



Reading Resources:

Fun and Effective Ways to
Help Your Child Become a
Strong Reader

Benefits of Strong Reading Skills

Reading is arguably the most important skill your child can learn in the early years of their education. But why?

Reading lays the groundwork for your student's ability to excel in all other subjects. From early education through 3rd grade, students are taught various skills and concepts required for reading. After 3rd grade, students are expected to use their reading skills to comprehend all their other subjects, like science, history, math, and more.

Not only are strong reading skills important for the classroom and furthering your child's education, but they also have plenty of other valuable benefits for their development and well-being.

Benefits of Reading:

Lower Stress Levels¹

According to a 2009 study at the University of Sussex, reading for just 6 minutes can reduce stress levels by 68%. This study also showed reading was more effective at reducing stress than taking a walk (42%) or listening to music (61%).

Improved Concentration and Memory²

Think of your brain like a muscle—you need to exercise it regularly to keep it strong! Reading requires students to extend their attention span to stay engaged in the story and constantly remember multiple characters, settings, plots, and more.

Increased Creativity and Enhanced Imagination⁴

Each book a child reads transports them to another world. Their reading skills allow them to imagine and create mental images of infinite landscapes and characters. Books allow their ideas to come to life and often spark creative new ideas.

Support for Cognitive Development³

Reading requires more focus than passive activities like watching television, and studies have shown this increased brain activation persists beyond a student's time spent reading. [One study](#) found an increased resting rate of brain activity for five days after a reading session!

Strengthened Self-Image and Empathy²

Not only do strong reading skills increase confidence, but they also provide access to reading materials with diverse perspectives and life experiences that help children better understand others.

Help in Developing Critical-Thinking Skills⁶

As students read more and more, they are presented with unique arguments and challenges that require them to ponder their own personal values and beliefs. Reading also teaches students to pay attention to and evaluate details important to making smart decisions.

Improved Sleep⁵

Reading before bedtime is an excellent way to relax the physical body and allow your mind to de-stress. It's also a better alternative to electronic screens right before you snooze; the blue light emitted from phone and tablet screens confuses your body's internal clock, making it more difficult to fall asleep. ⁵

References:

¹ <https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/reading-stress-relief>

² <https://www.nu.edu/blog/reading-improves-memory-concentration-and-stress/>

³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3868356/>

⁴ <https://worldliteracyfoundation.org/reading-enhances-imagination/>

⁵ <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/sleep/art-20048379>

⁶ <https://uwaterloo.ca/writing-and-communication-centre/blog/five-reasons-reading-fun-will-make-you-better-student-any>

10 Ways to Nurture Your Child's Love of Reading

1. Designate a Cozy Reading Nook¹

Turn any corner in your home into a comforting reading oasis for your child! Warm lights, blankets, and comfy cushions are all you need to create a positive environment children will look forward to cozying up in.

2. Create a Reading Ritual³

Turn reading into a family activity that becomes part of your child's routine! They will look forward to the quality time spent together—whether you're taking turns reading, asking them questions, or acting out the story.

3. All Reading Is Good Reading¹

When your child is learning to read or strengthening their skills, let their interests and curiosity drive what they pick up: comics, magazines, cookbooks, board game instructions, you name it!

4. Don't Leave Home Without a Book¹

Whether it's a quick errand or a family road trip, keep reading materials ready for your child. Grabbing a book is an enriching alternative to tablets or smartphones, plus you never have to worry about a charger!

5. Lead by Example¹

It's no surprise that children tend to imitate habits they observe. If your child sees you reading, they're more likely to sit down with a book themselves or, better yet, join your reading session.

6. Empower Your Child Through Book Choice²

According to [Scholastic](https://www.scholastic.com/readingreport/rise-of-read-aloud.html), more than 90% of children enjoy the books they choose themselves. Take a trip to your local library or bookstore to browse genres and topics together and see what makes their eyes light up!

7. Make Reading a Free-Time Activity⁴

Instead of viewing reading time as an assignment or punishment, try to position the activity as a TV alternative that can be just as immersive. Remember to lead by example here, too!

8. Gamify Reading Sessions⁴

Enhance your child's reading experience by creating game-like rules and rewards to motivate them to complete books. You can use themes from the book they're reading, an interest of theirs, the seasons, etc. There are endless options and ways to structure your unique reading game.

9. Celebrate Reading Achievements

Setting reading goals and achieving them helps students feel successful. Reward achievements with stickers, visiting a special place, extra time at the park, or something else fun!

10. Settle into a Series⁴

Once a child reads about a topic they enjoy, they'll likely want more! Multi-book series are a great way to satisfy their continued interest; foster an engaging relationship with reading; and help them connect tone, themes, and characters with an author or genre. Plus, there are a bunch of fantastic book-to-screen adaptations you can watch as a family as a reward for finishing the series!

References:

¹ <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/school/Pages/10-Tips-to-Help-Your-Child-Fall-in-Love-with-Reading.aspx>

² <https://www.scholastic.com/readingreport/rise-of-read-aloud.html>

³ <https://www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading/raise-a-reader-blog/how-to-encourage-children-to-read.html>

⁴ <https://www.understood.org/articles/14-ways-to-encourage-your-grade-schooler-to-read>

Help Strengthen Your Child's Reading Skills

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Nurture strong reading skills in your child with these tips:

Diversify reading materials around your house.²

As children learn to read, they may want to practice throughout the day! Ensure they've got a variety of options to choose from for both fun and reference.

Encourage and praise reading aloud.²

Reading aloud is not only a great practice method for your child but also a fantastic indicator of how their skills are developing. Offer reading every other page or chapter to keep the activity engaging.

Write little notes for your child.²

It could be a note in their lunch, household responsibilities, or any quick message they can read throughout the activities of their day.

Try activities that incorporate reading.²

Lots of family friendly activities actually require reading to complete: Board game instructions, cooking or baking recipes, toy builds, and so much more! Encourage your child to read with you through each task. This is also a great vocabulary expander!

Keep writing materials around.²

Reading and writing abilities are closely linked. Give your child ample access to writing materials like pencils, markers, crayons, and paper to foster writing and spelling practice.

Visit the library frequently.²

Library and bookstore visits are excellent ways to invigorate your child's interest in reading. They have hundreds of options across genres and topics. Allow your child to pick out a handful of books they want to bring home.

Remember that rereading is OK!³

Rereading books is a great way to build a child's reading skills! Even if they are familiar with the text, rereading helps build speed, accuracy, and confidence in reading aloud.

There is no rush; be patient.³

When practicing with your child, try not to rush them as they sound out words or get caught up on sounds. Careful listening will make it easier for you to tell what they're struggling with and help them work through the challenge. Remember to praise their efforts; mistakes are all learning opportunities.

Pick books at the right level.³

Your child may be struggling to progress in their reading skills if they're reading materials that are too hard or too easy for them. Check out one of our other free resources titled "Ways to Assess Your Child's Reading Level at Home" to help you determine what grade-level books they should be reading.

Sing along to some learning songs!²

Memorizing catchy educational songs is a great way to help readers of all ages grasp a variety of concepts. There are tunes to learn the alphabet, conjunctions, and other language concepts, and also songs to learn the 50 states, all the bones in the body, and limitless additional options to discover!

Find a book club in your community.¹

Whether meeting in-person or virtually, encourage your child to join a book club or literary circle with their peers in your community. Book programs such as these help students make friends, participate in thoughtful discussions, consider different viewpoints, and hopefully discover new passions for titles they've never heard of.

References:

¹ <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/school/Pages/10-Tips-to-Help-Your-Child-Fall-in-Love-with-Reading.aspx>

² <https://www.readingrockets.org/topics/activities/articles/encouraging-your-child-read>

³ <https://www.understood.org/articles/14-ways-to-encourage-your-grade-schooler-to-read>

Ways to Assess Your Child's Reading Level at Home

Why is determining your child's reading level important?

According to [HarperCollins](#), for children to consistently increase their reading abilities, they should practice with books they can read on their own. Appropriately leveled books should contain some challenging words but shouldn't overwhelm students difficulty.

Determining reading level is important to ensure your child is not getting overly frustrated because they're struggling with material that's too difficult or losing interest in a book that's too easy.

Methods to Try at Home:

Five Finger Method²

Have your child choose any book and flip it to a random page. Ask your child to read the page to you. If your student has difficulty with five or more words on that page, the book is too advanced for them. You can try a variety of pages to confirm the error rate.

Keep a Running Record¹

Make a photocopy of a passage or section of text that's written for the grade level you think your child is reading at. Listen to your student read the passage aloud and mark it where they make errors. Note the type of errors they're making to help you identify what they're having difficulty with. You can also record an audio clip of them reading aloud. Save the recordings by date for easy review.

Track Book Reading Levels³

On the back of most books, near the list price, you'll see something like this: RL 3.3. This reading level indication is an estimation, typically for students in grades K–6, where the first number is the grade level and the second number indicates the month of study. A book with this indicator was written for students with the reading ability and vocabulary in their third month of third grade. Keep track of the reading level of your child's favorite books for a rough estimate of what level they're reading comfortably.

References:

¹ <https://www.harpercollins.com/blogs/harperkids/reading-levels-for-children-explained>

² <https://www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading/raise-a-reader-blog/five-finger-rule.html>

³ <https://www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading/reading-resources/book-selection-tips/learn-about-leveled-reading.html>