

# Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

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Elmwood Park CUSD 401  
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## Book Picks

### Read-aloud favorites

#### ■ *Drum Dream Girl* (Margarita Engle)

A little girl dreams of playing the drums, but on her island, only boys are drummers. She plays in her imagination and practices on furniture. Finally her dad gets her drumming lessons. Based on the life of Millo Castro Zaldarriaga, who broke Cuba's male-only drumming barrier.



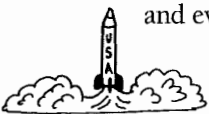
#### ■ *Born to Read* (Judy Sierra)

The moment baby Sam opens his eyes, he knows how to read his name. From that point on, he never stops reading. As Sam grows up, reading helps him win a bike race and even saves his town from a baby giant named Grundaloon. A fun book about the love of reading.

#### ■ *The Best Book of Spaceships*

(Ian Graham)

Space is the place in this nonfiction book! Your aspiring astronaut will learn about planets, rocket power, and even what it's like to work in space. Each page contains detailed photographs, so your child can see spacesuits and space stations. Includes a glossary of space words.



#### ■ *Little Blue Truck* (Alice Shertle)

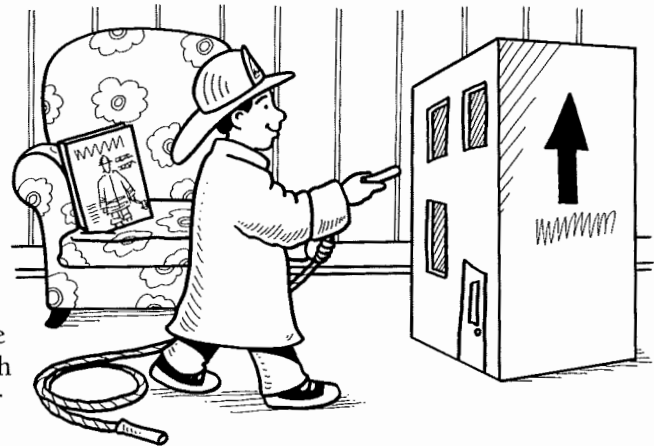
"Beep!" says the little blue truck as he greets all the farm animals. The animals respond with their own sounds like "Baa" and "Oink." When an unfriendly dump truck gets stuck in the mud, it's up to the blue truck and his animal friends to help. (Also available in Spanish.)



## Book-inspired play

After reading a book on firefighters, Jonathan puts on his red hat and pretends to spray water from a jump rope. Lucy reads a story about trains, then lines up a row of kitchen chairs and climbs aboard.

Children's play is often inspired by books. Combine playtime and story time with these ideas that stretch your youngster's thinking.



### Dress-up time

Veterinarian, chef, banker... it's fun for kids to try out grown-up roles. When you read to your child, point out jobs people do. Afterward, help him gather costumes and props (apron, cooking utensils). As he plays, encourage him to use vocabulary from the story. ("I'm kneading the dough like Baker Joe did.")

### Building blocks

Place books near your youngster's blocks, and he can create buildings from the stories' settings like an igloo or airport. Ask him about his building's design.

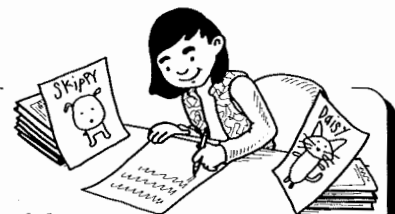
("Why is there a tunnel in front of your igloo's door?") If he's not sure, he could look in the book (the tunnel blocks wind and cold when the door is open).

### Treasure bin

Fill a plastic container with sand or dry rice or beans. Suggest that your child put in items related to a story he enjoyed and act it out. Maybe he'll get seashells and a mini beach bucket for a book about the ocean. Or he might bury coins when he reads a nonfiction book about money—he can dig them up, estimate the amount, then count to check. ♥

## Collect lessons from authors

Professional authors make great "mentors" for little ones who are just starting to write. Here are writing techniques your child can discover:



- Help your youngster read a book with a pattern and then write a repeating story. For example, on each page of *It Looked Like Spilt Milk*, Charles G. Shaw writes: "Sometimes it looked like ( \_\_\_\_\_ ), but it wasn't ( \_\_\_\_\_ ). It was ( \_\_\_\_\_ )!" Have your child make up the pattern she will build her tale around.
- Let your youngster read multiple stories by the same author and try the plot structure in a story of her own. In both *Stellaluna* and *Verdi*, Janell Cannon tells of a little animal who overcomes a problem and makes new friends. What problem will the characters face in your child's story, and how will they solve it? ♥

# Read the signs

Your town is full of signs for your child to read. Help her practice using strategies to sound out words by looking for these three things.

**1. Letter combinations.** Your youngster is probably learning to recognize letter combinations like *th*, *str*, *ph*, and *qu*. Pick one to look for while you stroll—maybe you’ll spot a “No hand-held phones” or “Quarry entrance ahead” sign. If she struggles, remind her of the sounds the combinations make (“Ph sounds like f”).



**2. Words within words.** Bigger words are easier for your child to read if she finds smaller words inside them. Call out compound words you see, like *railroad* or *westbound*. Can your youngster read the words that make it up (*rail* and *road*, *west* and *bound*)?

**3. Beginnings and endings.** Knowing prefixes (*re-*, *un-*, *dis-*) and suffixes (*-ed*, *-er*, *-ing*) helps your child read words. Luckily, road signs contain a lot of these (“Dismount bicycle on bridge,” “Pedestrian crossing”). How many will you and your youngster spot and read during your walk?♥



## First, next, and last

Some words act like glue—they make sentences in a paragraph or story “stick” together. Let your youngster learn to use these types of words so his writing flows logically.

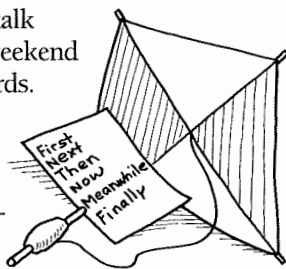
Down the left side of a sheet of paper, help him list words that show when events took place. He might think of *first*, *next*, and *last*. You could suggest others like *then*, *now*, *later*, *meanwhile*, and *finally*.

Together, talk about your weekend using the words.

Take turns picking a word and starting a sentence with it. Maybe you’ll

say, “First, you ran across the field with your kite.” Your child may add, “Then, it rose into the air.” Continue until someone chooses *finally* to end the paragraph. (“Finally, the kite dove to the ground.”)

*Idea:* Have your youngster keep the list so he can use it when he writes.♥



## Q&A

### Understanding written directions

**Q** When my second-grader takes a test or does a worksheet, he sometimes gets answers wrong because he didn’t read the directions correctly. How can I help him?

**A** Suggest that your child read directions with a pencil in his hand. He could number the steps and underline important words or copy them onto scratch paper. Reading actively like this will help him pay attention to the instructions and understand them.

Practice at home when you play a board game or do a project. Help your son read the directions aloud and then go back and mark important parts with sticky notes (examples: “Play continues clockwise,” “Win by exact count only”). You can also ask him to explain the instructions to you in his own words to be sure he’s ready to follow them.

*Note:* If he tries these strategies and still doesn’t understand a set of directions, encourage him to ask his teacher for help.♥



## Guess the book by its cover

Book covers get a makeover with this activity, which strengthens your youngster’s reading comprehension and creativity.

First, let each person secretly choose and read a picture book from the library or your family’s bookcase. Then, wrap your book in brown paper, and decorate the new cover with a different title and illustration. The catch? You can’t use any words or images from the original!

Your child will need to think carefully about the story to come up with a title and picture. For example, she might rename *Goodnight Moon*

(Margaret Wise Brown) *Bedtime for Everything*.

Now, take turns reading your books aloud. Begin by presenting the cover and reading the title. Can anyone guess the real book before you open and read it?♥



### OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators,  
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