

Stepping stones

Igniting a love for reading

Kids who read more likely to succeed

There's no denying it: Learning to read well at a young age pays dividends for a lifetime. According to a report by the National Center for Educational Statistics, students who read for pleasure every day scored almost 10 percent higher on proficiency tests than children who don't. Parents can play a vital role in instilling a love of reading in your child that lasts a lifetime. You'll not only help them succeed in the long-run, but you might rediscover a book you loved from your own childhood. The following ideas come from educators and parents who are working to raise passionate readers.

Read aloud to your child every day

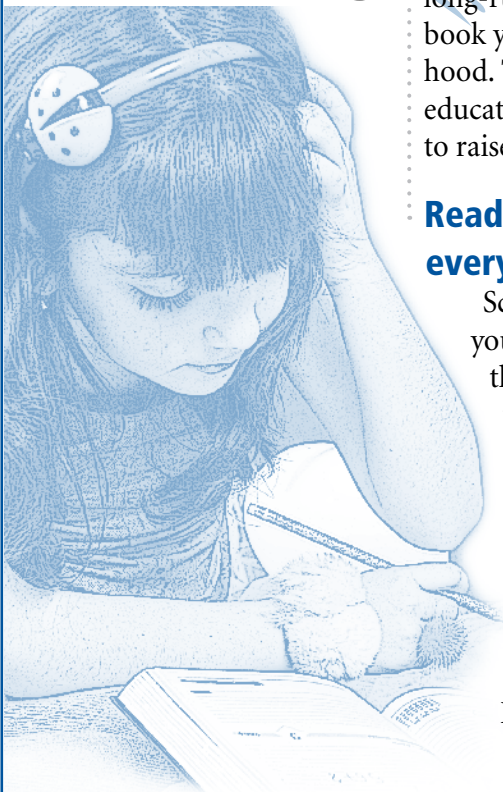
Schedule a time every day with your child to share an adventure in the world of a book. It's important to be relaxed and unhurried, so aim for a time when you're fully available without distractions whenever possible. If you have more than one child, try to spend time reading with each one separately because their interests will likely be different. Busy schedules can still be flex-

ible to allow time for reading. Consider bringing a bag of books along when you and your children run errands. You can read together (out loud or to yourselves) while waiting for an appointment, and your children can explore the books you've brought while you are busy with other things.

Read it right

Take time to read the story well. If you're not into it or you think a story is boring, your child can tell. Don't be afraid to use different voices for characters or inject emotion in the story to bring out the drama. If you read without enthusiasm, your child will lose interest. If reading becomes a chore or even a source of stress, it will have the opposite effect you're looking for. Pay attention to your pace, and pause regularly to give your child time to take in the story and apply his imagination to the people and places. It's a good idea to ask questions as you go, and to check in with your child to make sure he's following the plot. Talking about the story as you go can help keep young readers engaged and can encourage them to formulate ideas about the story.

(Continue on page 2)



tips for building your library:

- ▶ Organize a book swap with friends or groups at school.
- ▶ Encourage family members and friends to give books as presents on birthdays and holidays.
- ▶ Help your child arrange books in a particular order.
- ▶ Pick a special place in your child's room or near places where the family gathers.
- ▶ A cardboard box or packing crate that you can decorate together makes a good bookcase.

Love for reading *(Continue from page 1)*

Create a home library with many different types of written materials.

It's important to surround your child with interesting reading material she can pick-up when the mood strikes. And starting a home library shows your child how important reading is to you. It's not difficult to find used books at yard sales, flea markets, and book stores – including copies of the classics. When you're building a home library, make sure you pick out a place you both like to store the books, and teach your child to respect and care for them.

Walk the talk

If your child sees you and the rest of your family reading regularly – for enjoyment, for information or to perform a task (such as following a recipe or programming the DVD player from instructions) – you are a positive role model for your children and are showing them how reading has real-life usefulness.

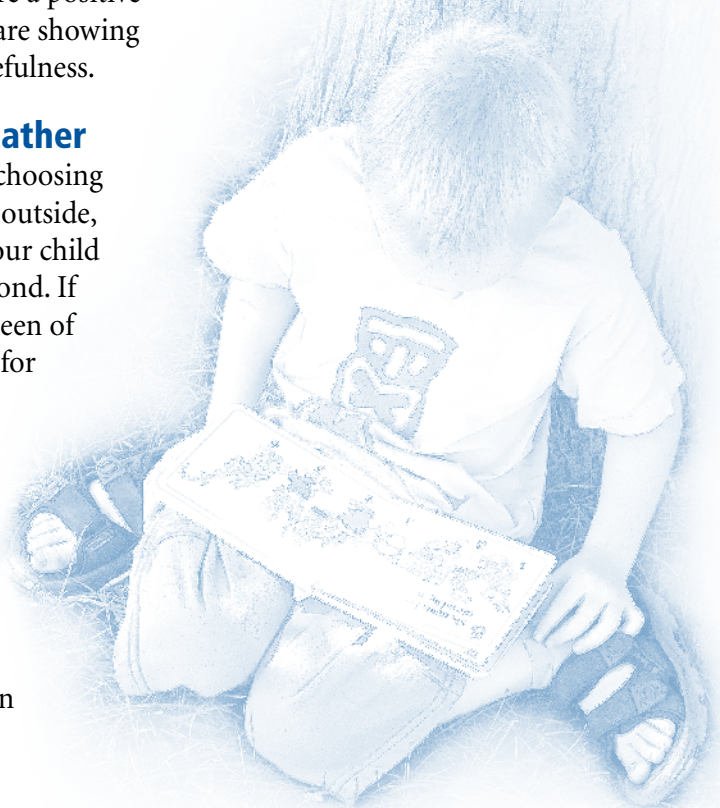
Take advantage of the weather

Spark your child's interests by choosing books that fit the day. If it's warm outside, it's the perfect time for you and your child to read under a tree or next to a pond. If it's cold and snowy, try "Stella, Queen of Snow," by Marie-Louise Gay. And for cloudy and rainy days, try "The Rainy Day," by Anna Milbourne or "City of Ember" by Jeanne DuPrau. When Halloween is close, you can opt for "Big Pumpkin," by Erika Silverman, or any number of other seasonal books for young readers that your local library is sure to have on its shelves.

Tap into your child's interests

When you read aloud to your child, choose a book you both like. If it seems boring, ask your child if he would prefer to hear a different story. The same applies for choosing books your child plans to read alone. When your child is developing her own preferences for reading materials (finding favorite authors, genres, and styles), you should allow and encourage her to tell you what books she wants to read. Recently, many parents credit the "Diary of a Wimpy Kid," series by Jeff Kinney for turning their children into eager readers. The Internet is packed with stories about children who were frustrated readers until they started reading these books.

Your librarian can help suggest other topical books that might interest your child, or ask for ideas from other parents and children, or a clerk in the children's section of your local bookstore.



Although many of the books children read are fiction, non-fiction books can also be a terrific way for them to learn what is meaningful to them.

Websites such as *Kidsreads.com* provide excellent resources for learning more about literary classics – from 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea to Harry Potter. Topical books on pirates, snowboarding, jungle animals and more can be just the thing to hold the interest of younger children who are interested in specific topics but who haven't yet developed independent reading skills.

Get interactive

If your child likes to spend time on the computer, you can help make it an educational experience. Innovative series such as *39 Clues* (a series of adventure books combining reading, gaming and card collecting) published by Scholastic are becoming valuable resources for parents who are trying to instill a love of reading in their children.

Try movies, plays and books on tape

If you are leaving on a road trip or vacation, you may want to see what tapes are available from your local library. Many books for children have been turned into movies (think "Ramona and Beezus" or "Charlotte's Web," for example) or recorded as books on tape – available at school and local libraries. Likewise, check out performances by high school or community theater groups. Family event listings in the local paper often include information about these types of performances. With reluctant readers, stories in these forms may be just what they need to spark an interest in picking up the book (or tackling the next in a series). This can also be a fun way for children who have already read the book to experience the story from a different perspective.

Other fun ways to encourage reading

1 Buy books where your child's name appears

Many children like to see their name in print.

2 Play the game

Games such as Scrabble or Boggle not only help families spend quality time together, they also encourage the whole family to play interactively with words. If your children like to play and compete, they'll want to read more to increase their vocabulary.

3 Share the books you grew up loving or look for today's equivalent

If you grew-up reading "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory," "The Polar Express," or "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," there's a good chance your child will love them, too. They will be able to tell that you're interested in the story and that enthusiasm can rub off.

4 Write messages for your children and ask them to write to you, too

Notes in lunchboxes, lists of responsibilities and posting important activities and events on calendars can encourage your children to read for meaning. Writing back to you or other family members and friends gives them real-life ways to use all the new words they are learning.

5 Get cooking.

Some kid-friendly cookbooks to look to for inspiration are the "Magic Spoon Cookbook" by Suzanne Gooding and Emeril's, "There's a Chef in My Soup." In the latter, children can learn to cook baby bam burgers and sweet potato-praline marshmallow casserole, among other dishes.

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4

Resources for Parents

Books

Raising Bookworms

by Emma Walton Hamilton

Story Time Crafts for Kids Volume 1

by Holly Adler

How to Get Your Child to Love Reading: For Raven- ous and Reluctant Readers Alike

by Esmé Raji Codell

Reading Magic: Why Reading Aloud to Our Children Will Change Their Lives Forever

by Mem Fox

The Read-Aloud Handbook

by Jim Trelease

Hey! Listen to This: Stories to Read Aloud

by Jim Trelease

Understanding Reading: A Psycholinguistic Analysis of Reading and 39 Clues

available at www.scholastic.com

Web

Reading for Beginners

(<http://www.education.com/topic/learning-to-read/>)

Reading is Fundamental

(<http://www.rif.org/parents/>)

Help My Child Read

(<http://www.ed.gov/parents/read/resources/edpicks.jhtml>)

Reading Tips for Parents

(www2.ed.gov/parents/read/resources/readingtips/part_pg2.html#2)

Developing Reading Skills in Young Children

(<http://www.greatschools.org>) Type "Developing Reading Skills in Young Children" into the search box in the upper right of the page. Then choose the first article listed.

Promoting Reading at Home

(www.atyourlibrary.org/interactive-ways-encourage-your-children-read)

Literacy Begins at Home

(<http://literacyconnections.com/LiteracyBeginsAtHome.php>)

Parents: Keep Informed

Sign Up For South Colonie's School News Notifier Today

Don't forget to take a moment and sign up for South Colonie's "School News Notifier" (SNN), a system designed to help keep parents more in touch with what is happening at South Colonie Central Schools. SNN is an opt-in email alert system for which parents and residents can sign up to receive email alerts from the district. With SNN, district officials have the power to send updates and reminders about district activities or information about school closings and delays. Users can choose to receive any or all of the alerts, and they can unsubscribe at any time. Sign up today by clicking on the SNN icon on the South Colonie web site.



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