

# BUILDING READERS®

Chelmsford Elementary Schools

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

## A book club can motivate your child to read all summer long

Want to keep your child reading over the summer? Help him start a book club with his friends. Not only will it encourage your child to explore new books, he'll have the opportunity to engage in thoughtful conversations—and participate in a fun social activity.

Whether the book club meets in person or online, encourage members to:

- **Select books** that will challenge them and spark dynamic discussions.
- **Set ground rules**, such as “Everybody gets to talk” and “No put-downs.”
- **Think of open-ended** questions that invite a lot of discussion. Asking questions like, “Why do you think the character acted this way?” will promote more interesting conversation than “Did you like this book? Why or why not?”



## Help your child improve reading habits

There is no such thing as too much reading—it just has to be done responsibly. Here are three common reading problems and easy ways to turn them around:

1. **Tattered books.** Choose a special spot for books where they won't get trampled—like a basket or a shelf.
2. **Overdue library books.** Record when books are due on your calendar, then set a weekly schedule to return books with your child. Make sure she returns items on time. Then have fun browsing in person or on the library's website for new material to check out.
3. **Late night reading.** On school nights, tuck your child in early so she has time to read in bed before lights out. On occasional weekend nights, it's OK to let her stay up later to read.

## Use the five Ws to ask questions

When you discuss a story with your child, remember the Five Ws: *Who? What? When? Where? Why?*

These simple questions help readers focus when they read and retell a story. They also help kids think critically about what is going on in the story.

A few examples are, “*Who* is the story about?” “*When* does it take place?” “*Where* does it happen?” “*Why* do the characters act the way they do?”



## Try a timed reading game

Strong readers don't just read well. They read quickly, too. To give your child practice:

1. **Pick a page** in a book he can read easily.
2. **Give him** one minute to read it.
3. **Count the number** of words he read.
4. **Try again** in a few days and see if he can beat his previous number.



## Suggest books that will make your child want to read

If your child needs encouragement to pick up a book, do what you can to make reading appealing. Suggest that she try:

- **A series of books**, like *Magic Treehouse* or *I Survived ...*
- **A joke book.** Ask your child to find the funniest joke she can.
- **A “choose your own adventure” book.** Your child may enjoy creating her own path as she reads.



## Use a storytelling game to develop imagination and language skills

When children tell stories, they practice using their imaginations. They learn to play with words and structure their thoughts.

Try this storytelling game together:

- 1. Select at least five words** that are not connected to each other, such as *donkey*, *song*, *tree*, *happy* and *forgetful*. The older your kids, the more words you can choose.
- 2. Write the words down** on a piece of paper.
- 3. Have each player create and tell a story** that includes all the selected words.
- 4. Ask each player to include** a title and conclusion. The story must make sense, but it can take any form—suspense, fairy tale, comedy or drama.



## Set summer screen-time limits

One way to limit recreational screen time is to require your child to earn it. Assign points for time spent doing chores, playing outside and—of course—reading. Your child can redeem a certain number of points for a set amount of screen time.



## Plan some fun family reading activities

Get the whole family involved in reading this summer by planning exciting reading events. Here are some to try:

- **Trivia night.** Choose a book that everyone in your family can take turns reading. Or, read a short book together. Then, have each person write three trivia questions about the story. Take turns quizzing each other. Who remembers the most? The winner gets to pick the next book you read.
- **Theme dinners.** What do the characters in your child's books have for dinner? Ask your child to help you base a meal around a favorite book. If the story takes place in another country or time period, help your child research what to include on the menu.



## For lower elementary readers:

- *Ike's Incredible Ink* by Brianne Farley. Ike sits down to write a story and decides to make his own ink. Join him on his journey to gather the materials for just the right ink.
- *The Hole Story of the Doughnut* by Pat Miller. Learn how this tasty treat came to be—all because of a boy who was a ship's assistant cook.



## For upper elementary readers:

- *Eureka! Great Inventions and How They Happened* by Richard Platt. Ever wonder how the hot air balloon was invented? Or the vacuum cleaner? Learn all about inventions and the creative minds that produced them.
- *Running Shoes* by Frederick Lipp. Sophy receives the most wonderful gift—a pair of running shoes—and is inspired to do great things.



**Q:** When my child has trouble reading, he gets frustrated and says, "I can't read this!" How can I encourage him?

**A:** Remind him that every new skill takes practice. Show him examples of books he now finds easy, and remind him that at one time, they were a challenge for him. Reassure him that he is able to learn how to read—and that he will. It simply takes determination, patience and hard work!

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