

Top Ten Ways to Improve Reading Skills

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Nothing is more important to academic achievement than being a good reader. Parents know their children best and can provide the one-on-one time and attention that will lead them to success in reading. Here is a list of ways to help your children become more effective readers.

1. Set aside a regular time to read to your children every day.

Studies show that regularly reading out loud to children will produce significant gains in reading comprehension, vocabulary, and the decoding of words. Don't stop reading aloud when your children begin to read themselves. Whether your children are preschoolers or preteens, reading aloud to them will increase their desire to read independently.

2. Surround your children with reading material.

Children with a large array of reading materials in their homes score higher on standardized tests. Tempt your kids to read by having a large supply of appealing books and magazines at their reading level. Put the reading materials in cars, bathrooms, bedrooms, family rooms, and even (or especially) by the TV.

3. Have a family reading time.

Establish a daily 15 to 30 minute time when everyone in the family reads together silently. Seeing you read will inspire your children to read. Just 15 minutes of daily practice is sufficient to increase their reading fluency.

4. Encourage a wide variety of reading activities.

Make reading an integral part of your children's lives. Have them read menus, roadside signs, game directions, weather reports, movie time listings, and other practical everyday information. Make sure that your child understands what they are reading. If they are reading for a purpose, such as above, have them relate the information to you. If they are reading a story, see if they are able to retell the sequence of events. Also, make sure they always have something to read in their spare time when they are waiting for appointments or riding in a car.

5. Develop the library habit.

Entice your children to read more by taking them to the library every few weeks to get new reading materials. The library also offers reading programs for children of all ages that may appeal to your children and further increase their interest in reading.

6. Be knowledgeable about your children's progress. Find out what reading skills they are expected to have at each grade level. The school's curriculum will give you this information. Track their progress in acquiring basic reading skills on report cards and standardized tests.

7. Look for reading problems.

Teachers do not always detect children's reading problems until they've become serious. Find out if your children can sound out words, know sight words, use context to identify unknown words, and clearly understand what they read.

8. Get help promptly for reading problems.

Reading problems do not magically disappear with time. The earlier children receive help, the more likely they will become good readers. Make sure your children receive necessary help from teachers, tutors, or learning centers as soon as you discover a problem.

9. Use a variety of aids to help your children.

To help your children improve their reading, use textbooks, computer programs, books-on-tape, and other materials available in stores. Games are especially good choices because they let children have fun as they work on their skills.

10. Show enthusiasm for your children's reading.

Your reaction has a great influence on how hard they will try to become good readers. Be sure to give them genuine praise for their efforts.

