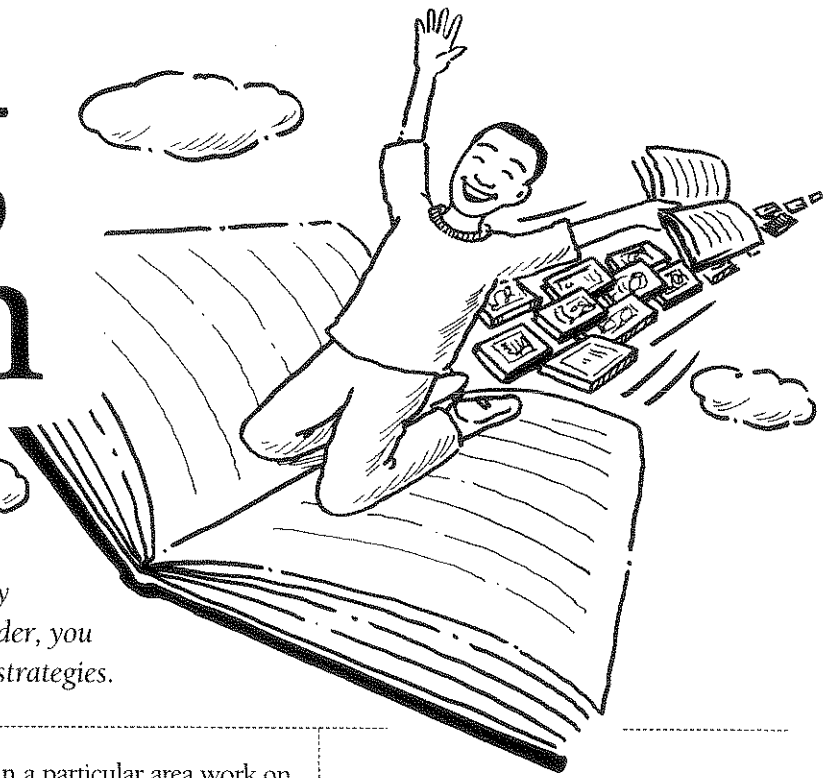


# Reading to Learn



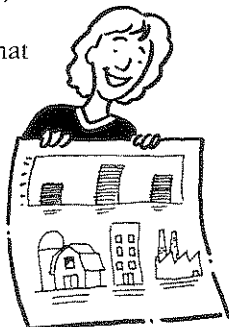
Reading may seem like a quiet activity, but good readers do many things as they read. Sometimes intermediate readers are not aware of all the skills they need to gain deep and lasting meaning from what they read. Whether your child is a strong or struggling reader, you can help improve his understanding by sharing these strategies.

## Use your senses

Successful readers experience what they read through seeing, hearing, and other senses. The next time your youngster struggles with a reading passage, try the following activities to help him boost his understanding using his senses:

▣ Read part of a paragraph aloud, and challenge your child to act it out as you read. Here's one to try: "He got off the chair and drew himself up to his full height. Peering down his nose at me, he asked, 'Is this how you treat all your friends?'" Then, try changing "Peering down his nose at me" to "Winking at me," and ask your youngster to show you how the meaning changes.

▣ Complicated processes or descriptions can be transformed into a map or a graph to improve your youngster's understanding. Suggest that she create a drawing to show a process such as photosynthesis. Or she could graph statistics. Example: how



many people in a particular area work on a farm, in an office, or in an industry.

## Check understanding

Skilled readers recognize when they don't understand what they've read. They know how to use strategies to make the meaning clearer, such as figuring out unfamiliar words and rereading. Here are two ways you can teach your child these important skills:

▣ Encourage your youngster to create her own dictionary. When she comes across a word she doesn't know, have her write down the sentence containing the new word in a small notebook. Challenge her to guess what the word means and write her definition under the sentence. Then, she can check her guess by looking up the word in a dictionary and adding the actual definition to her personal dictionary.

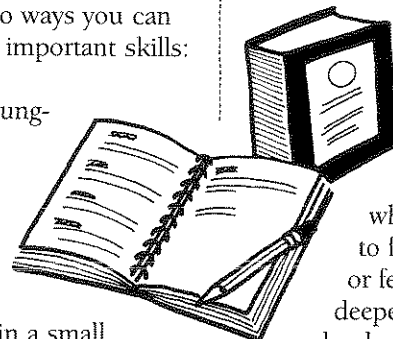
▣ Read the same book your child is reading, and add a letter-writing twist. Instead of discussing the book out loud, write to each other about the book. Write comments in a spiral

notebook that you pass back and forth. As you write, ask your youngster questions to see how well he understood the book. Example: "I thought the uncle had a good reason to be angry. What do you think?" If your child isn't sure how to answer, suggest that he go back and read the text again.

## Make reading real

Readers understand new information best when they can relate it to familiar objects, events, or feelings. Help your child deepen her connection to books with these ideas:

▣ Similes are a fun way for your youngster to compare new information to something she already knows. For example, if she's reading a chapter in her science book on volcanoes, ask her to complete the following sentence: "A volcano is like \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_." She might say, "A volcano is like a whistling teapot because it releases lava to let out pressure inside the



continued

earth.” Then, try the same exercise for describing characters or a plot. Your child may come up with, “This story is like a roller-coaster ride. It’s scary, then calm, and then scary again.”

Help your child connect what he reads to the world around him. For instance, if he’s reading a book about a character who is being bullied, you might talk about how people who are picked on because they are different often feel left out. Then, challenge your youngster to look for articles in the newspaper on the same topic. Perhaps he will find an article on discrimination or one about how an organization helps the disabled.

## Look ahead

All readers guess what might be coming next in a story, even if they aren’t aware of doing it. When a skilled reader picks up a newspaper, he knows it will include facts. His expectations change when he reads a play or a novel. Increase your youngster’s anticipation—and interest in reading—by helping him guess what comes next:

Make a list of the important words in your child’s next textbook reading assignment. For a chapter on air pollution, you might come up with words like “smog,” “asthma,” and “cancer.” Then, ask your youngster to tell you what the chapter will be about by looking at the list of words. Have him read the chapter to see if he was correct.

Let your child choose a short story or magazine article to read aloud. After each paragraph, ask her questions to help her make predictions.



*Examples:* “Based on what the little girl said, what do you think she might do next?” “What will happen if she doesn’t listen to her mother?” “How do you think the story will end?” Remind your child that the goal is to make logical predictions based on what she has already read, not to guess everything correctly.

## Make judgments

Is everything that you read true? Absolutely not. A strong reader questions what she’s reading and is alert to clues that tell her whether to trust the information or not. The following activities encourage critical thinking, a valuable skill for readers of all ages:

Before your child reads the next book on her favorite subject, show her how to determine if the information is reliable. Can she find the publication date? (Older books might not contain the latest facts.) Is there a description of the author? Is the writer an expert on the subject, or just reporting what he learned?

Next, go to a Web page and help your youngster find the date it was last updated. Look for the “About” link to see who created the site. Does she think the information is trustworthy? Why or why not?



Help your youngster form opinions about what he reads by asking him questions. For example, you might ask, “What do you think is the most important word in this chapter?” or “Which character is the most—or least—believable? Why?” Remind your child that opinion questions do not have a right or wrong answer. Encourage him to give reasons for his answers.

# Reading Q&A's

You know how important it is for your child to be a good reader. But it is not always easy to know if your youngster's skills are where they should be—or if he has any learning problems that could interfere with his success.

Below are answers to some of the common questions that parents ask about their children's reading ability.



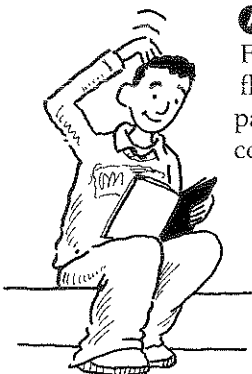
## Q How can I tell if my child comprehends what she is reading?

A After your child finishes a short story or a chapter in a longer book, talk to her about what she has read. Ask questions, such as “What is the main character like?” “What happened in that chapter?” and “What do you think will happen next?” Also, look over her homework assignments to see if she understands what she has read.

## Q What should my youngster be able to read by now?

A Children in upper elementary through beginning middle grades should be able to easily follow the plot of age-appropriate fiction. They should also be able to use nonfiction books, such as encyclopedias and class textbooks, to find information for school reports.

## Q How can I tell if my child is making progress with his reading?



A There are several signs to look for. First, consider whether he is reading fluently (see “Helpful Definitions” on page 2). Second, is he able to read and comprehend fiction, as well as textbooks and handouts for subjects other than reading, such as social studies and science? Does he seem to enjoy reading, or consider it a chore? Be patient if your youngster doesn't read at the highest level in the class, but do look for signs of progress.

## Q What kinds of books should I steer my child toward?

A Children this age tend to love series, where they get to know the characters and follow their adventures. Try the Magic School Bus and the Encyclopedia Brown series. This is

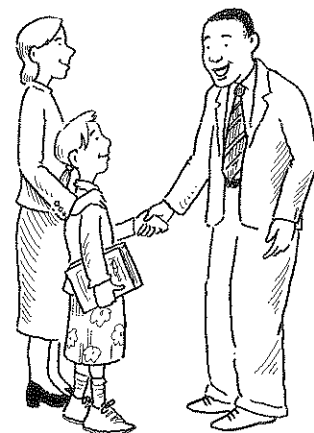
also a good age for discovering poetry. Kids often get a kick out of humorous poetry from authors such as Shel Silverstein and Jack Prelutsky.

## Q How can I help my youngster choose books that are appropriate to her reading level?

A Enlist the help of the school media specialist or the children's librarian at your local library. They usually have book lists on hand, and by discussing your youngster's interests, you'll be able to find books targeted especially to her. You can also find lists online. Examples: Notable Children's Books at [www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alsc/awardsgrants/notalists/nch](http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alsc/awardsgrants/notalists/nch); Children's Book Awards at <http://people.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/awards.html>; Children's Choices at [www.reading.org/Resources/Booklists/ChildrensChoices.aspx](http://www.reading.org/Resources/Booklists/ChildrensChoices.aspx).

## Q What should I do if I suspect a problem?

A The first and most important step is recognizing the problem. Bring it to the attention of your child's teacher. The teacher will probably refer your youngster to a school educational team, which typically includes teachers, reading specialists, special educators, and school administrators. The team will evaluate your child's abilities and, if necessary, conduct diagnostic tests.



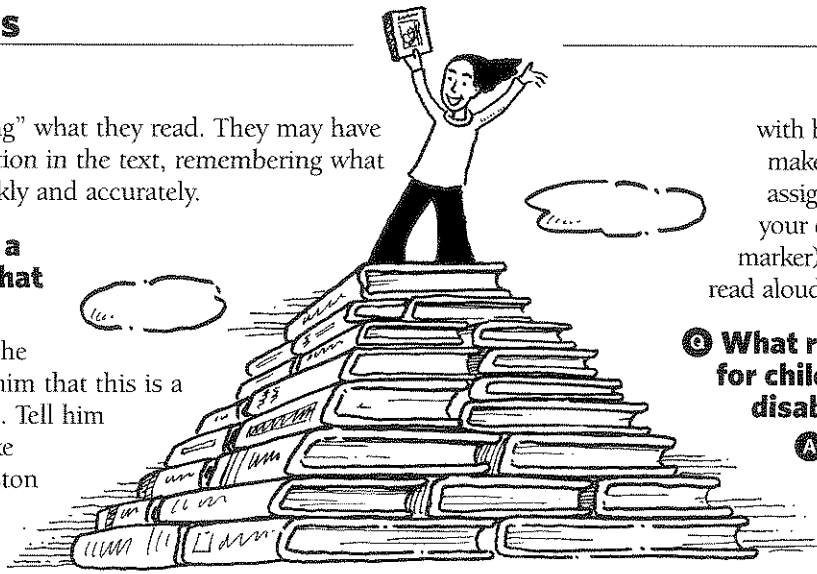
## Q What are the most typical reading problems?

A Dyslexia is the most common reading disability. Youngsters with dyslexia have problems with word recognition and spelling. Another common reading disability causes children

to have trouble “processing” what they read. They may have problems finding information in the text, remembering what they read, or reading quickly and accurately.

**Q My youngster has a reading disability. What can I do to help him?**

**A** Support your child as he makes progress. Remind him that this is a problem he can overcome. Tell him about famous people—like Muhammad Ali and Winston Churchill—who had reading disabilities and went on to be great successes. *Tip:* Check out the amusing Hank Zipzer series by actor Henry Winkler (who has dyslexia) about a fourth-grade boy with learning problems—and unusual creativity. To help



with homework, try these strategies: make enlarged photocopies of assignments and book pages; have your child highlight (with a yellow marker) words he knows by sight; read aloud along with him.

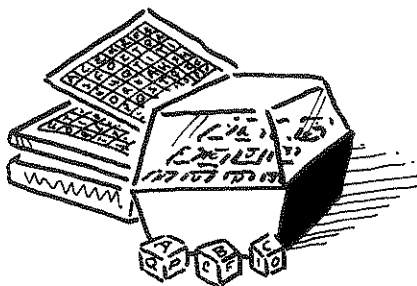
**Q What resources are available for children with reading disabilities?**

**A** You can find a list of helpful organizations at [www.idonline.org/ldresources/help.html](http://www.idonline.org/ldresources/help.html). Contact the International Dyslexia

Association at 410-296-0232 ([www.interdys.org](http://www.interdys.org)) or the National Center for Learning Disabilities at 212-545-7510 ([www.nclld.org](http://www.nclld.org)).

**10 ways to help your child be a better reader**

1. Fill your house with books, magazines, comic books, newspapers—any and all reading materials. A few ideas: Put the newspaper next to your youngster’s breakfast in the morning. Use cookbooks together to make dinner. Stack books by your child’s bed. Leave magazines in the bathroom.
2. Visit the library regularly. Make a date to get new books and return the old ones every two to three weeks.
3. Organize a parent/child neighborhood book club. Parents read and discuss one book while children read and discuss another. Come together for snacks at the end.
4. Even though your youngster is getting older, bedtime reading does not have to end. Continue reading aloud each night, but with a twist: Take turns reading a page or a chapter.
5. Play games that involve reading, such as Scrabble or Boggle. Encourage crossword puzzles and other word games.
6. Turn computer time into reading time by suggesting that your youngster read news and information online or play computer word games.
7. Make time to talk about what your child is reading. Talk about what you’re reading, too.
8. Have a family reading hour. Schedule a “no TV” reading date every few days.
9. Let your child choose reading material that interests her. Whether it’s fiction, comic books, or baseball cards, a youngster who follows her heart will read more often and with more pleasure.
10. Praise your child for reading!



**HELPFUL DEFINITIONS**

**Reading fluency**

Fluency is the ability to read accurately and quickly—recognizing words automatically—so your child understands what she reads. When children read word by word (without fluency), they tend to focus on how each word sounds rather than on what the whole text means. Ask your youngster to read a page out loud to you. Does she read it smoothly? Does she read with expression, indicating that she understands what she’s reading?

**Phonemic awareness**

Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear the individual sounds—phonemes—that make up words. In English, 44 sounds are used to form about 1 million words. Children need to recognize these sounds so they can put them together into words as they read.

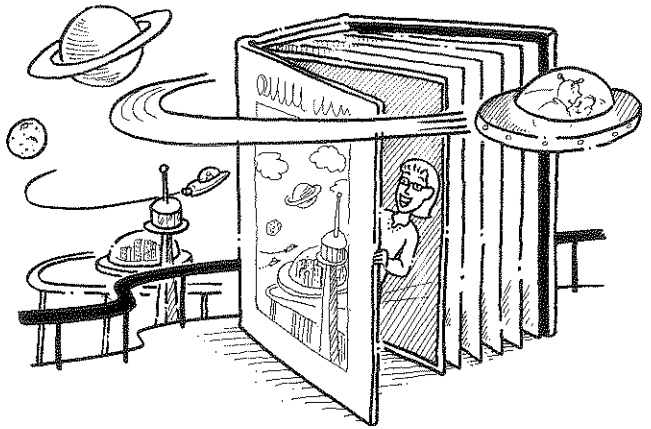
**Phonics**

Phonics is the relationship between written letters and spoken sounds. When youngsters learn the sounds that individual letters and groups of letters make—and the relationships between those letters and sounds—they can recognize familiar words automatically and “decode” words they don’t know.

# Books Older Kids Love

An army of whales, a secret kingdom in the woods, a stolen painting ... Did you know that the right books can unlock a whole new world of learning for your child?

From adventure, mystery, and coming-of-age stories to fantasy tales and nonfiction, these titles will capture your youngster's imagination and provide valuable lessons along the way.



## Adventure

**Ivanhoe** by Sir Walter Scott

With England on the verge of civil war, a humble knight named Ivanhoe takes up the cause of King Richard I. This kid-friendly book in the Great Illustrated Classics series captures the spirit of the Middle Ages, complete with jousting tournaments, romance, epic battles, and a quest for honor.

**My Side of the Mountain** by Jean Craighead George

Kids often threaten to run away from home, but in this book, Sam Gribbley is serious. Leaving New York City for the Catskill Mountains, Sam makes a home in a



hollowed-out tree and learns to live off the land, eating turtle soup and acorn pancakes.

Blizzards and hunters test his survival skills. Will Sam return to his home in the city? (Available in Spanish.)

**Whales on Stilts! M. T. Anderson's Thrilling Tales** by M. T. Anderson

In this humorous adventure story, Lily and her two best friends are determined to prove that Lily's dad works for a mad scientist who's trying to take over the world. When no one—not even her father—believes the boss is creating an army of 30-foot-tall whales on stilts, the friends take matters into their own hands.

## Coming-of-Age

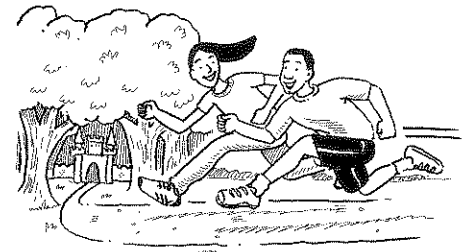
**Because of Winn-Dixie** by Kate DiCamillo

After adopting a big, scruffy dog she found in a supermarket, 10-year-old Opal makes friends in her new town. She also learns more about her mother, who abandoned her when she was three. Readers will love the colorful characters and

humor as Opal copes with disappointment and loneliness. (Available in Spanish.)

**Bridge to Terabithia** by Katherine Paterson

Jess's dream to run faster than anyone in the fifth grade is dashed when a new girl in town outruns him. But the two neighbors begin an unlikely friendship as they create their own imaginary kingdom in the woods. When tragedy strikes, Jess's world changes forever. (Available in Spanish.)



**Dear Mr. Henshaw**

by Beverly Cleary

In this story, Leigh is the new kid in town. His parents are separated, and a school lunch thief is always taking his favorite snacks. To deal with his problems, he writes to a famous author who surprises him by writing back and helping him learn to handle his problems. (Available in Spanish.)

## Fantasy/Science Fiction

**The BFG** by Roald Dahl

Children and adults alike will enjoy the black-and-white illustrations sprinkled through this story about a "big friendly giant" (BFG). One night, the BFG kidnaps young Sophie from the orphanage and takes her off to Giantland, where his evil brothers hatch a terrible plot. Will the BFG save Sophie? (Available in Spanish.)

**The Last of the Really Great Whangdoodles**

by Julie Andrews Edwards

Three children on a trip to the zoo meet an eccentric professor and soon find themselves in a magical place called Whangdoodleland. Surrounded by monsters with 10 legs, purple trees,

a Whiffle Bird, and other unusual creatures, the youngsters set off to find a Whangdoodle—a “fanciful creature”—and discover the power of imagination in the process.

**The Phantom Tollbooth**

by Norton Juster

Bored by his daily life, Milo finds new adventures when a mysterious tollbooth and instructions for its use appear in his bedroom. Not knowing what lies ahead, he pays the toll and enters a new world with strange characters and a special rescue mission designed just for him. (Available in Spanish.)



**Number the Stars**

by Lois Lowry

Based on a true story, this book portrays the life of a 10-year-old girl during World War II. When the Nazis begin to arrest the Jews in Annemarie’s Denmark community, she and her family take the dangerous step of protecting her best friend from capture. (Available in Spanish.)

**The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963**

by Christopher Paul Curtis

Byron Watson is always getting into trouble. So his parents take him to visit his strict grandmother in Alabama to get him away from the influence of his city gang. This thought-provoking story teaches a lesson about love and family as an African American family lives through the civil rights struggle of the 1960s.

*Mystery*

**Chasing Vermeer** by Blue Balliett

After the theft of a famous painting, two sixth-graders join forces to try to recover the piece of art. Petra and Calder, with the help of a teacher and some mysterious letters, solve mathematical puzzles in an effort to find the painting. Readers will enjoy unraveling the clues hidden in the book’s clever illustrations.

*Nonfiction*

**The Chimpanzees I Love: Saving Their World and Ours** by Jane Goodall

The much-admired scientist writes a personal account of her experiences with chimpanzees in Africa and her efforts to protect wildlife habitats. With vivid photographs on nearly every page, Goodall describes life in the forest, including teaching chimpanzees sign language and how to use a computer.

**A Life Like Mine: How Children Live Around the World** by the United Nations Children’s Fund and DK Publishing

Real-life stories, combined with colorful pictures, maps, and charts, give readers a glimpse into the daily lives of children around the world. Featuring more than 180 countries, the book shows that, although people all over the world are different, they have the same needs.

**Picasso** by Mike Venezia

The life and paintings of the famous artist Picasso are portrayed in this selection from the Getting to Know the World’s Greatest Artists series for young readers. The book uses simple language and Picasso’s drawings to make art come alive for children.



**Encyclopedia Brown Gets His Man**

by Donald Sobol

His father is the local chief of police, but it’s Encyclopedia Brown who solves most of the mysteries in Idaville. From missing blueberry pies to a whistling ghost, 10 mystery challenges put Brown’s sharp mind to the test. The book also gives readers a chance to solve the cases themselves.

**Three of Diamonds** by Anthony Horowitz

The author of the Alex Rider series introduces the Diamond Brothers Mysteries series. In this book, Nick Diamond sets out to solve three mysteries, including “I Know What You Did Last Wednesday.” Can Nick succeed before his brother, the world’s worst detective, bungles the cases?

*Historical Fiction*

**Charley Skedaddle** by Patricia Beatty

When Charley’s brother is killed during the Civil War, he seeks revenge by joining the Union army. But after several of his friends are killed in battle, Charley deserts his regiment and hides in the mountain home of Granny Bent. There, he learns a lesson about courage.



# E-reading

Maya is answering e-mail. Jessica is sending a text message to Kyle. Ali is playing Scrabble online. What do all of these youngsters have in common? They are all reading.

Take advantage of your child's screen time to boost her reading skills by turning Web sites, e-mail, MP3 players, and cell phones into learning tools.

*Safety Note: Monitor your youngster's time online, and remind her never to give out personal information like her last name, address, school, or telephone number.*



## Web sites

The World Wide Web offers many reading opportunities, from stories and poems to games and information sites. Here are some ideas.

### Go on a cyberhunt

An online scavenger hunt will get your child reading nonfiction and learning new facts. At [http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/instructor/cyberhunt\\_kids.htm](http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/instructor/cyberhunt_kids.htm), he can find cyberhunts that ask questions and provide links to sites where he can find answers. He might try a social studies adventure like "Lewis and Clark's Trail" or a science quest such as "Think Green!" Or encourage your youngster to make his own cyberhunt. He can list 10 questions. ("How do CDs work?" "What are the five top-selling CDs of all time?") Then, have him look for the answers using search engines such as Ask Kids ([www.askkids.com](http://www.askkids.com)) or KidsClick! ([www.kidsclick.org](http://www.kidsclick.org)).



### Play games

Word games are a great way to build reading skills. Visit Reading Planet's Game Station ([www.rif.org/kids/readingplanet.htm](http://www.rif.org/kids/readingplanet.htm)) for activities like "Poetry Splatter"—your child will "splatter" words and then arrange them to make a poem. At FunBrain

([www.funbrain.com/words.html](http://www.funbrain.com/words.html)), he can play "Grammar Gorillas" to practice parts of speech and learn Spanish words with "The Translator Alligator."

### Read reviews

Is your child looking for a good book? He can find out what other kids are enjoying by reading online book reviews. For reviews grouped by title, author, and grade level, suggest that he visit [www.booksintheclassroom.com/allreviewed.php](http://www.booksintheclassroom.com/allreviewed.php). The Spaghetti Book Club ([www.spaghettibookclub.org](http://www.spaghettibookclub.org)) contains reviews written for kids by kids of all ages. And Kids Reads ([www.kidsreads.com](http://www.kidsreads.com)) features a monthly list of Cool New Books and instructions to help your youngster start his own book club so he can share his favorites with friends. Online bookstores such as Amazon ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)) and Barnes

& Noble ([www.bn.com](http://www.bn.com)) include reviews by publishers and customers.

### Computer talk

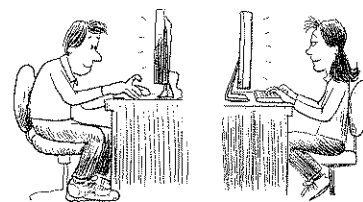
Chatting with friends, answering surveys, sharing blogs, and creating polls are great ways for children to read and work on language skills. Steer your youngster to kid-friendly social-networking sites like Glubble ([www.glubble.com](http://www.glubble.com)) and Club Penguin ([www.clubpenguin.com](http://www.clubpenguin.com)). Encourage her to write her own blog about her hobbies and books she has read.

## E-mail

Help your youngster set up an e-mail account with a free provider like Yahoo ([mail.yahoo.com](mailto:mail.yahoo.com)) or Google ([mail.google.com](mailto:mail.google.com)). Keep her safe by having her add friends and family to her address book and not opening messages from senders who aren't on her list.

### Stay in touch

Suggest that your child become e-pals with a friend or relative. They can keep the conversation going by posing a question of the week to each other. *Example:* "If you could break one world record, which one would it be?" Your youngster will look forward to opening and answering each message, which will keep her reading and strengthen her letter-writing skills.



### Write a story

Inspire your youngster's imagination by writing an e-mail story together. Begin by sending him an opening line ("Ken found a stray dog in his backyard"). He can read what you wrote, then continue the tale in an e-mail

*continued*

back to you. ("He and his mother put an ad in the paper. When no one claimed the dog, Ken's mom said he could keep him.") When you're finished, your child can save the story in an online folder. Then, have him start a new one.

### Send new words

E-mail your youngster short notes, and build her vocabulary by using at least one word she might not know. Include the link to an online dictionary such as Merriam-Webster's site for kids ([www.wordcentral.com](http://www.wordcentral.com)) so she can look it up, and ask her to copy and paste the definition in her response to you. *Example:* "Your choir concert last night was *stupendous!*"

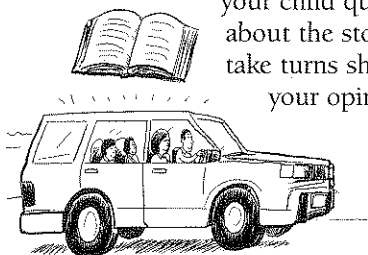
## MP3 players

MP3 players aren't just for music. Encourage your child to read no matter where he is by loading books and podcasts onto an MP3 player.

### Read on the road

Hundreds of audio books are available online in MP3 format for children. If you have an adapter, plug the player into your car, and listen together to stories or poems from Storynory (<http://storynory.com>). Or listen to a chapter per outing from a classic like Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* downloaded from Project Gutenberg ([www.gutenberg.org/browse/categories/1](http://www.gutenberg.org/browse/categories/1)). When you finish, ask

your child questions about the story, and take turns sharing your opinions.

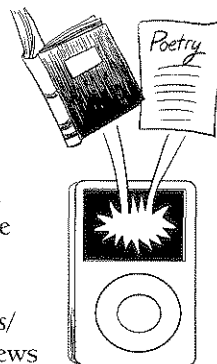


### Follow along

Go to the library to find a print version of an audio book your youngster can download. Then, encourage her to follow along in the book as she listens. Pairing the print and audio version of a book can help struggling readers and allow them to enjoy more challenging books.

### Listen to podcasts

Your child can download podcasts to a music player on a variety of topics. At Kids Learn Out Loud (<http://kids.learnoutloud.com>), he will find audio talks on everything from history and literature to science and sports and hobbies. Or he can visit Reading Rockets ([www.readingrockets.org/podcasts/authors](http://www.readingrockets.org/podcasts/authors)) to watch video interviews with children's authors and illustrators. Book talks are a great way to get your youngster excited about reading a new book.



## Messaging

BFF? LOL?\* Text messages and instant messages have created a new kind of shorthand for children. Encourage your youngster to spell things out with these ideas that will build reading and word skills. She

can try them with a friend using cell phones or instant-messaging programs like Yahoo IM or AIM. (\*Best Friends Forever. Laugh Out Loud.)

### Ask and answer

Send a question to your youngster. The catch? You scramble the letters in the question, and your child has to figure out the words. *Example:* "tawh od uyo ntwa orf ruoy tiaybhdr?"

("what do you want for your birthday?"). Then, she sends an answer for you to unscramble ("absdoktera" for "skateboard").

### Last letter loses

The object of this game is *not* to be the player who completes a word. Your child thinks of a word and sends the first letter to you. For example, he might text "b" for "bicycle." You think of a word that starts with "b" (basketball) and send him the first two letters (ba). Then, it's your youngster's turn to think of a word that starts with "ba" (balloon) and send three letters (bal). Continue back and forth until someone has no choice but to spell an entire word—and lose!

### Riddle me this

"Knock, knock!" "Who's there?" "Orange." "Orange who?" "Orange you glad you got this message?"

Knock-knock jokes and riddles are perfect for instant messages. They are a short, fun way to find something new to read. Suggest that your child read through joke books or search for riddles online to text to his little brother or best friend.



# Once Upon a Time

Children who write stories build critical-thinking skills and learn to use their imaginations. They also become better readers, since writing their own tales boosts reading comprehension.

Use the ideas in this guide to give your child the tools she needs to dream up a story idea, imagine a setting, plan a plot, and create colorful characters.



## Chapter 1: Finding an idea

What will your youngster write about? Many stories get started when an author asks: “What if...?” Examples: “What if a spider could write?” “What if we could fly?”

Brainstorm ideas with the “What if” game. Have your child ask an interesting or a silly question: “What if people lived in trees?” Then, you ask one: “What if you drew pictures that came to life?” Your youngster can write down each question as you go. Keep asking each other questions until your youngster finds one she wants to use for her story. *Tip:* Have her keep the list to use whenever she needs a new idea.

if she can picture it in her mind. Encourage her to draw a picture of her setting to help her “see” it. If the story takes place in more than one location, she should draw a separate picture of each one. Have her hang the pictures on the wall near her desk—the drawings will inspire her as she writes about each place.

Your youngster can make her setting even more realistic by using all her senses. For example, she might imagine sounds (birds chirping, an audience clapping) or smells (a mom’s perfume, a fragrant flower) and add them to her description.



## Chapter 2: Who’s who?

Every story needs characters—the main character to work on a problem, friends to help, and people to get in the way. Use this idea to help your child dream up unique people for his story.

First, let him describe how his characters look. Then, have him list details that make each one different. Is the character clumsy? Is he funny? Does he have a pet? Does he listen to country music? To help your youngster flesh out his characters, ask him to pretend to be each one and introduce himself to you. (“Hello. I’m Hank. I’m the main character’s best friend. I like to tell jokes. I’m always losing things. Have you seen my cat?”)



“Hello. I’m Hank. I’m the main character’s best friend. I like to tell jokes. I’m always losing things. Have you seen my cat?”

## Chapter 3: You are here—the setting

Where does this story happen? Is it on an island? At the park? Sometimes it is easier for your child to describe a place

## Chapter 4: Point of view

Point of view refers to who tells the story. Most stories are written in either first person (“I”) or third person (“he,” “she,” “they”).

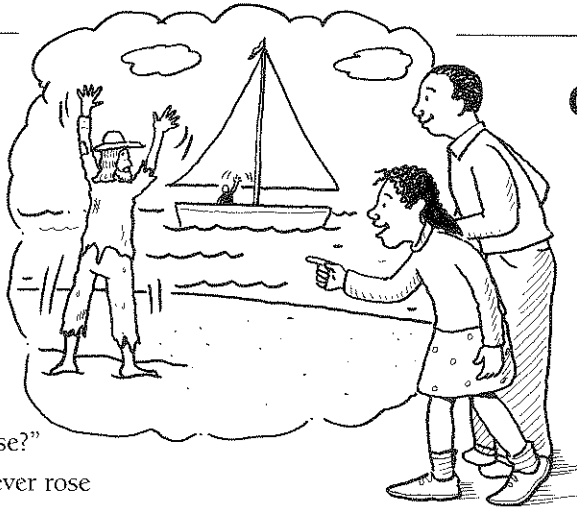
Help your child choose which one works best by having him tell the beginning of his tale aloud twice. The first time he should use “I,” and the second time he should use “he” or “she.” Which way feels more comfortable to him? Which version allows him to give more details and to make his story more interesting? Remind him that either way is fine—it’s up to him as the author!

*continued*

### Chapter 5: Hooking the reader

In the opening line of *Charlotte's Web*, Fern asks where her father is going with an axe. Immediately, the reader wants to know, too. This first line is called a "hook." A good hook gets the reader interested in learning what will happen next. Your young author can use these techniques to get readers hooked from the very first line:

- Start with a question: "What was that noise?"
- Begin with an unusual detail: "The sun never rose in Darktown."
- Open the story in the middle of a crisis: "Don't let go! I shouted. "I'll find a way to get you down."



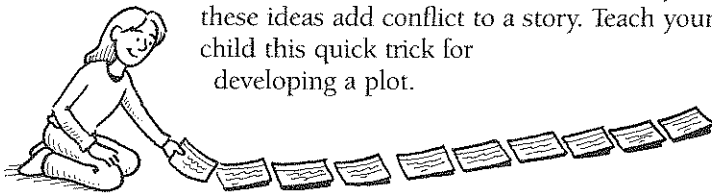
### Chapter 7: Wrapping up the story

There are more ways to end a story than "happily ever after." Before your child writes "The End," encourage him to think of all the different ways he could finish his tale. Here are a few suggestions:

- Use the ending to show the reader how the main character feels. For example, the shipwrecked character might think about how happy he is to be at home sleeping in his own bed again.
- Show how the character has been changed by the events in the story. Your youngster might say that the day after the shipwrecked character got home, he started planning a new trip—by plane.
- Stop the story early, and let the reader imagine what happens next. Perhaps your child's story will end as the shipwrecked character steps aboard the rescue ship instead of following him all the way home.

### Chapter 6: The plot thickens

Problems make up a story's plot. Remind your child to think creatively when dreaming up her plot. The main character might cause problems himself, a villain can try to stop him, or a natural disaster could strike. Any of these ideas add conflict to a story. Teach your child this quick trick for developing a plot.



Number 10 index cards 1–10. On number 1, have her write the first thing that happens in the story (the character is shipwrecked). On card 10 she writes the last thing that happens (the character is rescued). For the remaining cards, have her alternate writing new problems and their solutions. Example: Card 2 = problem (a storm is coming), 3 = solution (the character finds a cave), 4 = another problem, 5 = solution to that problem, and so on. As your youngster writes, she can go through the cards one by one to keep the story on track.

### Chapter 8: Sharing the tale

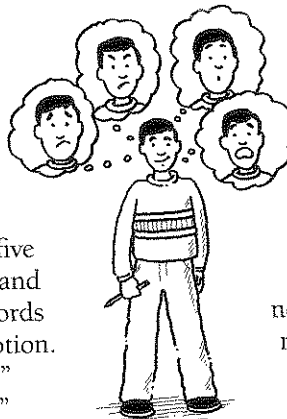
Now that the story is complete, suggest that your youngster "publish" it for others to read. First, she should proofread it carefully. Is everything spelled correctly? Does each sentence have correct punctuation (begins with a capital letter and ends with a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point)?

Once your child has corrected any mistakes, she can recopy the story neatly or type it on a computer and print it out. Suggest that she illustrate her story by drawing pictures or inserting clip art and then staple the pages together. Finally, she can leave a copy on the coffee table for visitors to read. Or she can e-mail her story to relatives who live out of town.

### Dressing up dialogue

Help your youngster spice up the dialogue in his writing by teaching him to find alternatives to common words like "said."

To start, have him divide a sheet of paper into five columns and label them *happy*, *sad*, *angry*, *scared*, and *surprised*. Next, have him fill each column with words he could use instead of "said" to portray that emotion. For example, under "angry," he might list "yelled," "screamed," and "cried." Words in the "surprised"



column might include "yelped," "squeaked," and "gaped." You can brainstorm words together, or he might look them up in a thesaurus.

Then, encourage your child to keep the chart nearby while he writes and use it sometimes to replace "said" with stronger words. Tip: Suggest that he keep his eyes open for new words to add to his lists anytime he reads.