

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

October 2009

Achieving Success Together

Book Picks



Read-aloud favorites



■ *AlphaOops! The Day Z Went First*

Z doesn't think it's fair that A always goes first. In this backward ABC book by Alethea Kontis, Z decides to move up, and soon all the letters are arguing about their places in line. Their behavior will make youngsters giggle—and give them extra alphabet practice.

■ *Pumpkin Town*

Can there be too many pumpkins? It seems that way at first in Katie McKy's story. Five brothers accidentally spread pumpkin seeds all over town, and everything gets tangled in the vines. But when the boys clean up the mess, the townspeople end up with plenty of pumpkins to sell.



■ *Dinosaursaurus*

Douglas Florian's collection of dinosaur poems combines interesting facts with clever rhymes. His verses will teach youngsters about the "t-rex-tinct" (tyrannosaurus rex) and the "try-scare-a-tops" (triceratops), among others.

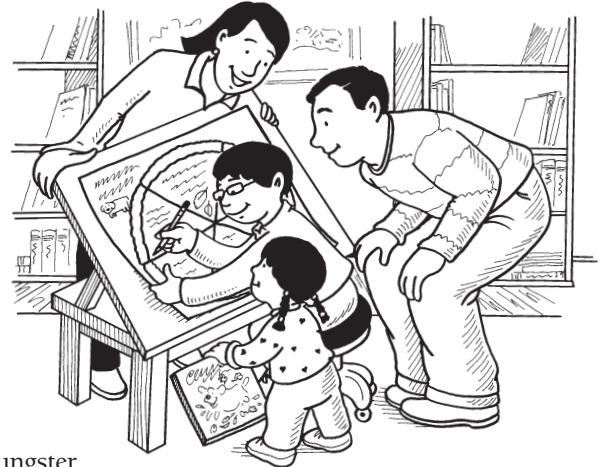
■ *Thank You, Mr. Falker*

Trisha can't wait to learn to read. But it's harder than she thought, and as she struggles, her classmates tease her. Then, her teacher discovers the little girl's learning disability and is able to help her. An autobiographical picture book by Patricia Polacco. (Also available in Spanish.)



Read, write, and understand

"What was the story about?" Ask your child this question, and you'll give him a chance to show you how well he understands books he reads or hears. Can he tell you all about the main character or explain the plot? Use these fun "graphic organizers" to help him build important reading comprehension skills.



Story pizza

This activity will help your youngster get to know a book character better. Read a story about a character he likes, such as *Clifford's First Autumn* by Norman Bridwell. Ask him to describe things about Clifford (*big, red, likes to play, gets into trouble, loves autumn, a good friend*).

Then, have him draw a round "pizza" that fills up his paper. Help him divide it into six slices and write a characteristic on each piece.

Give me five!

The outline of your child's hand is a ready-made graphic organizer to tell the plot of a story. Have him trace his hand

on a sheet of paper. On the "palm," help him copy the title and author of a book (*Little Bear's Friend* by Else Holmelund Minarik).

Above each finger, you can write *Who? What? When? Where? and Why?*. Then, let your youngster write or dictate his answers (*Little Bear and Emily, new friends, summer, forest, have fun together*). When he finishes, he'll have a quick summary of the story.

Tip: Suggest that your child picture one of these organizers in his mind when he reads. This will help him keep track of the story. ♥

Writing workouts

Writing is more fun when your youngster's hands don't get tired. Help strengthen her hand muscles with these two workouts:

1. Give her a single-hole punch and let her make holes in scrap paper. Have her squeeze with the hand she writes with. *Note:* Make cleanup easier by having her punch the "holes" into a bowl.

2. Hold a bead race. Each player gets tweezers and two small bowls: one with a dozen beads (or other tiny objects) and one that's empty. Players use tweezers to transfer all their beads to their empty bowls. The first one to finish wins! ♥



I hear it!

Encourage your child to play with words, and she'll learn that sounds are like building blocks. She can put them together in different ways to make different words.

Find the rhymes. Get a book of nursery rhymes or look online at www.nurseryrhymesonline.com. Ask your youngster to copy a different rhyme each week and post it on the refrigerator. She can underline the rhyming words and circle the letters they have in common (*sheep* and *asleep* both have



tap her knee for *an*. Tip: Your child can clap syllables to sound out words while reading. ♥

ee). Then, help her write more words with the same ending sound (*deep*, *peep*). Tip: Have your child make lists of the rhyming words and collect them in a folder to read whenever she likes.

Cheer the syllables. Suggest that your youngster make up "cheers" to go along with her spelling words. She can choose a motion for each syllable and perform them as you call out the word. Example: For *librarian*, she might clap on *li*, stomp her foot on *brar*, turn around on *i*, and tap her knee for *an*. Tip: Your child can clap syllables to sound out words while reading. ♥

Fun with Words

Letter graph

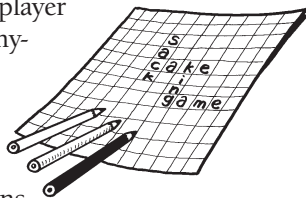
This crossword game will improve your youngster's spelling and logical-thinking skills.

To make a game sheet, draw vertical lines on notebook paper to create a grid, or print out graph paper with ½-inch blocks (try www.printfreegraphpaper.com). Give each person a different-colored pen. The first player

puts a word anywhere on the grid, writing one letter per square.

Then, take turns adding words using at least one letter that's already on the paper.

For example, if the first person writes *cake* across the squares, the next player could use the *k* to start *king* going down. When no one can add another word, count each person's letters. The player with the highest number wins. Note: Score points only for new letters added (*ing* for *king*). ♥



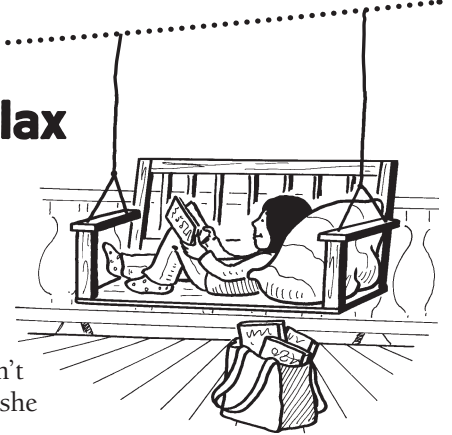
Parent to Parent

Read and relax

My first-grader has a homework assignment this year: to read for 20 minutes each night. Kayla's teacher sends home a monthly calendar, and we initial it to show that she has completed her reading. For the first few weeks, Kayla was excited. But then she couldn't decide what to read, and after a few minutes, she wanted to go outside and play.

I e-mailed her teacher, and she had a few ideas. Mrs. Preston recommended that we have Kayla choose her books for the week ahead of time and keep them in a special bag. She also said we could let her read wherever she wanted: outdoors, in the car, or even under a table.

Mrs. Preston's advice is working. Kayla enjoys choosing her reading spot (the back porch is her favorite!), and she likes not having to worry about what to read each night. ♥



Q&A Table talk

Q My son thinks our dinners are boring and always wants the TV on. What can we do to make our conversations more fun?

A Lively dinner conversation can make meals pleasant for everyone and build your son's language skills. One idea is to put a "conversation piece" in the center of the table. For example, you might choose a family photo and discuss who's in the picture and what they're doing. Or your conversation piece could be an unusual coin or stamp, and you could

talk about what it looks like or where it came from.

You might also play a party game, like "Who Am I?" Before dinner, put a place card at each person's plate (facing out so he can't see it) with a name that everyone knows—a friend, a relative, or someone famous. While you eat, take turns asking each other "yes" or "no" questions to guess the name on your card ("Am I a grown-up?" "Do I have blonde hair?"). ♥



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote their children's reading, writing, and language skills.

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