

# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

March 2021



Gregory - Portland ISD

## KID BITS

### Tic-tac-ABCs

Play this twist on tic-tac-toe. Instead of choosing X or O, each person picks a different letter to use. Before writing your letter on the game board, you must find an object that starts with that letter. If your youngster's letter is *m*, she might spot a *mat*. *Tip:* Use letters your child tends to confuse, perhaps *b* and *d*.

### Join the club

Do you have ideas for making your child's school a better place for him to learn and play? A parent-teacher group (PTA, PTO, steering committee) lets you share your thoughts and support the school. Watch newsletters or the school website for meeting dates, and plan to attend or log in.

### If vs. when

Changing just a few words may make your youngster more likely to cooperate without a fuss. Rather than saying, "If you pick up your toys, we'll play a game," try, "When you pick up your toys, we'll have room to play a game." You'll give her a logical reason to cooperate.

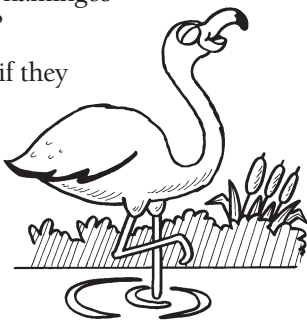
### Worth quoting

"Anyone who does anything to help a child is a hero to me." *Fred Rogers*

### Just for fun

**Q:** Why do flamingos lift one leg?

**A:** Because if they lifted both, they'd fall down.



## Citizenship at home

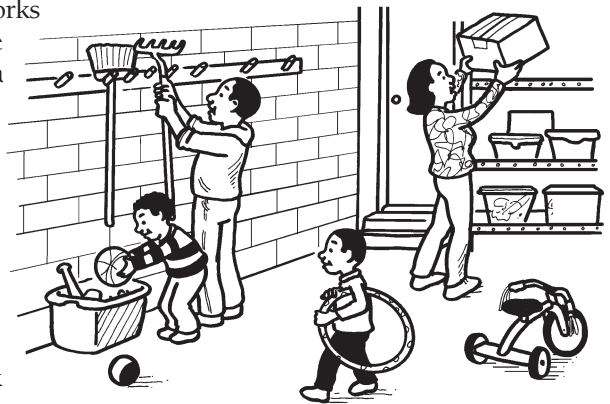
When your child shares, works with others, or helps to make decisions at home, he's being a good citizen. Consider these suggestions to teach him about citizenship.

### Share property

Take turns naming items in your house that your family shares. Your youngster might say the couch, board games, and the TV. Then, talk about how life would be different if you didn't share those things. For instance, it's no fun to play a board game by yourself! Now can your child name things everyone in your community shares? He may think of library books, playgrounds, schools, and streets.

### Do your part

Show your youngster that big jobs are easier—and more fun—when everyone helps out. Pick a project, like cleaning out the garage or doing yard work and give each family member a task. He might organize outdoor toys while you put away tools. *Idea:* Take a walk to look for people working



together. He might see construction workers building a house or delivery people unloading packages.

### Cast a vote

Should you have tacos or pasta for dinner? Which movie will your family watch this weekend? Take a vote so your child sees how group decisions are made. He could set up a "voting booth" by covering an empty tissue box with wrapping paper and putting a pencil and slips of paper beside it. Have him count the votes and announce the winner. ("Taco night won by 1 vote!")♥

## Follow their lead

Letting your youngster take the lead while you play a supporting role can boost her learning. Try these strategies:

- Set out learning supplies like Scrabble tiles or colorful beads. Then, let your child decide what to do with them. Perhaps she'll spell her name with the tiles. Or maybe she will count the beads, sort them by color, or arrange them into a rainbow.
- Maximize learning by encouraging your youngster to explain what she's doing. You might ask, "Which letters did you use to spell your name?" or "Which color bead do you have the most of?"♥



## Engineers solve problems

“How can I build a bird’s nest?”  
 “What could I use to make a crown?”  
 At its heart, engineering is all about solving problems. Encourage your child to think like an engineer with these ideas.

**Read, then build.** Let your youngster use household materials to create items inspired by books. After reading about birds, she could build a nest out of craft



sticks and tape. What other materials will help her hold the nest together? Or if she reads a fairy tale, she might make a crown like kings and queens wear, using cardboard and tape—how can she keep it from falling off her head?

**Create playthings.** Suggest that your child design her own versions of toys and games. Maybe she’ll engineer a boat that will float. Or perhaps she’ll set up a miniature golf course with pool noodles. How could she arrange them so a ball bounces off and goes into a hole?♥

## Q & A Ways to handle frustration

**Q:** Our daughter gets upset easily. Yesterday she burst into tears because she couldn’t cross the monkey bars. What can I do to help her?

**A:** Some children are extra-sensitive at times. The upside is that sensitive youngsters tend to show empathy for others. But they may also become frustrated easily.



When your child gets upset (say, when her drawing doesn’t come out the way she wanted), ask, “What could you do now?” (Get a new piece of paper and start again.) Also, try to praise her when she soothes herself without getting upset: “You worked really hard to put your train track back together.”

Finally, acknowledge your youngster’s frustration: “I know you’re disappointed that you got paint on your new shirt. Let’s go wash it.”♥

### OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote school readiness, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

Resources for Educators,  
 a division of CCH Incorporated  
 128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630  
 800-394-5052 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com  
 www.rfeonline.com  
 ISSN 1540-5567

© 2021 Resources for Educators, a division of CCH Incorporated

## PARENT TO PARENT

### Raising kids who love the outdoors

Our family spent a lot of time outside over the past year as we looked for ways to get out of the house and stay safe. It has been wonderful to see our son Milo develop a love of the outdoors.

In the fall, we camped in the backyard. We showed Milo how we pitch a tent and let him put the stakes in the ground. He watched while I started a campfire, and my husband helped him cook a hot dog over the flames. And we all enjoyed listening to nighttime nature sounds as we fell asleep.

This winter, we explored local nature trails. To keep Milo interested longer, we taught him to skip rocks across a stream and gave him specific things to spot, like red berries. And now that spring is coming, we plan to hike in the mountains. Milo is excited to pack his backpack with his water bottle and a snack—and use binoculars for the first time.♥



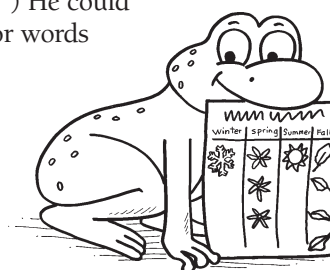
## ACTIVITY CORNER

### The survey says ...

Taking a family survey is a fun way for your little one to practice writing and math while connecting with relatives. Here’s how.

**1. Pick a question.** Encourage your child to think of a question for you to write at the top of a sheet of paper. (“What is your favorite season?”) He could help by writing letters or words he knows.

**2. Set up a graph.** Have your youngster draw lines to divide the paper into four columns, each labeled with a season.



**3. Call relatives.** Your child can ask each person his question. To make a picture graph, he will draw symbols representing their answers in the correct columns.

*Examples:* snowflakes in the winter column, flowers for spring, suns for summer, leaves for fall.

**4. Share results.** When your youngster has all his data, help him mail copies of his graph to relatives. Or he might have a call or video chat to share his findings—and reveal which season is his family’s favorite!♥

# Home & School

## Working Together for School Success

### CONNECTION®

March 2021

Gregory - Portland ISD

#### SHORT NOTES

##### Ask about tests

If your child has standardized tests coming up, ask her to show you any study guides or practice tests she completes. You might have her explain how she arrived at some of the answers. Your interest shows her that the tests are important to you and will encourage her to do her best on test day.

##### Patience pays off

Enjoying leisurely activities with your youngster can teach him the value of patience. For example, make chili together in a slow cooker, then eat a delicious meal you've waited for all day. Play Jenga or build a house of cards—he'll need to take his time to avoid toppling the structure!

##### Sad, or depressed?

It's normal for kids to feel sad occasionally. But if your child becomes withdrawn or moody, has changes in her eating or sleeping habits, or loses interest in things she normally enjoys, talk to her pediatrician. Those may be signs of depression, and the doctor can recommend next steps.

##### Worth quoting

"Always be a first-rate version of yourself instead of a second-rate version of someone else." *Judy Garland*

#### JUST FOR FUN

**Q:** I get bigger every time you subtract something. What am I?

**A:** A hole!



## Learning with hobbies

A hobby gives your child a productive way to spend his free time, and it brings a wealth of real-world learning opportunities. Encourage him to pursue a hobby—and learn from it—with these ideas.

### Reading

Let your youngster read to learn more about a hobby that interests him. If he'd like to learn to play chess, he could read a book on opening moves. Or if he collects comic books, he might read about how to draw comics. Then, give him opportunities to share what he learns. For instance, offer to play chess with him or ask to see the comics he sketches.

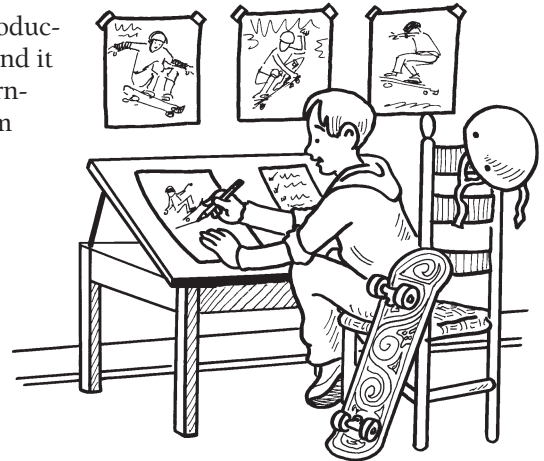
### Writing

Have your child start a journal or scrapbook about his hobby. A skateboarder can write instructions for tricks he's learning and check off each one as he masters it. A youngster who makes balloon animals could take photos of

his completed projects to put in a scrapbook, then write a caption for each.

### Math

Help your child find math in his hobby. If he's a runner, suggest that he keep track of his times and distances and then make a graph to see how he improves. Or if he plays a musical instrument, he can work on timing by writing the fractions above the notes ( $\frac{1}{4}$  note,  $\frac{1}{2}$  note) in sheet music and using them to keep count. ♥



## Ways to offer encouragement

Going beyond general praise and giving your youngster specific feedback can inspire her to keep up the good work. Consider these examples:

- Instead of "You're so smart," try "You're good at thinking things through." *Why?* You'll avoid labeling your child.
- Instead of "You're so helpful," try "Thanks for doing your chores before I asked." *Why?* Your words will motivate your child to repeat her behavior.
- Instead of "Awesome grade," try "I'm proud of you for studying hard." *Why?* This puts the focus on effort rather than grades only.
- Instead of "What a pretty painting," try "I'm impressed by all the details." *Why?* Your youngster will know exactly what made it appealing to you. ♥

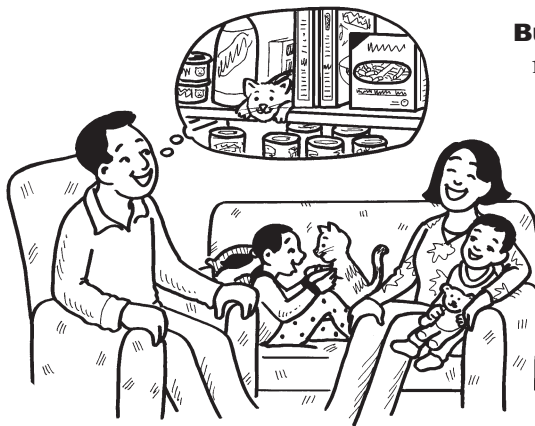




## A caring family

A supportive family can give your youngster confidence and teach her to care about others. Use these ways to show one another that you care.

**Highlight good news.** Let your child write “Family News” on a sheet of paper and tack it to a bulletin board. When something good happens (her big sister is accepted to college, you get a new job), have her post it on the board. Encourage everyone to add a comment to each news item. (“Way to go, Mom!”)



**Build each other up.** When a family member is disappointed or frustrated, chances are someone in your house has been in a similar situation. Ask that person to talk about her experience and how she handled it. For example, your youngster might tell her little brother, “I was sad when I couldn’t have a birthday party with my friends because of the pandemic. But we had fun playing games together on Zoom.”

**Laugh together.** Humor can relieve stress and strengthen bonds. Many families have a collection of “inside” jokes and stories. Tell them frequently, and share a good laugh. (“Remember when we found the cat on the top shelf of the pantry?”)♥

## Q & A Healthy snacks

**Q:** The only snacks my daughter wants to eat are cookies and chips. What should I do?

**A:** Try suggesting fun, creative ways your child can prepare nutritious snacks. You’ll get her invested in making healthy ones that she’ll want to eat.

For instance, have her layer trail mix ingredients in a clear jar. Perhaps she’ll use whole-grain cereal pieces, dried fruit, and nuts or seeds. She could store the jar on the counter with a scoop equaling one serving.



She might also make colorful, single-serving veggie bags to keep front and center in the refrigerator. In separate zipper bags, she can put raw (rinsed) vegetables, such as broccoli florets, carrots, grape tomatoes, and snap peas.

Finally, try to avoid buying empty-calorie snacks like chips and cookies so she’s not tempted by less-healthy options.♥

### OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

Resources for Educators,  
a division of CCH Incorporated

128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630  
800-394-5052 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com  
www.rfeonline.com

ISSN 1540-5621

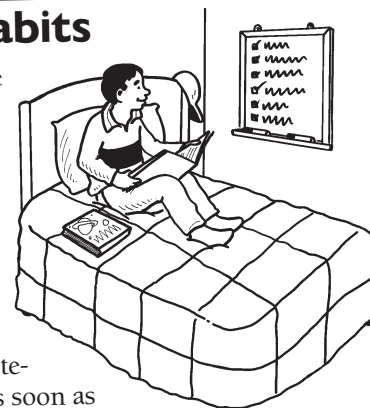
## PARENT TO PARENT

### Strong work habits

Each year it was the same pattern: My son Luis started off the school year strong, but then his work habits slid in the second half. This year was no exception, so I suggested that Luis make a checklist to keep himself on track.

We talked about his habits, such as waiting until the last minute to study for tests or doing homework in front of the TV. Then for each problem area, he listed a solution on a small whiteboard. He included things like “Study for tests as soon as they’re announced” and “Work where I won’t be distracted.”

Luis hung his whiteboard in his room. He reviews it before he starts working each day, then puts a check mark beside each good habit he uses. He’s happy when he shows me he’s checked off all his boxes—and I’m relieved to see him staying on track!♥



## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Smart spending starts now

Learning to make smart financial decisions will help your child now and in the future. Try these activities when you shop together.

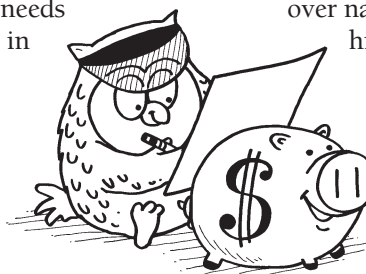
#### Identify needs and wants

Make a grocery list, and ask your youngster to highlight needs in one color and wants in another. For example, he could use a green highlighter for milk and toilet paper and a yellow one for ice cream and popcorn. Explain

that you’ll shop for needs first, then wants if there’s money left in your grocery budget.

#### Go on a saving spree

How much money can your child save your family by choosing generics over name-brand products? Have him write down the prices for both versions of each item. When you finish shopping, he can subtract to find the savings for each product, then add up all the savings to find the total.♥



# Math+Science Connection

Intermediate Edition

Building Understanding and Excitement for Children

March 2021

Gregory - Portland ISD

## INFO BITS

### Rhythm of poetry

Read a poem together.

Then, see if your youngster can identify a pattern. Does every other line rhyme or have the same number of beats? Noticing the rhymes and rhythms will help her hear the math in poetry. *Idea:* Suggest that she use patterns to write her own poem.

### Design a zip line

Challenge your child to engineer a “zip line” for a toy. Let him tie a string between two doors and create a safety harness for the toy from twist ties or rubber bands. Have him give the toy a push—does it make it all the way across the zip line? If not, he could improve on his design by trying different materials for the harness or adjusting the slope of his zip line.

### Book picks

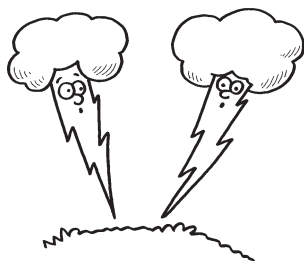
Youngsters can explore numbers in a wacky way with *How Many Guinea Pigs Can Fit on a Plane? Answers to Your Most Clever Math Questions* (Laura Overdeck).

*The Science of Goo! From Saliva and Slime to Frogspawn and Fungus* (DK) bursts with strange facts and gooev trivia that are bound to stick with your child.

### Just for fun

**Q:** What did one lightning bolt say to the other?

**A:** You’re shocking!



## How far? How tall?

Accurate measurements are important not only in math, but also in science and engineering—and in everyday activities like sports, sewing, and planting. Your youngster will be excited to practice measurement with these real-life ideas.

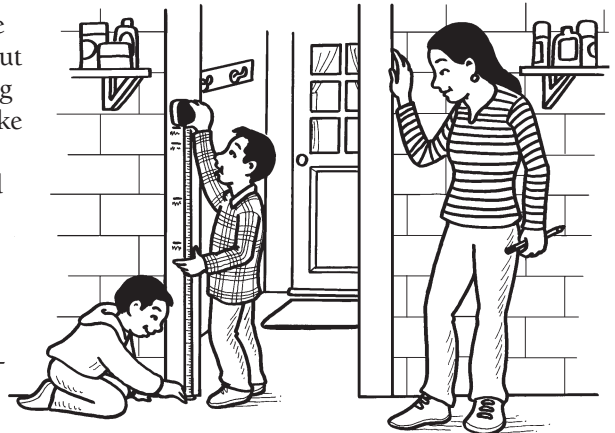
### Measure distance

Coaches and PE teachers measure running courses precisely to make sure all students run the same distance.

Using a yardstick or tape measure, have your child carefully measure a 50-yard course outside (marking it in 10-yard increments). Then, family members can take turns running a 50-yard dash and timing each other. *Idea:* Let him make courses for other distances, perhaps 60 meters or 100 meters.

### Measure height

Children love to discover they’ve grown even  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch, so show your youngster how measuring accurately can determine his true height. Ask him to stand straight with his feet together and his back and heels against a wall.



Make a light pencil mark where the top of his head meets the wall, and help him use a tape measure to determine the distance from the floor to the mark. He can write his height at the mark (say, 55 inches), then measure other family members and record their heights. *Idea:* Measure him every six months so he can track his growth.

**Tip:** A carpenter’s “golden rule” is “Measure twice, cut once.” Encourage your child to double-check his measurements, too. If he gets the same result, chances are he measured correctly. If not, he should measure until he gets the same measurement twice.

## It’s an earthquake!

With this tasty activity, your child will learn about earthquakes—and enjoy eating the results.

First, have her spread cream cheese on wax paper and lay two graham crackers on top, side by side. The graham crackers represent *plates* in Earth’s top layer (*crust*) and the cream cheese represents the second layer (*mantle*). Next, she can model an earthquake by slowly rubbing the crackers together, back and forth. Crumbs will come off, and the crackers will break.

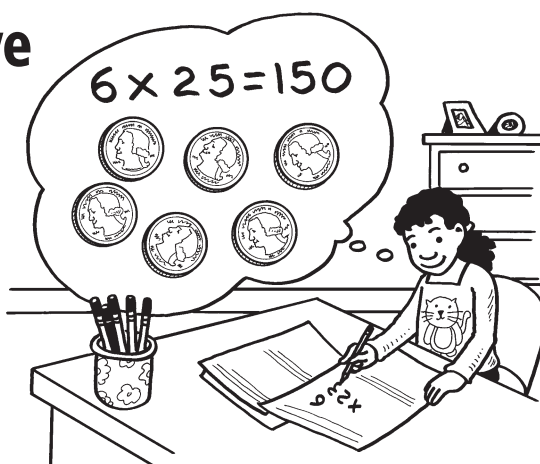
When plates in the crust slide past one another, they sometimes get caught on each other. Then, they suddenly break apart along the edges where they meet (the *fault line*), shaking the ground.




## Estimate, then solve

Estimating answers to math problems before solving them gives your youngster confidence that her answer is right (Yay!) or tells her to try again (Oops!). Suggest these strategies.

**Make it familiar.** Ask your child to think of something familiar she could use to estimate an answer. For  $6 \times 23$ , she might think, “23 is close to 25, and a quarter is 25 cents. Since 6 quarters



would be \$1.50 or 150 cents, 150 is a good estimate.” Now she can compute the actual problem ( $6 \times 23 = 138$ ). She’ll know her answer is reasonable because it is close to, but smaller than, her estimate.

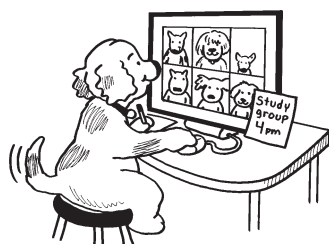
**Make it simpler.** Have your youngster round one of the numbers to the nearest 10 so it’s easier to use. Say she’s solving  $42 \div 5$ . If she rounds 42 down to 40, she would estimate  $40 \div 5 = 8$ . Because she rounded down, she’ll know the answer will be slightly more than 8 ( $42 \div 5 = 8$ , remainder 2). 




## Q & A Study strategies for math tests

**Q:** What are some strategies my son can use to study for math tests?

**A:** Your child’s graded math assignments make great study tools because they include the types of problems he’s likely to see on tests. Encourage him to review them and correct any problems he got wrong. He could also change the numbers to create new practice problems, then check his answers on a calculator.



Your son might also hold virtual study sessions with a friend. They could make up quizzes for each other. Creating, taking, and grading the quizzes will all help them study—together.

Finally, if your son doesn’t fully understand something that’s going to be on a test (say, how to convert fractions into decimals), he should ask his teacher for extra help. 

### OUR PURPOSE


To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote their children’s math and science skills.

Resources for Educators,  
a division of CCH Incorporated  
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630  
800-394-5052 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com  
www.rfeonline.com

## MATH CORNER

### Don’t break the factor chain

With this game, your youngster can practice using factors and multiples. Factors multiply to make a number (4 and 6 are factors of 24 because  $4 \times 6 = 24$ ). Multiples are the result of one number times another (24 is a multiple of 4 and 6).

1. Draw a  $10 \times 10$  grid, and number the boxes 1–100. Using dry beans as tokens, place one on any square (say, 33).
2. The first player puts a bean on any factor or multiple of that number (for instance, 3, because  $3 \times 11 = 33$ , so 3 is a factor of 33).
3. The next player marks a factor or multiple of the new number (3). *Example:* Cover up 15, since  $3 \times 5 = 15$ , so 15 is a multiple of 3. Keep taking turns, each time marking a factor or multiple of the last number played.
4. The last person who can make a move wins. 



## SCIENCE LAB

### See the water glow

Does your child know that 90 percent of deep-sea creatures “glow” in the dark? This demonstration lets him model *bioluminescence*—an animal’s ability to give off light.


**You’ll need:** measuring cup, water, clear jar, pliers, highlighter, disposable gloves, flashlight

**Here’s how:** Ask your youngster to measure 1 cup water into the jar while you use pliers to remove the stopper from the bottom of a highlighter.



Wearing gloves, he can pull out the felt tube, put it in the jar, and squeeze out some of the ink. Now let him turn off the lights and shine a flashlight on the jar.

**What happens?** The water appears to glow.

**Why?** A chemical in high-lighter ink absorbs and then reflects light. In bioluminescence, chemicals in animals produce light so the creatures can see in the dark. That’s why the animals and the water around them look like they’re glowing! 



# Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

March 2021

Gregory - Portland Independent School District

## Book Picks

### ■ *Paint the Wind* (Pam Muñoz Ryan)

When 11-year-old Maya's grandmother dies, the little girl goes to Wyoming to live with relatives she's never met. There she enjoys new freedom and the friendship of a wild mustang. After the mustang saves Maya's life, she must decide whether to keep the horse or set her free. (Also available in Spanish.)



### ■ *Tiny Stitches: The Life of Medical Pioneer Vivien Thomas* (Gwendolyn Hooks)

In this inspiring biography, readers will learn about African American surgical pioneer Vivien Thomas. Unable to go to medical school, he landed a job in a research lab at an all-white college. There, he helped to pave the way for children's open-heart surgery.

### ■ *Professor Astro Cat's Deep-Sea Voyage* (Dominic Walliman)

Follow along as Professor Astro Cat explores the deep sea. Blending fiction and non-fiction, this book includes facts about shipwrecks, coral reefs, sea creatures, and much more. Contains illustrated diagrams and maps plus a glossary with ocean terms. Part of the Professor Astro Cat series.



### ■ *The Hero Revealed* (William Boniface)

Meet Ordinary Boy. In his hometown of Superopolis, he's the only resident without superpowers. Then, he gets to help his favorite superhero and learns that even regular people can be heroes. This humorous book is the first in the Extraordinary Adventures of Ordinary Boy series.



## Creative study guides

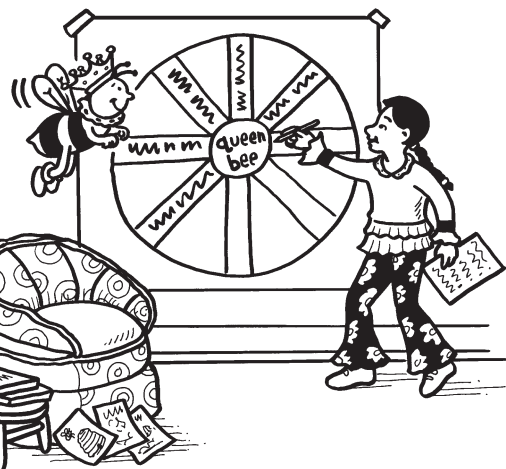
Reading for information is a skill every student needs. Suggest that your child create a study guide to use for her next test. In the process, she'll practice reading closely for key ideas and details. Here are formats she could try.

### Details, details

For each section of a textbook chapter, have your child draw a wheel (a circle with spokes, coming out from its center in all directions). In the hub, she can write the topic (*queen bee*). On each spoke, she could write a detail about that topic (one queen bee per colony, lays up to 1,500 eggs per day).

### Color-coding

Let your youngster choose a different-color pen or font for each kind of fact. For instance, if she's reading about the American Revolution, she could use blue to write notes about people (George Washington, Benjamin Franklin), red for dates (1775, 1783), and green for places (Bunker Hill, Yorktown).



Color-coding will help her remember the information.

### Q&A

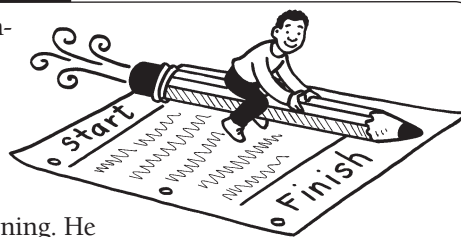
Ask your youngster to pretend she's an expert on a topic she's studying and that a news reporter has interviewed her. She can write an "interview transcript" and use it as a study guide. First, she should rewrite each topic as a question. For instance, "The Importance of Protein" might become "Why is protein important?" Then as she reads, she can fill in the answers to create her transcript. ■

## Strong starts, fine finishes

It takes practice to write effective beginnings and endings for essays or reports. Share these tips with your youngster.

● **Introduction:** The opening sentence welcomes the audience and hints at what's to come. Encourage your child to experiment to find the most inviting opening. He might pose a question ("When was the first robot built?") or present a fact ("The earliest known robot had wings").

● **Conclusion:** The last sentence offers a snapshot of the ideas presented. Have your youngster reread his paper and ask, "What do I want readers to remember?" Then, he can write a line with that in mind. ("Robots may seem like new technology, but history shows they've been around for a long time.") ■



## Combine books with crafts

Crafty activities can encourage your child to think more deeply about books—and make reading more enjoyable. Spark his imagination with projects like these.

**Design graffiti boards.** Have your youngster decorate poster boards with drawings and words related to a book. For example, if he's reading a mystery, he could draw a part of the setting, write clues from the story in a giant question mark, and fill the margins of the poster with his favorite quotes from the book. He'll



have to read carefully to pay attention to what's important.

### Build models.

Let your child use household materials to make 3-D creations that match a book. If he's reading about roller coasters, he might engineer one with cardboard tubes and straws. Or for a tale about forest animals, he could sculpt creatures out of clay. Have him dig for details in the text and examine the illustrations so he can make accurate models. ■

## Parent 2 Parent Be a better speller

My son Elliott has been struggling with spelling, so I shared rules I used at his age, like “i before e, except after c.” But he said he'd learned that many words don't follow those rules. So I asked his teacher for better ways to help him at home.

The teacher suggested that Elliott keep a list of words he frequently misspells and post it over his desk. For example, she pointed out that he tends to put *-able* at the end of words that should have *-ible*. So Elliott made a list that included *collectible*, *edible*, *flexible*, and *visible*.

She also said that while rules can be useful, looking for exceptions might be a fun way to help Elliott remember difficult spellings. When he found *e* before *i* in a “neighborhood meeting” notice and on a “weigh produce here” sign in the store, he decided that words with *igh* have their own rule: *e* before *i* if it sounds like *a*. Now, he's looking for exceptions that don't include *igh*. ■



## Read and write about science

**Q** I think my daughter might want to be a scientist when she grows up!

How could we use her love of science to help her with reading and writing, too?

**A** It's great that your child enjoys science so much. Try getting books of science experiments for her from the library. She can read them and pick out experiments to do at home—following the instructions will give her good reading practice.

Your daughter may enjoy reading science fiction, too. Ask her to point out inventions or technology in the stories that are based on real science or that she thinks could be possible in her lifetime.

You might also suggest that your child start a science journal. She could record the results of her experiments or write about what she spots during walks, such as animal tracks in the mud or flowers sprouting from the ground. ■



## Once upon a time

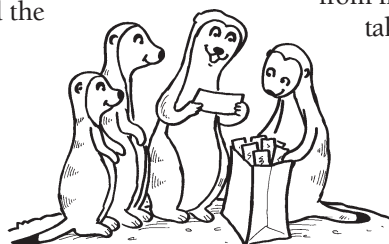
Give your youngster's speaking skills a boost with this family storytelling game.

**1.** Have each player write 10–20 random words (*feud*, *crucial*, *magical*) on separate slips of paper. Fold the slips in half, put them in a bag, and shake.

**2.** Let your child pull out a slip and begin telling a story that uses the word she drew. “Once upon a time, there was a *feud*

between two kings who just happened to be brothers.” Then, the next person draws a word and continues the story. “One king thought it was *crucial* to build a moat to keep his brother's knights from invading.” Continue taking turns picking slips and adding to the story.

**3.** The person who chooses the last word gets to wrap up the tale. ■



### OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote their children's reading, writing, and language skills.

Resources for Educators,  
a division of CCH Incorporated  
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630  
800-394-5052 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com  
www.rfeonline.com  
ISSN 1540-5583