only will he learn some interesting food-related words, he may pick up a few valuable kitchen skills.
- **Surf the Internet** with your child. Despite all the scary stuff out there on the Web, there are also lots of terrific, kid-friendly sites for young readers. If you're not sure where to begin, www.pbs.org and www.nick.com are always safe bets.
- **Make an ABC meal.** Put each letter of the alphabet (leave out X and Z) into a bowl. Then have your child close his eyes and select three of them.
Think of a food that begins with each letter. Then help your child turn them into a literary lunch (or dinner or breakfast).
- **Make one corner** of your home a "reading and writing" area. Fill it with magazines, newspapers, books, crayons, paper and markers. Encourage your child to spend lots of time there.
- **Have your child** create new stories by mixing characters from old ones. Pick a handful of stand-bys, such as Harriet the Spy, Pippi Longstocking and Tom Sawyer. Ask your child to weave a wild tale combining all three.
- **Even if your child** is past the age of taking naps, she's never too old for some quiet book time each day. Whether it's right before bed or just after breakfast, make sure she spends at least a few minutes a day in front of a book instead of the TV.
- **Have your child write his name** in a vertical column. He can use each letter to begin a line of a poem. Or he can think of words that describe his personality. For example, "J is for joyful. E is for energetic. N is for nice."
- **Switch things up a little!** Instead of reading to your child, ask him to read to you. Whether you're stuck together in traffic, fidgeting in the doctor's waiting room or behind an endless line of carts at the grocery store, reading aloud is an excellent way to pass the time.
- **Give an old story** a new ending. When reading your child a well-loved book, surprise him by stopping halfway through and asking him to come up with a different (though still happy) outcome.
- **Get your child hooked** on a series! While she shouldn't completely limit herself to these books, they're a wonderful way to keep her interested in reading.
Since they never really "end," (there's always another edition around the corner), she'll always be curious about what's going to happen next.
- **Plan a reading dinner.** Let each family member bring a book to the table. Allow everyone to read quietly while eating. Then talk about what you've read.
- **Have your child write a story** from an interesting point of view—Groundhog's Day from the groundhog's perspective, for example, or a birthday party from a present's point of view.
- **Cut out an ad** from the newspaper. Have your child cross out the adjectives and replace them with opposites. A large house with fresh paint would become a small house with old paint, for example.
- **Allow your child** to stay up late to read on a weekend. Think of ways to make this extra fun, such as reading by flashlight or making a favorite snack. Then let her sleep late, too.
- **Play "Alphabet Mix-Up."** Let your child choose a word. Together, put its letters in alphabetical order. Now put them back in the right order.
- **Make up a secret code** with your child. A number might stand for each letter, for example. Use the code to write notes to each other.
- **Play an animal alphabet game.** Try to think of one animal that starts with each letter of the alphabet. The only letter you can leave out is x.
- **Think of onomatopoeias** with your child. These are words that sound like what they mean. Here are some examples: buzz, smash, hiss and thump.