

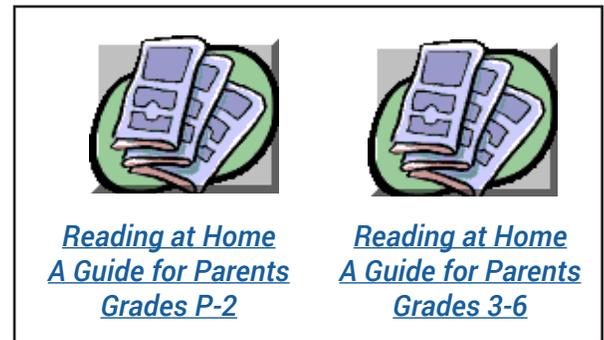
# Ideas for parents to help children to improve their reading and writing skills

## Reading

Reading with your child is one of the most important activities that you can do with your child. A child is never too young or too old to be read to or to read with you. These brochures were compiled by Stephen Jamieson, retired literacy and technology consultant and we hope they will be of assistance to you. Click on the brochure icons below to access the one of your choice.

How parents can help students to improve their reading?

- Read with your child on a daily basis.
- Talk about reading regularly with your child by discussing what they are reading and sharing what you are reading too.
- Help them to understand what they are reading.
- Encourage them to read a wide range of materials.
- Regularly listen to your child read.
- Pay attention to the kinds of material your child finds interesting and use this to encourage your child to read. Non-fiction materials make great reading too.
- Help make reading fun and enjoyable.
- Model reading yourself by letting your child see you reading.
- Have your child use reading for a purpose. This may be assisting you with a recipe, reading you the grocery list, pointing out road signs, reading a map or the like.
- When they are open, visit the library or bookmobile.



## Reading Strategies

When we read, our goal is to make meaning of the text. To do this we use a variety of strategies. The more complete our repertoire of strategies, the easier it is for us to make meaning of text.

Children should be reminded to **make connections** in their reading. This will elicit prior experiences. They can make-

- text to self connections (I understand how the boy felt when his dog died because I was very sad when my pet died too.)
- text to text connections (I learned about how and why pyramids are made in a non-fiction book so I understand in this fiction book why the Pharaoh was so concerned about getting his pyramid built.)
- text to world connections (I am reading a book about the Ice Age and now understand why there is so much rock in Nova Scotia.)

We can encourage children to make a mental picture of what they are reading. This **visualization** helps to make sense of the text.

When students infer what is happening they put together the pieces of the text. Or, what we might call reading between the lines. This **inferring** helps to create a greater understanding of what is being read.

We can ask **questions** about the text and can read to confirm these predictions. Reading expert Tony Stead indicates in his work that reading is mainly an act of **predicting**. This important strategy helps students to engage with the text and read for understanding and **confirmation** of their predictions.

Sometimes we are reading for a specific purpose (answering homework questions, researching a topic, answering our wonder questions...) and it is important to read with that focus in mind. Read for key words and topics. Read to find out the information you need- read for the purpose of **determining important information**.

**Analyze** what you are reading to help you figure out what it is about. Remind students of the type of reading they are doing. Different **genres** of writing will be presented in different ways. Genre means type of writing. Some types of genre include: mysteries, poetry, biographies, autobiographies, science fiction, historical fiction, myths and fables, legends, fantasy, facts, and folk tales.

**Synthesizing** is also a comprehension skill where children build on the knowledge from the text and what they know to create new ideas.

## Good Readers

- Use a variety of comprehension strategies to make meaning of text.
- They choose books appropriate to their stage of reading development and purpose for reading.
- Good readers self-correct. They re-read, read on, ask for help, use pictorial clues, use text feature clues and put things in context. Good readers may make mistakes too when reading but these errors do not effect the meaning of the text and good readers will self-correct to make sense of what is being read.
- Have the ability to word solve. This includes: looking for smaller words in the big word, being able to rhyme the word to figure it out, determining the meaning of the word, looking for patterns in the word, using a dictionary or thesaurus, and sounding it out.
- Can read smoothly and have appropriate expression as they read. They observe punctuation clues and use this to help ensure flow.
- Good readers read!

## Writing

### Ideas for Parents to Help Children to Improve Their Writing Skills?

Students will improve their skills by engaging in the activity, therefore writers write and readers read. But, making it fun helps you and your child share in this activity together in a pleasurable way. Here are some ideas to get your child writing everyday.

- Give your child a journal and a special pen to write with. The 'Dollar Store' can be a great source for these kinds of items.
- Send an e-mail to a family member or friend.
- Engage your child in authentic writing activities- creating grocery lists, creating a family newsletter, keeping the family calendar up to date with events, writing thank you notes, surveying opinions or ideas on a topic like what kind of pet your family should have, sending a letter to the Editor about an issue your child is concerned about, and the like.
- [Make paper](#) with your child and then write a special letter or poem on it.
- Read information about a topic of interest on a website with your child. Websites, unlike books can be updated frequently. This means that a website that is maintained properly has up to date information about topics of interest to your child. This also affords you an opportunity to talk to your child about safer searching and about being an alert consumer when it comes to information published online. We know not everything online is true. Have your child do some of the online activities from [Media Smarts](#) to see if they can determine truth from fiction in the online world.
- When your child wants something have him/her write you a note to explain why.
- Show your child how you use writing in your life. Discuss the different types of writing you use. e.g. for home and work purposes.
- Encourage your child to keep a writing notebook where he or she will act much like a detective. He or she can write down ideas, words, pictures and clues to what might be wonderful topics to write about. This way your child will have some ideas when it comes to writing workshop in school.
- Use a white board or chalk board in your kitchen and leave questions for your child to answer. e.g. What was the most interesting thing you did at school today? What would you like for lunch tomorrow? What book are you reading now? etc...

- Use post-its and let your child label things in his/her room. These words should be spelled correctly on the labels. Encourage your child to use different strategies when writing these words. The strategies should go beyond sounding it out and should include- word patterns, letter connections, how to look up words in a reference book (dictionary, glossary...). Ask your child's teacher what types of strategies your child needs to continue to develop to improve his/her spelling skills.
- Discuss with the classroom teacher what is expected of writing in your child's grade.

## **What do writers do?**

Writing is very much like golf, you practice certain skills and get better at them but you still have many other skills to develop and to constantly work on. Writing, like reading and golf have stages of development. Unlike reading where the reader becomes the audience, the writer must consider who the audience is for their writing.

Lyons and Pinnell in *Systems for Change In Literacy Development*,(pg.27) say that competent writers:

- “see writing as a way of recording and expanding experiences
- write for many different purposes
- think of ideas and composes these thoughts into written sequences of words
- write ideas and messages word by word while maintaining a sense of the overall meaning of the text
- spells many words quickly and automatically
- has a flexible range of strategies for spelling words, including how words sound, look, and mean
- connects words
- constantly rereads and revises the composition to reflect the evolving message
- uses feedback from readers as a basis for revision
- reflects on writing to evaluate how it conveys the intended writing”