

A Message to Parents

Ways You Can Help

Many parents ask the question “How can I help my child become a good reader?” Reading outside the instructional setting is an essential ingredient for your child’s reading success. You can make a difference.

- *Read to your child.* Children of all ages benefit as they listen to an adult read. When a child hears material that is *above his own reading level*, his vocabulary is expanded and enriched, and he hears the more interesting syntax patterns that he will encounter in his own reading in the future. When a child hears material *at his present reading level*, he is given a model for the fluency that he needs to attain. When a child hears material that is *easy for him to read*, he is invited to take up that very book and read it for himself.
- *Visit the library with your child.* Help him to select easy, interesting books for his independent reading and more difficult, appealing books for you to read aloud to him.
- *Read the newspaper with your child.* Study the weather map and compare the map to the forecast given. Look at the sports page. If a sports article is particularly interesting to a child, he will read it eagerly. If any articles or editorials have content a child can understand, discuss the facts and opinions given after you and your child have read it.
- *Ask your child to read to other family members.* Any homework that turns into family time has double benefits. A child’s oral reading fluency will improve as he entertains younger children or older relatives by reading easy material to them.
- *Encourage meaningful writing.* Writing builds reading. Help your child to keep a journal of family trips. Enhanced with photographs or original art, it can become a record of his childhood that he will enjoy looking back on when he is older. Encourage him to write long letters to grandparents or aunts and uncles who live in other cities. (Keep copies for yourself.)
- *Show interest in your child’s school papers.* Look with interest at the activity pages that he has completed. Give value to his pages by commenting on their content rather than concentrating only on the incorrect answers. If he knows you are interested in his thinking, he will become more diligent in his efforts.
- *Be enthusiastic about the selections in your child’s reading book.* After your child has completed the reading lessons for a selection in his reading book, he will benefit from some good follow-up.
 1. Read some of the selections yourself and then discuss them with your child in the way you would have a relaxed dinner table conversation. Some of the stories with strong messages will provide wonderful opportunities for disciplining your child.
 2. Ask him to read the most exciting paragraphs aloud. Praise him specifically if he communicates the character’s voice or emotions or if he changes the pace or pauses to show suspense.

Things to Avoid

Some practices may become obstacles to your child's reading development.

- *Avoid allowing your child to read ahead in his reading book.* This will harm the book's effectiveness as a tool for teaching reading comprehension.
- *Avoid making your questions sound like a quiz.*
- *Don't allow your child to read his whole story aloud in a meaningless drone or in a hurried manner.* Good oral reading always communicates the message of the author.
- *Use caution as you correct misread words.* A child who reads fluently may say slightly different words. For example, the sentence *Jessie put her many toys away* might be read *Jessie put all her toys away*. This happens when the child's eyes begin moving across the text faster than his speaking voice can interpret it. In his mind his own thoughts and the author's words have become one. This is a sign of a good reader. It is the way you read as an adult. If you insist on asking him to go back to get each specific word, you are asking him to revert to being a word-by-word reader rather than a fluent phrase-by-phrase reader.

Tools for the Job

BJU Press Reading emphasizes comprehension and develops phonics systematically. These materials provide the tools not only to teach reading well but also to encourage critical thinking and evaluating literature from a biblical worldview. A variety of selections—realistic fiction, adventure stories, Christian fiction, Bible accounts retold, biographies, informational articles, folktales, poems, and plays—offer engaging reading that provides both pleasure and understanding. We trust your child will enjoy the school year as he uses his reading materials to become a confident, eager reader—one who will continue to read all his life.