

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

October 2020



Gregory - Portland ISD

KID BITS

Strengthen small fingers

What do a button and an old potato masher have in common? They can be play dough tools that will spark your youngster's creativity and build his finger muscles. Together, look around the house for options, then encourage him to use his tools to mash, mold, or stamp play dough.

Let's brush our teeth

Stand in front of the mirror with your child while the two of you brush your teeth. She'll watch you to learn the right technique—brushing in circles to clean all the surfaces of her teeth. *Idea:* Play a two-minute song so she brushes for the right amount of time.

Chain of kindness

Help your youngster make a "kindness chain." Each time he sees someone do a kind deed, he can write (or dictate to you) a description of it on a strip of colored paper. ("Dad made a playlist of Mom's favorite songs.") Have him tape the ends of the strip together to create a link, then add new links as he spots more acts of kindness.

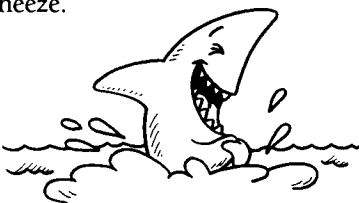
Worth quoting

"Yesterday's the past, tomorrow's the future, but today is a gift. That's why it's called the present." *Bil Keane*

Just for fun

Q: Why do sharks live in salt water?

A: Because pepper makes them sneeze.



Better behavior: Plan ahead

What's behind your child's behavior? Little ones cope with challenging situations in different ways, and one way is by acting out. Use these strategies to prevent misbehavior before it starts.

Know the cues

Your youngster might not tell you that she's tired, hungry, or worried. But she may show you how she's feeling by throwing a tantrum or starting an argument with her brother. Watch for triggers that cause her to act up. Prevention may be as simple as providing a nap, a snack, or a snuggle and some reassurance.

Keep her in the loop

Remember that your child *wants* to behave well. Set her up for success by explaining ahead of time what she's supposed to do. ("When we walk to the mailbox, you need to hold my hand the whole time.") Prepare her for changes in routine, too, as these can lead to misbehavior. ("We have to take the car for



repairs. Why don't you pick out books to read while we wait?")

Provide plenty of attention

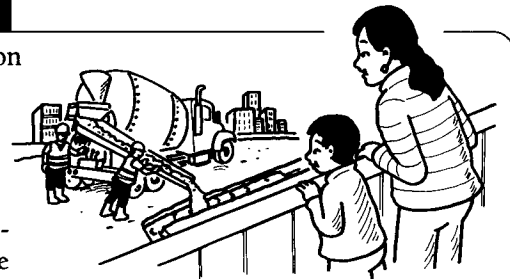
Kids have a knack for finding inconvenient times to act out, like when you're on a conference call or in the shower. Often, that behavior is a request for attention. When possible, give your youngster a "fill-up" of attention beforehand so she'll be less likely to misbehave. For example, you might color or sing songs before your call or shower.♥

A passion for learning

Liam loves construction sites. Aaron is crazy about sea animals. Whatever your youngster is into, consider these tips for using his interests to help him learn.

● **Talk about it.** When you pass a construction site, ask your child to name vehicles he knows. Point out workers wearing *hard hats* or mixing *cement*. You'll boost his oral language and vocabulary.

● **Explore together.** Help him do research to learn about things he may not be able to see in person. For instance, check out books about coral reefs, observe sea turtles via online zoo cams, or let your youngster ask an out-of-town relative how she cares for the fish in her home aquarium.♥



Time for a story

Your youngster's very first reading lessons take place while you read aloud to him. Here's what he learns from story time.

How books work. We read the words on the pages from left to right and top to bottom. Run your finger under the words or let your child point to them as you read. Soon, he will recognize words he sees frequently.



How reading sounds. Try to read at a comfortable pace and with expression so your little one gets a feel for what fluent reading sounds like. Add to the experience by giving each character a different voice.

How readers think. Encourage your youngster to be a thinking reader. Ask questions like "Why did the tortoise win the race?"

Also, compare story events to your child's experiences. ("This reminds me of when we saw that meteor shower.") And pause now and then to let him tell you what he likes best about the story and why.♥

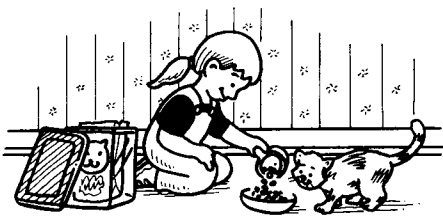
**PARENT
TO
PARENT**



Little helper

My daughter Janelle loves to help around the house, but she would often create more work for me. I didn't want her to feel like she wasn't capable, so I made a few adjustments to help her be successful.

When it was time for Janelle to set the table, I put out one place setting, and she used it as a guide for setting the other places. Then, I gave her a measuring cup for scooping up cat food so she knows how much to feed our kitty.



I also resist the urge to go behind Janelle for changes that don't really matter. It's not a big deal, for instance, if the towels and washcloths aren't folded into exact fourths. Janelle may not get everything perfect, but that's okay. My little helper is becoming a big help!♥

OUR PURPOSE

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**Q
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A**

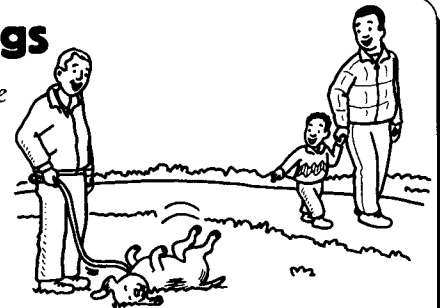
Talking about feelings

Q: How can I help my grandson be more considerate of other people's feelings?

A: Young children are still learning to recognize their own emotions, which is the first step toward feeling empathy for others. With a little guidance from you, he'll be on the right path.

When you take walks, mention how people or animals might feel. ("That dog is rolling around in the grass—he looks happy.") Or as you read or watch TV together, ask him to act out the characters' emotions. ("Piglet is sad. Can you pretend to be Piglet and show me how he feels?") Your grandson might hang his head and wipe away pretend tears. Then ask, "If you were Pooh, what would you do to make Piglet feel better?"

The more your grandson explores emotions, the better he'll understand his feelings and those of others—and that's where empathy starts.♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

Welcome to my apple orchard

If you can't get to an apple orchard, bring the orchard to you! This "tasty" activity lets your child practice writing and math.

Set it up

Help your youngster cut out red, yellow, and green paper apples, put them in containers, and label each "basket" with a price. She could even create pretend apple products—maybe she'll line a clear jar with yellow paper and label it "Allie's Applesauce. \$2.00."



Go shopping

Using real or pretend money, be your child's customer. Show her how to count out three quarters for your red apple or four dollar bills for your apple pie.

Count and taste

Add real apples to your youngster's orchard. Cut open two different varieties, and ask her to scoop out and count the seeds in each.

Which kind has more?

Then, taste the apples—are they sweet? Tart?

Which do each of you like best?♥

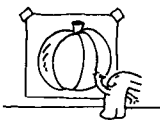
Home & School

CONNECTION®

Working Together for School Success

October 2020

Gregory - Portland ISD



SHORT NOTES

Spot respect

Ask your youngster to write the word “R-E-S-P-E-C-T” across the top of a sheet of paper, with a column for each letter. Post the paper on the fridge, and let everyone write examples of respect that start with those letters. (“Return borrowed items in good condition.” “Express thanks for favors.”) Put a tally mark by each one someone does or notices this week.

Sprinkle in similes

Your child can use similes—comparisons with *like* or *as*—to write vivid descriptions. Try this: Pick something (say, the wind), and take turns describing it with a simile. Your youngster might say, “The wind tickled my ear *like* a whisper.” Or you could say, “The wind howled *as* loudly *as* a wolf.”

DID YOU KNOW?

The last speech sounds children typically master include *ch*, *sh*, and *th*. By age 8, your youngster should pronounce all sounds correctly in the beginning (*cheese*), middle (*seashell*), or end (*with*) of a word. If you’re concerned about his speech, contact his teacher. She may suggest an evaluation by the school speech therapist.

Worth quoting

“Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.” *Arthur Ashe*

JUST FOR FUN

Q: What’s one question you can never answer with “Yes”?

A: What does n-o spell?



Homework success

Which homework assignment should your youngster tackle first? How can she make sure she follows the directions? Suggest these strategies that will help her do her best at homework time.

Start smart

Before your child digs into the day’s homework, have her rank her assignments from easiest to hardest. She may want to do the hardest work first while her mind is fresh. Or perhaps she’d prefer to get an easier assignment out of the way first to give her a sense of accomplishment.

Read the instructions

Paying careful attention to directions can help your youngster complete assignments correctly. For instance, the instructions might say to write explanations or draw pictures to show her thinking in solving math problems. Also, tell her that if she doesn’t understand the directions, it’s okay to ask for help. Offer to read them with her, or she could call a friend.

Share expectations

How you tell your child what you expect will go a long way toward turning your expectations into his reality. Consider these three techniques.

1. Show understanding. You might say, “I know you want to play, but it’s time to study for your test.”

2. Give choices. Your youngster may do what’s expected if he gets to decide when to do it. Ask him, “Do you plan to practice piano before or after dinner?”

3. Look to the future. Help your child tie your expectations to his goals. Does he want to become a race car mechanic? Try: “When you grow up, you’ll need to be organized to know exactly where all your tools are.”♥

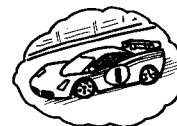


Take breaks

Short breaks will help your child stay focused. Between assignments or subjects, let her set a timer for 10 minutes. She can stretch, snuggle with the cat, or dance to music until the timer goes off, then get back to work.

Review work

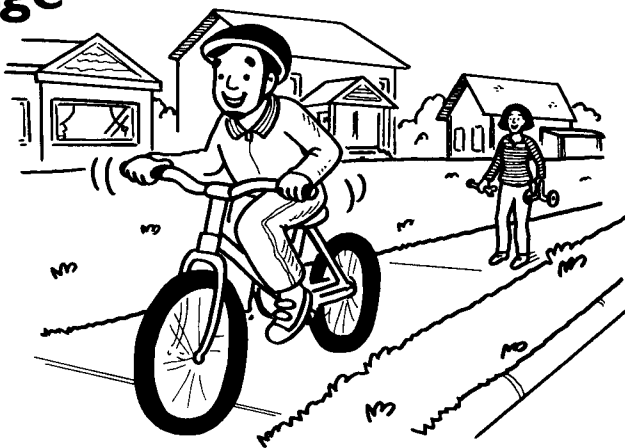
As your youngster finishes each assignment, have her check it over before putting it away or sending it electronically. Is her name on her paper? Did she skip any parts? Do all answers make sense? Once she’s satisfied, she should put her paper in her backpack or hit “send.”♥



Count on courage

Children may believe that being brave means being fearless. But having courage really means taking action even when something feels scary—like learning to ride a bike or speaking out if something is wrong. Encourage your child's bravery with these tips.

Recognize it. Since courage often doesn't feel "brave" while it's happening, your youngster might not realize he is being brave. When he



shows courage, point it out to him. ("It was brave of you to meet the neighbor's dog. I know you're not comfortable around big dogs.") Or you could say, "It took a lot of courage to tell your friend to stop teasing that girl."

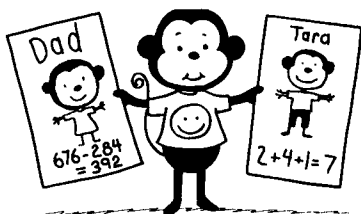
Control feelings. If your child is nervous or afraid, he may convince himself that something is too difficult. Help him develop ways to manage his feelings. He might take a few slow, deep breaths before he tries riding his bike without training wheels. Or he can give himself a pep talk before speaking up for himself. ("I know it's wrong to share answers. I'm doing the right thing.")♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

"I'm 3 x 3 years old!"

Age, shoe size, address ... your child's world is full of numbers. For a fun way to practice math facts, she can use those numbers to make up personalized math problems for everyone in your family.

Have each person write equations about herself or relatives. Your youngster might write " $2 + \text{my shoe size} + 1 = 7$ " (answer: size 4). And you could write " $676 - 284 = \text{our house number}$ " (answer: 392). More numbers to use in equations: age of our dog, Dad's birth year, number of people living in our home, year of grandparents' wedding.



Trade papers—can you solve each other's problems? Then, let your child display the math by drawing portraits of your family and writing the equations on each person's portrait.♥

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Strengthen bonds with family traditions

Traditions build a sense of security by giving your youngster something to count on. Try these ideas.

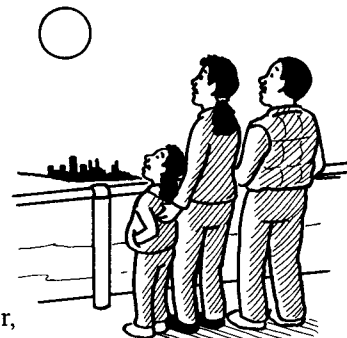
Talk about family traditions

Maybe you take a full-moon walk once a month or visit a pumpkin farm every October. Discussing these traditions will help your child recognize and treasure them as part of what makes your family special.

Make adjustments

Accept that some traditions may not work this year, such as hosting a World Series watch party or attending a neighborhood potluck. Then look for ways to adapt them. Perhaps you'll eat peanuts and popcorn with your family while watching baseball or classic sports on TV.

Tip: If you have a blended family, start new traditions together—and be sure to keep old ones, too. You'll build stronger bonds and a sense of a family identity.♥



Q & A Learning to brainstorm

Q: My son often has to brainstorm for school assignments, but instead of coming up with a lot of ideas, he gets stuck after one or two. How can he learn to generate more ideas on his own?

A: Brainstorming often stalls when kids spend too much time trying to think of "good" ideas. Remind your son that brainstorming has no wrong

answers, and a so-so idea might lead him to an ideal solution.

Practice brainstorming together. Each night, try to come up with a headline that describes your day, a new title for tonight's bedtime story, or a name for a stuffed animal. Your son can toss out the first idea, then take turns suggesting others until he has one he likes. Over time, he'll get more comfortable offering ideas without overthinking them.♥



Math+Science Connection

Intermediate Edition

Building Understanding and Excitement for Children

October 2020

Gregory - Portland ISD



INFO BITS

Let's skip count

Can your child skip count by numbers other than 2s, 5s, or 10s? Give him a random number (say, 7) and a starting point (perhaps 65). He would count 65, 72, 79, 86. Then, have him skip count backward. Maybe you'll have him begin at 103 and count back by 11s (103, 92, 81, 70).

Making mountains

Have your youngster lay two sheets of paper on a baking sheet so they overlap slightly and spread sand (or soil) over the seam. Holding down the top sheet with one hand, she should slowly push the other sheet underneath. The sand starts to mound. This shows how underground movements help form mountains over time.



Book picks

■ Marty views every situation like a math equation in *The Math Wiz* (Betsy Duffey). But can he solve the problem of being picked last in gym class?

■ Captivate your child with fascinating facts about tarantulas, diving bell spiders, jumping spiders, and more in *Spiders* (Kay de Silva).

Just for fun

Q: Which weighs more, 1 pound of rocks or 1 pound of feathers?

A: Neither—each weighs 1 pound!



Mental math games

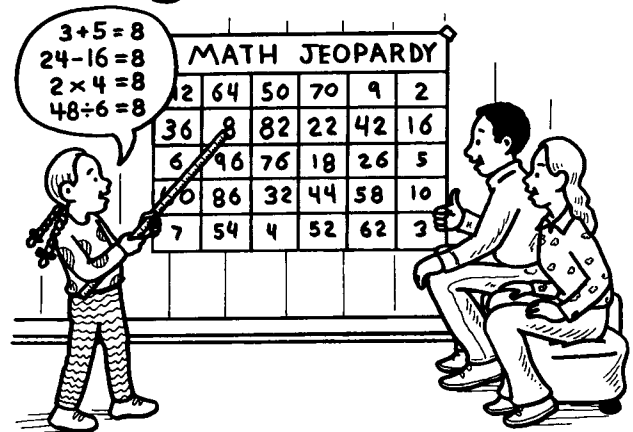
The more often your youngster does math in her head, the more efficient she'll become. Play these games that will inspire her to come up with strategies for solving problems—without pencil and paper.

Math Jeopardy

In this game, players first choose answers and then call out problems. Let your child draw a Jeopardy board (6 columns, 5 rows) and write a one- or two-digit number in each box.

Take turns picking an answer (say, 8) and stating four problems (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division) that equal it. *Example:* $5 + 3$, $60 - 52$, 4×2 , $16 \div 2$. Your youngster will practice doing all four operations in her head!

Check problems on a calculator. If they're all correct, score 8 points and cross out the 8. When all answers are chosen, the person with the highest score wins.



Fact fluency race

Who can score closest to 100 points without going over? Each player rolls a die to get her starting score. On each additional roll, she may add the number rolled to her score or multiply the number by her score.

Say your youngster has 32 points and rolls 5. By using the mental math strategy of rounding, she'll realize that 32×5 would put her over 100, since $30 \times 5 = 150$. So adding ($32 + 5 = 37$) is the better choice.

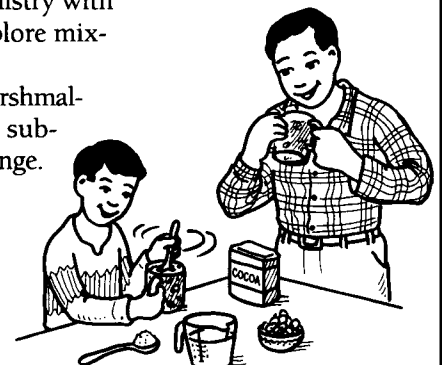
Keep track of scores on paper. A player may choose to stop rolling at any time—the winner is the person who gets closest to 100. 🎲

Mixtures and solutions

Stir up your child's enthusiasm for chemistry with some hot chocolate! Here's how he can explore mixtures and solutions.

First, let him scoop cocoa powder and marshmallows into a mug. It's a *mixture* because the substances don't dissolve, melt, or otherwise change. What happens when he adds hot milk? It becomes a *solution* because the cocoa dissolves and the marshmallows melt.

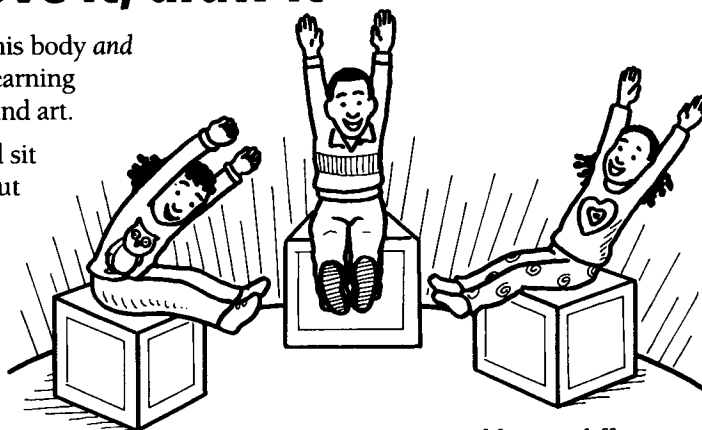
Together, think of more examples of mixtures and solutions. Your youngster might say that trail mix is a mixture and lemonade is a solution. 🍹



Geometry: Move it, draw it

Your youngster can stretch his body and his mind with these ideas for learning geometry through movement and art.

Strike a pose. Have your child sit upright with his legs straight out in front of him and his arms stretched above his head. He's a right angle (90°). How could he make an acute angle (less than 90°)? (Lean



forward.) An obtuse angle (more than 90°)? (Lean backward.)

Now suggest that he hold his arms so they're parallel lines (lines that never touch). Can he make perpendicular lines (lines that intersect at right angles) with his arms?

Create abstract art. Encourage your youngster to draw a dozen straight, crisscrossing lines all over a piece of paper and color the shapes he forms.

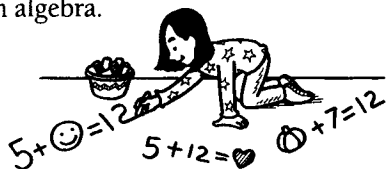
He could use a different color for each type of shape (trapezoid, rhombus, pentagon) and count how many of each there are. Now let him display his colorful work of art on the refrigerator.

**PARENT
TO
PARENT**

Solving for x

I noticed my daughter Lucy's math assignments had problems with x in them. Since I didn't do equations like that until middle school, I asked her teacher why they were already doing algebra.

He explained that teaching kids to solve for x is an early algebra skill that builds number sense and gives them a head start on the more advanced math they'll do later. That made sense to me, so I asked how I could help Lucy work on algebra.



The teacher said we might make up problems with numbers missing in different places, such as $x + 7 = 12$, $5 + x = 12$, or $5 + 7 = x$. He pointed out that Lucy doesn't have to use x —she could draw a heart, a star, or anything she likes.

Lucy decided to write problems on the sidewalk using pictures in place of x . Sometimes, we leave equations on sticky notes for each other to find—under dinner plates or on the bathroom mirror, for instance. Her current favorite math activity? Typing equations on my phone or tablet—with emojis in place of x .

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MATH CORNER

Place-value scarecrow

This twist on "Hangman" will build your child's understanding of place value.

1. Secretly think of a four- or five-digit number. (You may use the same digit more than once.) Draw a blank line for each place.

Example: For 5,078, write $_ _ _ _$.

2. Your youngster should guess a digit (0–9). If he guesses 7, you would say, "There's a 7 in the tens place," and he would write a 7 in the correct blank ($_ _ 7 _$).

3. If he guesses a digit that's not in your number, he draws a scarecrow body part and writes the digit next to it.

4. When all the blanks are filled in, ask your child to read the number to you ("Five thousand seventy-eight").

5. Switch roles, and play until your scarecrow is complete.



SCIENCE LAB

Why does my brain do that?

Your family may get tongue-tied with this brain-testing experiment.

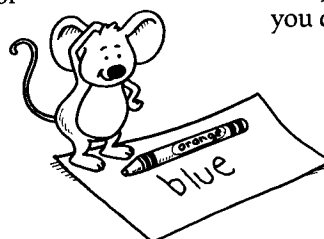
You'll need: 2 sheets of white paper, 8 different-color crayons or markers, stopwatch

Here's how: On one piece of paper, have your child write 8 color words with matching crayons (blue with a blue crayon). On the second sheet, she should write the same words, but this time in a different order and in the "wrong"

colors (blue might be written in orange). Time family members as they quickly say the colors of the words on the first page. Repeat with the second page—make sure to say the colors and not read the actual words (say, "orange" rather than "blue").

What happens? You say the colors when they match the words faster than you do when they don't match.

Why? One part of the brain reads words and another part identifies colors. When you try to simply name the colors, your brain instead tries to read the words.



Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

October 2020

Gregory - Portland Independent School District



Book Picks

■ *Joey Fly Private Eye in Creepy Crawly Crime* (Aaron Reynolds)

In the first book of the Joey Fly, Private Eye series, this graphic novel mystery stars an all-bug cast. Joey Fly is a detective who wants to protect Bug City. His latest case: Find Delilah the butterfly's missing diamond pencil case.

■ *The Thrifty Guide to Ancient Rome* (Jonathan W. Stokes)

Your child will become a "time traveler" in this guidebook that transports readers to Ancient Rome. A humorous book from the Thrifty Guide series, it weaves in historical information and introduces young readers to an important period in history. Includes maps and illustrations, and advises travelers on where to stay, what to wear, and more.



■ *Sarai and the Meaning of Awesome (Sarai #1)* (Sarai Gonzalez and Monica Brown)

Sarai has always lived close to her cousins and grandparents. When their rented home goes up for sale, her mission is to raise money so they don't have to move. She sells cupcakes and lemonade, and even enters a dance contest. Book 1 in the Sarai series. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *10 Plants that Shook the World* (Gillian Richardson)

How much trouble can a simple plant cause? Plenty! This book gets to the roots of 10 plants that started wars, helped medicine, and altered history. Fun facts, history, and anecdotes show how something as small as a plant can change the world.



Fall for nonfiction

Reading about the real world is fascinating! Whether your child is already a nonfiction reader or is new to these books, you can help him fall in love with "reality reading." Try these tips.

Discover interesting people

Biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, and diaries are often popular with youngsters. Encourage your child to find books about athletes, inventors, or presidents. Just one good story can get him hooked on nonfiction.

Use fiction as inspiration

Sometimes the setting or subject of a novel can lead to new nonfiction reading. Talk to your youngster about fiction he reads, and suggest topics he might look into. Was he fascinated by New York City or the Roaring Twenties in a recent story? He could ask a librarian to recommend nonfiction books that give him the real scoop.

Keep up with the news

The newspaper is a regular source of nonfiction. Hand your child a section,



and invite him to read alongside you. He can try different parts to find a favorite—and to discover various kinds of nonfiction. For instance, he could read factual accounts in the news section and persuasive pieces on the opinion page. Tip: Share news websites, too.

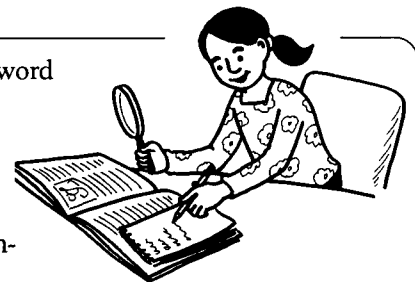
Explore a school subject

Perhaps your youngster is studying the solar system in science class or Greek mythology in social studies. Have him type that topic into the library database and look for nonfiction books. They can deepen his knowledge and offer new insights that will help him in school. ■

Unraveling words

Your youngster is reading and comes to a word she doesn't know the meaning of. What does she do? These strategies can help her figure it out:

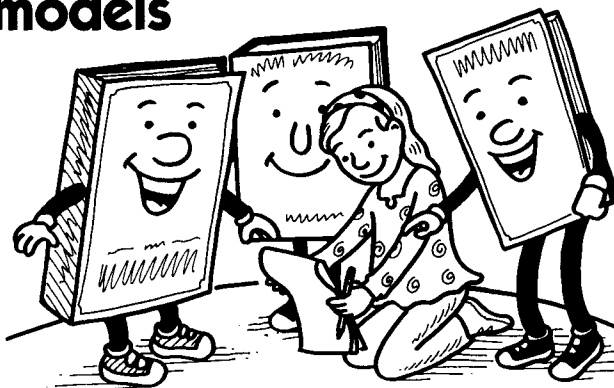
- Reread the sentence, and try to substitute a different word that would make sense. The context might make the unfamiliar word clear.
- Study the word for clues. Does she recognize any part of the word, such as a *prefix* (beginning), *suffix* (ending), or *root* (base word)?
- Write down the word. Then, look up its meaning and synonyms in a dictionary or a thesaurus. Seeing synonyms for the word can help her remember its definition in the future. ■



Authors as role models

The pages of your child's favorite book hold more than a good tale. They contain examples of writing techniques she can use in her own stories. Encourage her to watch for these.

Transitions. Good writing flows smoothly from one event to another, and transition words and phrases make that happen. Suggest that your youngster look closely at how an author switches the action to a different place ("Meanwhile, back at the villain's lair ...") or time ("Later, while Mom fixed dinner ..."). Ask her why clear transitions are important (they lead the reader through the story).



When she writes a story, suggest that she circle places where the action changes. Then she can come up with interesting transitions.

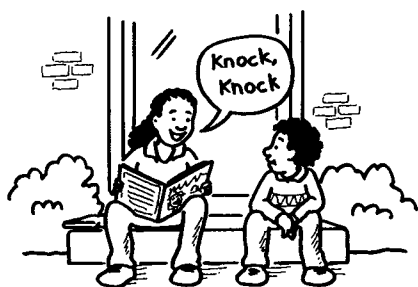
Tense. An author may choose to write in the past or present tense. Have your child look for books with examples of each and try reading a sentence or two in the opposite tense. *Example:* "The leaves are falling from the tree" (present) vs. "The leaves fell from the tree" (past). Which does she

prefer? What effect does each have? The present tense may make her feel like the story is happening right now, for instance. Encourage her to experiment with each technique in her own stories. ■

Make reading fun(ny)

Psst! Want your youngster to spend more time reading? Tickle her funny bone! Consider these three hints.

1. Keep joke books and volumes of silly poems on the coffee table, in the bathroom, and in the car for quick reading any time.
2. Help your child find humorous stories at the library. She could ask her teacher, the librarian, or cousins and friends for funny authors they like. (Two to try: Tom Angleberger and Jeff Kinney.)



3. Look up comic books at the library. Also, when you read a funny comic strip or cartoon in the newspaper, cut it out to share with her, or email your youngster ones that you find online. ■

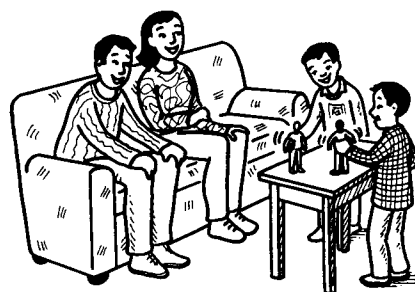
Parent 2 Parent

Act it out

When my son Steven had trouble following story plots, the reading specialist suggested that we take advantage of the fact that he likes to perform in school plays. She said they were acting out reading material during resource sessions at school, and she thought this approach would work at home, too.

The funny thing is, it has turned out to be a great activity for our entire family. To "see" the action in the novel he was reading for class, we used his little brother's action figures as characters from the story.

While I read, Steven and Timmy moved the figures around on the table according to the description from the book. Then, the two boys acted out the chapter themselves. As Steven made up the dialogue, I could tell that he understood what had happened in the story. Now reading time has turned into acting time! ■



Fun with Words

What's in a contraction?

Contractions such as *it's*, *she'll*, and *wouldn't* add variety to our language and help to make writing flow smoothly. These activities will show your youngster how language sounds without contractions and help him learn to spell them.

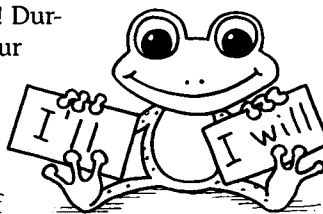
Talk and listen

Announce that no contractions are allowed at dinner! During conversations, your child will need to choose his words carefully. He might say, "I will have some peas" instead of

"I'll have some peas." Everyone must listen closely to see if anyone uses a contraction. Who can go the longest without saying one?

Read and write

Ask your youngster to read a short newspaper article out loud, replacing each contraction with the two words that form it. For example, if he sees *you're*, he would say *you are*. Then, have him write each contraction on one side of an index card and the two words that form it on the other side. This will help him remember the correct spelling. ■



OUR PURPOSE

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

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