Tips for Reading Success

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Book

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Be an author

Would your child like to be a real author? Strengthen his writing by helping him create homemade books with ideas like these.

Hide-and-seek book

For this clever hidden-picture book, have your child color a different background (a playground, a classroom) on each page. Then, he can draw objects to blend in with the scene (a hockey stick on monkey bars, a pencil in the teacher’s hair). At the bottom of each page, help him list the hidden items. Let him make a cover, hole-punch the pages, and tie them together with yarn.

Seasonal storybook

Suggest that your child create a wintry story with white chalk on dark construction paper. He can sketch snowy scenes and write one sentence beneath each picture. (“I woke up, and it was snowing!”) Staple the pages together.

Extra Yarn
When Annabelle finds an apparently bottomless box of yarn, she starts knitting...and knitting. She knits sweaters for people, animals, and even houses in this story by Mac Barnett. Soon, her black-and-white world is filled with color. Will she ever run out of yarn?

Good Night Captain Mama
At bedtime, a mother uses the patches on her military uniform to explain her job to her little boy. Marco learns that his mommy flies airplanes and helps to protect the country. Written in both English and Spanish by Graciela Tiscareño-Sato, an Air Force veteran and a mom. Based on a true story.

Reusing and Recycling
Help your child learn about everyday things he can do to take care of the earth. Author Charlotte Guillain includes suggestions like using cardboard tubes and boxes for craft projects or turning a glass jar into a pencil holder instead of throwing it out.

Cowgirl Kate and Cocoa
This is a story about a cute little cowgirl and her talking horse. Together, they count cows, enjoy treats of apples and carrots, and even have a sleepover in the barn. The first book in a series by Erica Silverman.

Personalize it!

When your youngster makes a book, she can add to the fun—and learning—with one of these finishing touches.

Summary. On the back cover, help her write a few sentences about the story. Tell her that an interesting summary will make people want to read her book!

About the author. Have your youngster write a page with facts about herself to put in her book. Example: “Lily lives in Virginia with her mom, dad, and brother. She likes to write stories about animals.”

Endpapers. Some books have decorative “wallpaper” inside the front and back cover. Your child could glue wrapping paper inside her cover, or she might use paint or crayons to create her own design.

Be an author

Tip: If he’s not writing yet, ask him to dictate the sentences to you.

How-to book

What is your youngster an expert on? Perhaps he’s good at jigsaw puzzles or a whiz at basketball. Give him a long strip of poster board to fold like an accordion—forward and backward. Help him write directions (one step per panel) for putting together a puzzle or shooting a basketball. For example, in the first panel, he might write, “Turn all the pieces right side up.” Finally, he can illustrate each step.
Use books to problem-solve

Your youngster may have learned in school that most storybooks include a conflict, or problem. You can use books to boost her problem-solving skills along with her reading comprehension. Try these ideas.

Discuss problems and solutions.
Read a book to your child, and tell her to listen carefully for the problem. For example, the children in Hansel and Gretel get lost in the woods. After you read, talk about how the characters solved the problem (they used bread crumbs to find their way home). Ask her what else they could have done. Perhaps she’ll imagine Hansel and Gretel using GPS to get out of the forest.

Link to real life. When your youngster faces her own problems, suggest that she think about books she has read. Maybe she’s having a disagreement with a classmate or a sibling. She might try one of the “recipes” for getting along in Enemy Pie (Derek Munson). This will help her to reflect on books and see them as useful as well as entertaining.

Wordplay

Use these activities to build your child’s phonemic awareness—his ability to hear sounds in words:

● Choose a three-letter word, such as cap. Have your youngster substitute different beginning sounds from the alphabet (lap, map, nap, rap, sap, tap, zap). How many can he think of that are actual words?

● Pick a long word, and tell him to clap once as he says each syllable. For mozzarella, he would clap four times: moz-za-rella.

● Ask your child to say a word without the first sound. Example: “Can you say sit without the s?” (Answer: It.)

● Think of a word, and give your youngster a “sound” clue to figure it out. For instance, “I’m thinking of a word for something that you chew. The word has an uh sound in the middle.” (Answer: Gum.)

Learn to read—together!

The teacher also mentioned that the library offers a free adult literacy class once a week. I signed up, and when I told my daughter about my class, she asked if we could do reading “homework” together! We are both learning a lot—and I think it’s good for her to see that learning can take place at any age.