

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

October 2020

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ *Doggy Defenders: Willow the Therapy Dog* (Lisa M. Gerry)

Some dogs have incredible jobs helping people, and Willow is one of them. This nonfiction book follows a therapy dog named Willow through her day at work. She spreads cheer in a hospital and a retired veterans' home, and she even "reads" with children at a library. Part of the Doggy Defenders series.



■ *Hair Like Mine*

(LaTashia M. Perry)

A little girl thinks her hair is too curly and frizzy, and she struggles to find someone with hair like hers. With guidance from her mother, who insists that no two people have the same hair, face, or toes, the girl learns about the value of differences.

■ *The One Day House*

(Julia Durango)

This is the heart-warming story of a young boy named Wilson and his older neighbor, Gigi. When Gigi's house desperately needs repairs, Wilson wants to make it nicer for her. Thanks to caring friends and neighbors, he gets his wish faster than he imagined. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *Ronan the Librarian*

(Tara Luebbe and Becky Cattie)

No legendary barbarian wants to read a book ... right? That's what Ronan the Barbarian thinks until he finds a book in his raided treasure. He loves the book so much that he teaches his fellow barbarians to enjoy reading, too.



Make time for reading

Any time is a great time for your child to read! Here's how to fit more reading into busy days.

Check the weather

Invite your youngster to be the family weather reporter. Each evening, she can read tomorrow's forecast in the newspaper or on your phone's weather app. Encourage her to use weather symbols, such as raindrops or suns, if she needs a little help figuring out the words. Soon she'll recognize words like *rainy* and *sunny* right away.



math practice, she could read the numbers and fractions in the recipe, too.

Explore recipes

When you cook, let your child read the recipe with you. Make it easier by having her get out the ingredients. Hearing you say potatoes or cheese, finding the item, and maybe seeing the word on the package will help her as she sounds out the words in the recipe. *Tip:* For

Listen to audiobooks

While you're working from home or running errands, your youngster can enjoy books independently. Download audiobooks and check out print versions of the same books from the library. She can follow along with the story as she turns the pages and perhaps learn to recognize new words. ♥

Write to keep in touch

"Will you be my pen pal?" With this idea, your youngster can write friendly letters and stay close to loved ones.

Together, ask a relative to be your child's pen pal. Explain that your youngster is learning to write—and they can help! Then, let your child pick out stationery or search online for "free stationery printables kids."

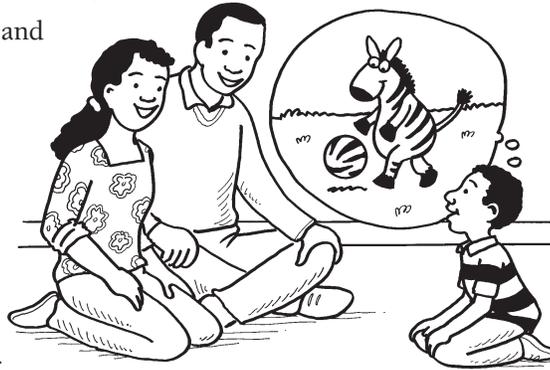
Now help your youngster write a greeting ("Dear Aunt Lori"). Underneath, he could write about or draw pictures of activities he's been doing, like roller skating or caring for his new kitten. He should also ask his pen pal questions. ("How is your job?") When your relative writes back, you and your child can read the letter—and write a reply. ♥



What sounds do you hear?

Sounds and syllables are like the nuts and bolts of words. Call your youngster's attention to word parts with these activities that will help him grow into a strong reader.

Swap the sound. With your youngster, think of a word family, or a group of words with the same "last name" (for example, *-all*). Now take turns saying a word with that ending (*fall, wall*). If you say a nonsense word (*zall*), ask your child to make up a silly definition. "Zall: A black-and-white striped ball that zebras play with!"



Blend the consonants. Have your youngster put these letter tiles or magnetic letters into a bag: B, C, E, G, H, L, P, R, S, T, and W. He can pull out two letters (perhaps S and P), then help him try to blend them and say a word that includes the blended sound (*spider*). If the sounds can't be blended, like B and T, he should put them back and pull out new letters.

Subtract a syllable. Say a familiar word that has more than one syllable, such as *pumpkin* or *television*. Now encourage your youngster to take away one or more of the syllables: "If you take *pump* out of *pumpkin*, what do you have left?" (Answer: *kin*.) What happens if he "subtracts" vision from *television*? (He'll have *tele*.)♥

Fun with Words

Sensational writing tools

Put down your pencils! Your child can practice forming letters and words with these fun-to-touch materials.

Sugar

Let your youngster spread a thin layer of sugar on a baking sheet. Then, she could write each letter of the alphabet with her finger.



Paint

Have your child dip her finger in paint and write on construction paper. She might write the color word that matches each color of paint she uses, like yellow for yellow paint.

Soil

Your youngster will get fresh air and enjoy nature by writing outside. Help her find a stick and a patch of soil. She could etch words in the dirt, perhaps to list things she sees outdoors (*birds, clouds*).♥



Q&A

Don't forget the spaces!

Q When my daughter writes, a whole sentence sometimes looks like one long word. How can I get her to put spaces between words?

A Ask her to read her writing out loud so she can "hear" the spaces. As she reads, have her draw a vertical line where she thinks each space should be.

You can also show her spaces in books. Pick a sentence, and ask her to count the words. She'll need to pay attention to the spaces to figure out how many words there are.

Finally, encourage her to use her finger as a "space bar" by laying it on her paper after she writes each word. It will show her how much space to leave before she begins the next word. Or let her decorate a craft stick with stickers and use that as a space bar.♥



Parent to Parent

Play library—at home

My son Elijah and I missed our weekly visits when the pandemic closed down our library. So he came up with the idea to play library at home, which has given us a nice way to talk about books.

First, Elijah made library cards for all of us. To play, we place books around our living room and use the coffee table as the checkout counter. Sometimes Elijah is the librarian. He recommends

books for me, "scans" them at the checkout, and leads story hour. Other times, we trade roles. After we finish playing, we put the books back on the shelf in alphabetical order, just like real librarians do.

We're enjoying library time even when we're not at the actual library, and Elijah is learning to think critically about books to give good recommendations.♥



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Read-aloud favorites



■ *Big Red Lollipop* (Rukhsana Khan)

Rubina is excited about going to a birthday party. But then her mother insists that her little sister Sana tag along, and Sana eats Rubina's party favor! Later, when Sana is invited to a party, she makes it up to Rubina. Based on a true story from the author's childhood.



■ *The Secret Explorers and the Lost Whales* (SJ King)

A diverse group of young adventurers must rescue a pod of humpback whales in this first book of the Secret Explorers series. Your child will learn facts about whales as marine-life expert Connor and his fellow explorers try to successfully complete their mission.



■ *How to Read a Book*

(Kwame Alexander)
This vivid picture book presents reading as an experience to savor. It begins with suggestions for finding a great spot to read, compares opening a book to peeling a juicy clementine, and encourages readers to take their time and enjoy every word.

■ *Good Night, Mr. Panda/Buenos Noches, Sr. Panda* (Steve Antony)

Mr. Panda is ready for bed, but each of his friends has forgotten to complete a task in their nighttime routine. As he reminds them what to do, he realizes that he can make an occasional

mistake, too. This bilingual English-Spanish book is part of the Mr. Panda series.



A growing vocabulary

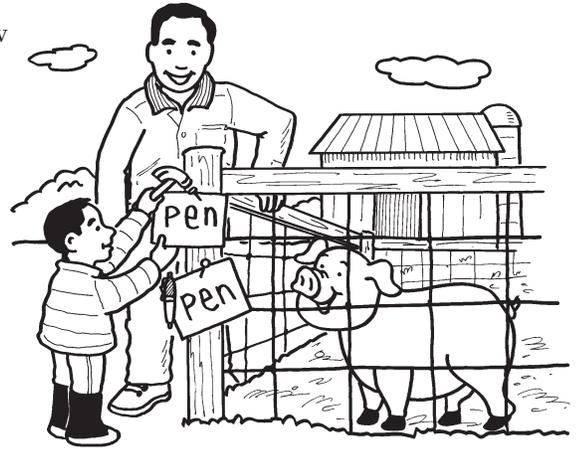
Hearing, learning, and using new words can make them a permanent part of your youngster's vocabulary. Try these strategies to increase the number of words he knows.

Weave in words

When you talk with your child, try using a few words he may not know. If you're gardening together, you could say, "These beets are a nice color. Can you think of anything else that's *magenta*?" or "The sky is *overcast* today. Look at all those clouds." Hearing new words on a regular basis will naturally expand his vocabulary.

Draw pictures

Illustrating new words will make it easier for your youngster to remember them. When he hears one (say, *parched*), tell him what it means (very thirsty), or look it up in a dictionary together. Then, help him write the word on a sheet of paper and suggest that he draw a picture. For *parched*, he might draw himself reaching for a big glass of water. *Idea*: Suggest that he staple his drawings



together to make his own vocabulary booklet.

Multiple meanings

Pick an everyday word that has two totally different meanings, such as *pen* (a writing tool or a place for pigs). Say one definition, and ask your child to come up with the other. *Additional ideas*: *ball* (a round toy or a big dance), *star* (a shining object in the sky or a celebrity), *foot* (a unit of measurement and a body part). How many can your youngster think of?♥

Write an ode

Your child can show gratitude during the Thanksgiving season—and enjoy writing poetry at the same time—with this activity.

Explain that an ode is a poem that expresses emotion toward a person, place, or thing. Ask who or what she's thankful for. She might choose a grandparent or a teacher, or perhaps your home or dog. Have her think of what she appreciates about the person or object.

Now help your youngster write the ode as if she's addressing the person or object—and include specific details she's grateful for. *Example*: "Oh, Grandma / How I love your silly jokes! / Your smile is always bright / Playing games with you makes my night."♥



Explore plot patterns

Predictable books follow a pattern—and noticing patterns can help your child follow the story. Here are popular patterns along with craft projects that will boost your youngster's comprehension.

Repetitive story. Read a book with a repeated refrain, such as *It Looked Like Spilt Milk* (Charles G. Shaw). Afterward, your youngster could glue cotton balls on blue paper to show each cloud in the book. Have her repeat



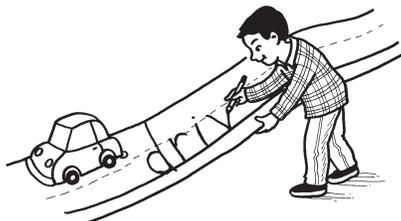
the refrain—“Sometimes it looked like”—and point to each cloud. Also try: *Goodnight Moon* (Margaret Wise Brown), *The Little Red Hen*, and *The Gingerbread Man*.

Circular plot. These stories end the same way they began. Read *If You Give a Moose a Muffin* (Laura Numeroff), and help your child make a paper chain. On separate strips of paper, she can draw and label something the moose was given. Have her tape the ends of each strip together, linking all the loops in a circle. Now she can use the chain to tell the story. Also try: *The Mitten* (Jan Brett), *The Relatives Came* (Cynthia Rylant), and *Stephanie's Ponytail* (Robert Munsch).♥

Q&A Lowercase first?

Q When I was in school, we learned to print capital letters first. Why is my son starting with lowercase letters?

A Lowercase letters appear more frequently in books than capital letters. And since learning to write letters also teaches your child to recognize them, knowing the more common ones first will make reading easier.



The trickiest part of writing lowercase letters is remembering where to write different parts of each letter.

Try this: Draw a “road” (with a dotted line between two solid lines) and add a line below it for the road’s “shoulder.” Now your son can write letters with each part in its own “lane.” For *d*, he would put the circle under the dotted line and the stick extending to the top solid line. And for *p*, the stick would go down to the shoulder.♥



Parent to Parent

Reading diverse books

My daughter Andrea recently found a library book about a little girl whose family came from Guatemala—just like ours. Andrea seemed proud and excited to recognize Spanish words sprinkled throughout the book and to see pupusas on the family's dinner table.

I asked the librarian for more books with Spanish-speaking characters. She was happy to help, and said children feel comforted and valued when characters remind them of themselves. The librarian also explained that kids learn to appreciate diversity when they read about characters whose lives are different from their own.

Thanks to this advice, Andrea and I have also read books about families from Mexico, Peru, Nigeria, and Japan. My daughter is discovering that she has a lot in common with children who speak or eat differently than she does—from the games they play to the way their parents tuck them in at night.♥



Fun with Words

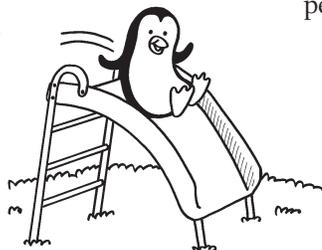
Terrific tongue twisters

Tongue twisters are tricky-talking-tremendous teachers! They help your child hear sounds in words and pronounce words more clearly. Here's how he can say and create his own tongue twisters.

1. Recite familiar tongue twisters such as “How much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?” Ask your youngster to tell you what sounds are repeated (*w* and *ch*).

2. Together, brainstorm a list of words that start with the same sound, like *penguin*, *park*, and *purple*.

3. Now your child can use the words to make up a tongue twister. (“The playful penguin went to the park to play on the purple playground.”) Have a silly time together saying his tongue twisters. What a fun way for him to hear and say the sounds!♥



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