

All About



A rich vocabulary can help your child be a better reader, writer, and speaker. You can help her expand her vocabulary by encouraging her to investigate new words and learn more about words she already knows. Use the activities and suggestions in this guide to explore the world of words together.

Picture it

Connecting words to pictures can make the words easier for your youngster to remember. Try these ideas:

- Save pieces of mail that contain photos, such as postcards and advertisements. Ask your child to choose one, and take turns saying a word related to the picture. For a pizza ad, someone might say *convenient*, *doughy*, or *zesty*.

- Suggest that your youngster make a collage for her vocabulary words. She can write a word at the top of a sheet of paper and add pictures cut from old magazines. For *parallel*, she might look for items that have parallel lines, such as a crosswalk, vertical blinds, and train tracks. When she needs to remember *parallel* for a math test, she can visualize her collage.



- Help your child learn to use a variety of adjectives. She can look through a book and choose 10 words that describe things or people (*quaint*, *elegant*, *extraordinary*). Let her write each word on a sticky note and use them to label pictures in a family photo album or scrapbook.

Collect words

Build your youngster's interest in learning new words with these ideas for helping him collect words:

- Can your child find 20 words about a topic that interests him? He might look at magazines, encyclopedias, or Web sites. For instance, a collection of music words might include *adagio*, *treble*, and *quartet*. Encourage him to read a nonfiction book about his subject to learn more about what the words mean.

- On Monday, post a category on the refrigerator (solar system, holidays, summer). See who can add the most words relating to the topic by Friday. Solar system words, for instance, might include *meteor*, *supernova*, and *constellation*. Have each person use a different color pen to



show who wrote which word. Then, family members can read their words at dinner on Friday.

- Suggest that your youngster make a colorful poster of interesting words clipped from newspaper and magazine headlines. He can glue the words on a poster board and use markers to add their definitions.

Play word games

Games can make learning new words fun for the whole family. Here are a few you can play:

- Your child will stretch her knowledge of short words with this game. Ask her to choose a word with four letters (*line*). Take turns saying a word that you can make by changing just one letter (*lone*). Go back and forth, changing one letter at a time (*long*, *song*) until you can no longer make a real word. (Note: Players cannot repeat a word.) Try different words, and see which one keeps the game going the longest.

- Have players write one person's first name vertically down a sheet of paper. Across the top of the page, players write three categories (animals, flowers, jobs). The object of the game is to come up with as many words as possible that begin with each letter of the name for each category. For example, "animal" words for Sara could include *Squirrel*, *Aardvark*, *Rabbit*, and *Ape*. The player with the most words wins the round. Play a round for each family member's name.



Note: Your child can try print dictionaries like *The American Heritage Children's Dictionary*, *Scholastic Children's Dictionary*, or *Merriam-Webster Children's Dictionary*. Or have her use online dictionaries such as Yahoo Kids Dictionary (<http://kids.yahoo.com/reference/dictionary/english>), Dictionary.com (<http://dictionary.reference.com>), or Wordsmyth (www.wordsmyth.net).

- In this game, each person chooses three unfamiliar words from the dictionary. Players write real definitions for two of their words and a made-up one for the third. Trade papers and guess which definitions are real. Play five rounds. The winner is the person who can spot the most real definitions.

Use a dictionary

These everyday activities will get your child used to looking up words in a dictionary. She'll learn an important habit that can teach her to spell, pronounce, define, and use new words:

- Suggest that your youngster write down the lyrics to her favorite song and look up words she doesn't know. Reading their definitions will help her understand the song's meaning. *Tip:* Show her how to use the dictionary's guide words. The



words on each page fall in alphabetical order between the two words at the top of the page.

- Have your child jot down new words that she comes across while reading. Later, she can look up

the words. *Idea:* Help her learn how to pronounce new words by showing her the pronunciation key that's usually located in the front of a dictionary. It will explain what accent marks and other pronunciation symbols mean. Some online dictionaries have audio clips so users can hear pronunciations.

- Ask your youngster to find definitions for words that you don't know. You might come across an unfamiliar word while you're reading a magazine, for instance. She'll see that vocabulary building is a lifelong process!

Explore a thesaurus

When your youngster writes a story, poem, or report, a thesaurus can be his best friend. This handy reference offers alternatives to words he uses every day, which will make his writing more interesting:

- Choose a word in a newspaper or magazine. Ask your child to find synonyms for it. Then, have him read the sentence aloud, replacing the original word with each synonym, one at a time. Which word works the best? He'll see that even similar words can bring whole new twists in meaning.



- Encourage your youngster to go over his writing and circle or underline words that he uses frequently (*good*, *fun*). Then, he can "target" alternatives by writing each word in the center of a bull's-eye (a small circle surrounded by larger rings). Suggest that he use a thesaurus to fill the outer rings with interesting alternatives for the words. Have him hang the bull's-eyes over his desk to refer to when he's writing.

- Think of a familiar saying ("The shoe is on the other foot"). Write it down, replacing some of the words with synonyms from a thesaurus ("The footgear is on the alternative paw"). Can your child use the thesaurus to guess the original saying? Next, let her "translate" a saying for you to figure out.

Note: Try print thesauruses like *The American Heritage Children's Thesaurus* by Paul Hellweg, *Simon & Schuster Thesaurus for Children*, or *Kingfisher Illustrated Pocket Thesaurus*. Online thesauruses include [Thesaurus.com](http://thesaurus.com) (<http://thesaurus.com>), Merriam-Webster's Word Central (www.wordcentral.com), or Fact Monster Thesaurus (<http://thesaurus.factmonster.com>).

Super Series Books

Curling up with a book from a favorite series can be like spending time with a good friend. As your child follows familiar characters through their latest adventures, he'll boost his reading comprehension. Plus, looking forward to the next book in a series can motivate him to read more often.

Use these activities to help your youngster become a better reader as he enjoys series books.



Make predictions

"I wonder what will happen in the next book." Predicting is an important comprehension skill that helps your child make sense of a story as he reads. Based on events in previous books in a series,



your child might guess what will take place in the next book. For example, in the Series of Unfortunate Events books by Lemony Snicket, the characters try to find a home, but something always goes wrong. Ask

your youngster to guess what will ruin their plan this time. He can seal his prediction in an envelope and check it after he reads the book. By comparing his prediction to what actually happened, he'll review the events of the story.

Sketch a character

Have your child read aloud a passage that describes a character. If she's reading the Pippi Longstocking books by Astrid Lindgren, she might find a section that tells about Pippi's carrot-colored hair and her blue dress with red patches. How do the words in the book help her visualize the character? Suggest that she draw a portrait of Pippi based on the description. She'll learn to notice details as she reads.

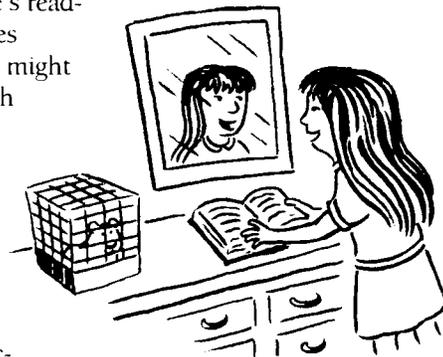
Give a summary

If you started reading your youngster's favorite series in the middle, what would you have missed? Pick a title from the middle of the list (check the back of the latest book), and have him bring you up to speed on what happened in previous

books. Say you were going to read *The Opal Deception* from the *Artemis Fowl* series by Eoin Colfer. Your child would need to tell you why Opal is Artemis' enemy and how the previous book ended. As he does that, he'll build summarizing skills such as finding main ideas and important facts.

Connect with characters

What does your youngster have in common with a series' main character? She can use sticky notes to mark each place in a story that shows a similarity. For example, if she's reading the *A to Z Mysteries* series by Ron Roy, she might write, "Dink and I both have guinea pigs." When she finishes the book, ask her to tell you why she marked each place. Making personal connections will help her get to know the characters in a story better.

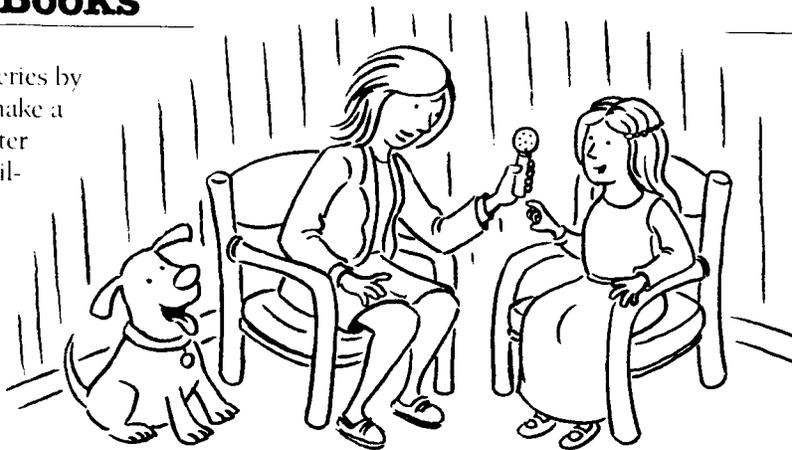


Map a setting

By drawing the settings in a series, your child will be able to picture them in his mind as he reads. Encourage him to create a map that shows the setting from each book. If he's

continued

reading the Wizard of Oz series by L. Frank Baum, he might make a map of the Emerald City after the first book and one of Gillikin County following the second book. When he finishes the series, he can staple the maps together to make an "atlas" to put next to the books on his bookshelf. *Tip:* He can also look for places in your town that are similar to his story settings. For example, a fancy gate outside a park might remind him of the entrance to the Emerald City.



she might dress and act like Lucy. Ask specific questions that will encourage her to give as many details as possible. *Examples:* "What is the first thing you remember about Narnia?" "Which book had the toughest problem, and how did you solve it?"

Role-play a character

Let your youngster play the role of a main character from a series while you pretend to be a talk show host interviewing her. If she's reading *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis,

Experience a story

Bring books to life by doing activities like those in a series. You might take a camping trip or camp out in your backyard when your child reads Jean Craighead George's *My Side of the Mountain* trilogy. He'll learn what it's like to taste food cooked over a campfire, see birds flying overhead, or perhaps discover animal tracks. These experiences will deepen his understanding of the stories.

Series picks

Help your young reader choose the perfect series with these suggestions. For more ideas, check with your school's media specialist or a public librarian.

The Sisters Grimm

Michael Buckley's series combines fantasy, mystery, and adventure. Two sisters make some startling discoveries during a quest to solve a family secret. It turns out that the Brothers Grimm are their ancestors, and their fairy tales are real-life mysteries. The girls must become detectives and crack the cases.

Little House

What was it like to grow up in a pioneer family on America's Western frontier? This classic series by Laura Ingalls Wilder gives readers a close look at family life in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Alex Rider

In this spy thriller series by Anthony Horowitz, teenager Alex Rider is recruited as a spy and embarks on a series of dangerous top-secret missions.

The Time Warp Trio

These magical time-traveling books transport three friends into the

past, the future, and back to their own time. A fantasy series by Jon Scieszka.

Goosebumps

R. L. Stine's spine-tingling mysteries cover everything from mad scientists and haunted schools to abominable snowmen and egg monsters from Mars.

Ramona

Ramona is a little girl with a big imagination. Beverly Cleary's series tells of the child's humorous antics and the trouble they cause for friends and family.

The Boxcar Children

This series, created by Gertrude Chandler Warner, follows the adventures of four orphaned siblings. In each book, the children find a mystery to solve in a different place, including a candy factory, a lighthouse, and a library.

American Girl

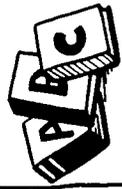
Eight shorter series, each by a different author, make up this collection of historical fiction. Readers will learn about girls' lives during various time periods, from Kaya's stories set in the late 1700s to Molly's, which take place during World War II.



READING & WRITING CALENDAR

MONDAY

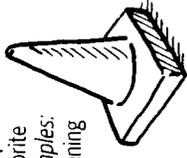
List four types of reading that begin with different letters of the alphabet (autobiography, chapter book, field guide, **m**ystery).
Read one a week this month.



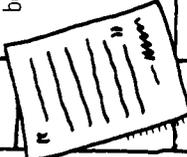
Pretend you're famous, and write an encyclopedia entry about yourself. Example: "Jon Jones set a world record for scoring the most goals in a soccer game...."



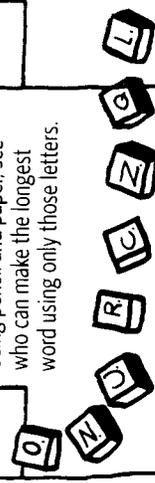
Invent descriptive names for your favorite colors. Examples: traffic cone orange, evening sky blue, snowball white.



Look through a library book of quotations, and fill a poster board with your favorites. Example: "Today was good. Today was fun. Tomorrow is another one." (Dr. Seuss)

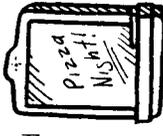


Lay eight Scrabble tiles taceup. Using pencil and paper, see who can make the longest word using only those letters.

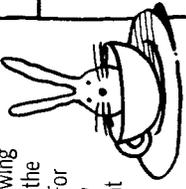


TUESDAY

Write a message for a family member on a dry-erase board or a notepad. ("Thanks for dinner, Mom." "Good luck on your test, Matt!")



Take turns secretly choosing a book and drawing clues to help the other person guess it. For *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, you might draw a rabbit and a teacup.



Practice being a ventriloquist. Read from a joke book, and use a sock puppet to say the punch lines without moving your lips.



List friends' birthdays in a small notebook. Use your birthday book to remind yourself to make cards for your friends on their special days.

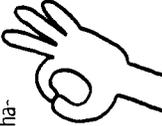


WEDNESDAY

Take turns making up lines of a family story that begins, "Remember when we... (got lost, built our tree house)." Use dramatic voices and act out exciting parts.



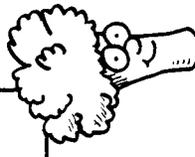
Practice your spelling words using American Sign Language. Search for the alphabet online, or find it in a book (try *Sign Language for Kids* by Lora Heller).



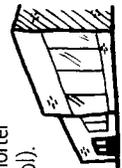
An acronym is a word formed from the first letters of the words it stands for (NASA = National Aeronautics and Space Administration). Find five acronyms in the newspaper, and read what they mean.



At the grocery store, take turns pointing out foods with three or more syllables (celery, macaroni, tomato). Who can find the product with the most syllables?

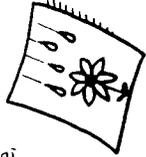


Make a list of things you can do every day to help the environment (take shorter showers, walk to school). Post your list on the refrigerator.

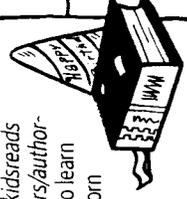


THURSDAY

Illustrate a pair of rhyming words for someone to guess. For instance, you might draw rain falling on blossoms ("flower shower").



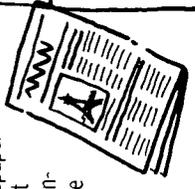
Visit www.kidsreads.com/authors/author-bdays.asp to learn which authors were born this month. Celebrate one writer's birthday by reading a book written by that person.



Play book charades. Act out the words in a book title or the action in the book. Whoever guesses correctly acts out a book for you.



Read a newspaper article about another country. Try to tell someone three things you learned about that country (name of a city, the climate).



FRIDAY

Set up a magazine swap with a friend. Borrow an issue from each other and return it when you finish reading.



Write a letter to a company that makes a product you use (baseball glove, modeling clay). Explain why you like it or what could be better.



Write down names of 10 items you see (thermostat, computer, pillow), and have a friend do the same. Look at each other's lists for one minute, and try to write the words from memory.

Cover a shoebox with construction paper, cut a slit in the lid, and write "Family Suggestion Box" on top. Invite suggestions, and read them at dinner once a week.



Think of a place (Mars) for a friend to guess. Give clues (red, rocky) until he figures it out. Then, trade roles.

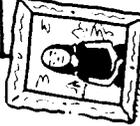


Note to Parents: Post this calendar on your refrigerator, and encourage your child to do an activity a day to strengthen reading and writing skills.

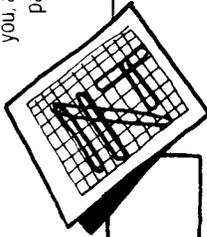
READING & WRITING CALENDAR

MONDAY

Make up a short story about a famous painting. You can find paintings in library books or at art museum Web sites (www.metmuseum.org, www.nga.gov). Or look for paintings hanging on the wall when you're in the bank or a doctor's office.



Make a word-search puzzle on graph paper by hiding your vocabulary words among random letters. Ask a friend to make one for you, and trade papers.



Read a how-to guide such as *The Klutz Yo-Yo Book* by John Cassidy or *101 Easy-to-Do Magic Tricks* by Bill Tarr. Show someone what you learn.

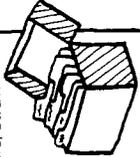


Research your state tree, flower, and bird in an encyclopedia or online at www.50states.com. Draw and label a picture of each one.



TUESDAY

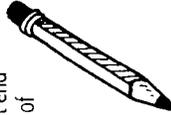
Collect recipes featuring your favorite food (strawberry salad, strawberry smoothie, strawberry cheesecake). Read cooking magazines and cookbooks to find new recipes.



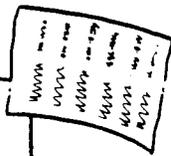
Play a word game like Scrabble, Boggle, or Upwords. Keep a dictionary handy to look up words if you challenge another player.



Write words that end with each letter of the alphabet (area, cab, optimistic). Use as many ending letters as you can.



Think of people your family calls regularly (grandmother, best friends). Find their phone numbers in the phone book, make a list, and hang it near the phone.



Read a wordless picture book such as *Floresam* by David Wiesner or *The Red Book* by Barbara Lehman. Make up a story to go with the pictures.



WEDNESDAY

Open a dictionary at random, and count the number of words that you recognize on the page. Learn three new words.



Choose a chapter book for you and a friend to read. Plan to meet in two weeks to discuss it, and then get together reading!



Misspell a word (trampoline), and ask a friend to spell it correctly (trampoline). Then, let her misspell a word for you to fix.



Write instructions for a craft you're familiar with (friendship bracelet, popsicle-stick house). Read over your directions to be sure the steps make sense and are in the correct order.



Write a short review to convince a friend to read a book you enjoyed. Summarize the story, and explain why you liked it—but don't give away the ending!

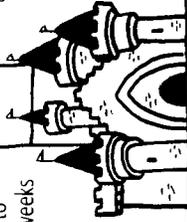


THURSDAY

Think of a business you'd like to start. Design a business card with your slogan. Example: "Pete's Pet Sitting Service. We sit. You go!"



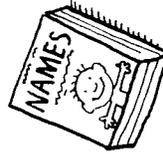
Pretend to visit the setting of a favorite story. Make a postcard that tells what you saw there. ("Today I went to Terebithia. The castle was huge!")



Make a story mural. Paint three scenes from a book: one from the beginning, another from the middle, and a third from the end. Use your mural to tell someone the story.



What does your name mean? Look it up in a book of names. Then, look up friends' and relatives' names.



Check out a poetry book from the library. Toss two dice and read the poem on that page number (example: roll 2 and 5 and read page 25). Repeat to read more poems.



FRIDAY

Imagine that you are making a movie of your favorite book. Choose an actor to play each character based on the descriptions in the book.



Write vocabulary words on separate slips of paper. Then, sort the words in different ways (by vowel sound, number of syllables, or part of speech).



Write a short comic. Cut several pictures of people or animals from old magazines, and glue them on a strip of paper. Draw balloons above each character, and add dialogue.



Combine two fairy tales to create your own. For instance, you might write "Snow White and the Seven Pigs" or "Goldilocks and Gretel."



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