Elementary School • March 2026

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Lynch - Bustin Elementary School

Boost school skills while helping your child have some reading and writing fun!

There are lots of entertaining reading and writing activities that can help your elementary schooler strengthen valuable skills. Encourage your child to:

- **Research events** that happened on the day your child was born. Your child can write about them in a journal or use the news headlines to make a poster.
- **Invent a new board game.** Have your child design the board and game pieces and then write down the rules.
- **Look at a map or globe** and pick a country. Challenge your child to discover and share five interesting facts about it.
- **Conduct a nature study.** How many animals, birds and insects can your child find in your backyard or a local park? Have your child take pictures of them to make researching the critters online easier.
- **Choose a favorite book character** and write a letter or email in the character's voice describing a day's activities or a new adventure.

Help your child analyze online information

Elementary school students often begin a research project by looking online. Unfortunately, the internet is full of misinformation. To evaluate sources and make sure they are credible, encourage your child to ask these three key questions:

1. **Is the source reputable?** Be sure your child checks to see where the information is coming from.
2. **Is the source biased?** Information that comes from a company might be designed to sell their product. Information from an organization might reflect a particular agenda. Your child should consider these biases while reading.
3. **Is the information up-to-date?** Science studies, for example, may become outdated when newer research is completed.

Read about spring cleaning safety

If your older child is helping you with household chores this spring, it's a perfect time for a quick safety lesson.

Ask your child to carefully read the safety labels on the cleaning products you use and then explain the directions to you. Understanding these instructions not only ensures your child uses the product safely, but it also is a practical way to demonstrate how important reading is in our daily lives.

Exposure to correct grammar improves language skills

Learning grammar rules can be tough—but reading makes it easier! Regular exposure to books trains your child's brain to recognize proper structure and phrasing. The more your child reads high-quality text, the more natural correct grammar becomes.

Let reading inspire activities

Children who have more fun reading have more motivation to keep reading! Try these ideas with your child:

- **Play games** that involve reading, such as Boggle, Scrabble and Apples to Apples.
- **Build activities** around what your child is reading. Act out the story or do crafts that relate to it.
- **Keep a reading calendar.** Mark the days that your child starts and finishes a book.

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Mealtime talks strengthen language skills

With a little imagination, mealtime can be a time for the whole family to have fun together and learn. The language skills kids learn during meals help improve reading, listening and speaking skills.

During mealtime, have family members:

- **Give book reports.** Have everyone share plots, characters and opinions about what they are reading.
- **Take turns selecting a topic** to discuss. Make sure everyone gets a turn.
- **Place an interesting object** in the center of the table to spark discussion.
- **Play Did You Know?** Have each person write three facts, one on each of three index cards. Place the cards face down and take turns drawing and reading them. Discuss what you learn.

Share five steps to writing success

Whether your child is a budding author who loves to write or one who dreads a blank page, these five simple steps can make any assignment more manageable. Encourage your child to:

1. **Prewrite.** Brainstorm and bounce ideas off someone.
2. **Draft.** Write a first copy—without worrying about mistakes!
3. **Revise.** Read through the paper at least once. Does everything make sense? Are there better ways to say things?
4. **Edit.** Check grammar, punctuation and spelling.
5. **Review.** Read the paper aloud to catch any errors that were missed by silent reading.

Q: My elementary schooler is learning all about synonyms and antonyms. Unfortunately, my child can't seem to remember which is which. How can I help?

A: First, remind your child that *synonyms* have the same or similar meanings (such as *happy* and *cheerful*). Point out that the words *synonym*, *same* and *similar* all start with the letter *s*. *Antonyms*, on the other hand, are words with opposite meanings (such as *fast* and *slow*). Point out that the word *antonym* starts with *ant-*, a prefix which means against.

Reinforce the value of reading

Positive images of reading remind children how important and exciting reading is. So take a picture of your child reading a favorite book.

Place the picture where your child will see it regularly, such as on a mirror or the refrigerator. Say how proud you are that your child is a reader!

For lower elementary readers:

- ***Mine-o-saur*** by Sudipta Bardhan-Quallen. The Mine-o-saur refuses to share his toys and his snacks. Soon he realizes he has no friends to play with! How can the Mine-o-saur solve this problem?
- ***Mars Needs Moms!*** by Berkeley Breathed. Milo doesn't see what's so great about moms. But when Martians kidnap the moms, will Milo discover why he needs his?

For upper elementary readers:

- ***Five Children and It*** by E. Nesbit. In this classic, five children find a Sand-fairy that grants wishes! But making wishes isn't as easy as it seems.
- ***Poem Runs: Baseball Poems and Paintings*** by Douglas Florian. Get ready for baseball season with this collection of poems about various positions and pieces of equipment.

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