

# Homework Tips for Families

1. Create a special workspace for homework
  - To create organization and have less homework battles, have a place to keep everything your child needs for homework (ex. Paper, pencils, sharpener, and other supplies he/she may need daily)
2. Create a homework schedule
  - Set up a specific time each day for homework (ex. Time of day when he/she can concentrate best and an adult is available to help)
  - Utilizing a calendar to keep track of homework due dates for long term assignments or tests
  - Utilize checklists to keep track of assignments completed (just pen and paper, list homework, cross off when finished)
  - Utilize a schedule to break down large assignments into smaller pieces to lessen distraction and frustration
3. Utilize a timer for homework
  - A timer can help your child stay on task
  - A timer can be utilized to create a break for your child in between assignments
  - A timer can be utilized to transition from play time to homework time
4. Encourage your children and be available
  - Agree ahead of time of a cue to utilize to help your child get back on task (ex. A touch on the shoulder, a hand on the table with a gentle reminder "It's homework time now")
  - Be available if your child needs assistance
  - If you do not understand an assignment, contact your child's teacher
  - Most important **Praise** and utilize **Positive Reinforcement** (children focus better in a positive environment!)

# Reading Comprehension Strategies

Reading comprehension is the ability to understand, relate to, and learn from what one reads.

Reading comprehension strategies that you can encourage your child to use before he or she reads are:

- Preview the book. Look at the cover, the back of the book, the author blurb, the table of contents, and other book features to predict what might happen in the book.
- When reading non-fiction, think about and discuss what you know about the topic.
- Make sure the book is an appropriate selection that matches your reading strategies and interest. Read the first page or two and ask yourself if you are able to understand the story so far.

Reading comprehension strategies that you can encourage your child to use during reading are:

- Read back. When you begin to read, reread the page or two that you finished reading yesterday.
- Go back and reread a sentence that you don't understand.
- Stop and talk about parts that make you angry, surprise you, remind you of something that has happened to you, or remind you of another book.
- Think back/think ahead. Stop and *think back* for a minute about what you have just read then look for clues that tell you what may happen next and *think ahead* to make a prediction.
- Imagine a story taking place as if it were a movie. Imagine the characters' features. Picture the plot in time and space.

Reading comprehension strategies that you can encourage your child to use after reading are:

- Summarize what you just read. Include important information (who, what, where, when, why and how). Think about the beginning, middle and end as you retell this part of the story.
- Ask yourself: Who are the characters? What is the setting of the story? What is the problem? What is the solution?
- Draw or write about your favorite part.
- Write a letter to the author or to a character in the book.
- Give a book review. Tell what you liked or disliked about the book.
- Ask yourself: What was the author's purpose? Think about why the author wrote the book or article.

# Fun Ways to Practice Spelling Words

Practicing spelling doesn't have to be boring. There are tons of ways to practice those tricky words that are engaging, fun, and HANDS ON. Try some! You just may like the results!



1. **Comon Get Appy!** - Who doesn't love playing games on their cell phone? See if you can find an app designed to practice spelling! New ones are created every day.
2. **Spelling City** - Type your words into <http://www.spellingcity.com> and explore some of the different activities there to practice them. It's free!
3. **ABC Order** - Write your words in alphabetical order.
4. **Rainbow Words** - Write your words in three different colors.
5. **Backwards Words** - Write your words forwards, then backwards.
6. **Silly Sentences** - Use all your words in ten silly sentences.
7. **Picture Words** - Draw a picture and "hide" your words inside the picture.
8. **Military Spelling** - GET MOVING! Spell your words while doing jumping jacks. Every time you clap your hands together, say a letter.
9. **Scratch 'n Sniff** - Write your letters with glue on a piece of paper. Then, sprinkle Jell-O powder over the glue. It makes a really cool Scratch 'n Sniff when it's dried!
10. **Choo-Choo Words** - Write all your words together as one long "train", using a different color for each word.
11. **Snap & Spell** - Snap your fingers for each letter of the word, clap at the end.
12. **"Chalk" To Me** - Write your letters outside on the sidewalk or driveway in chalk.
13. **Typing Time** - With the help of a grownup, on a program such as Microsoft Word, type your words three times each.
14. **Delicious Words** - Write your words in whipped cream, peanut butter, or anything else you can eat!
15. **Good Clean Words** - Write your words in shaving cream, on a counter or some other surface that can be cleaned safely.
16. **Story Words** - Write a short story using all your words.
17. **Scrambled Words** - Write your words, then write them with the letters mixed up. Or, have a family member scramble the words and YOU unscramble!
18. **Surround Words** - Write your words on graph paper and outline them in different colors. (Note: Graph paper is easy to find online! Just search "free printable graph paper.")
19. **Ransom Words** - Cut out letters in a newspaper/magazine and glue them on a paper to spell your words.
20. **Words-in-Words** - Write your word, and then write at least 2 words made from each. (For example, with the letters in the word "airplane", you can make "pear".)

"pain", "nail", "lean" - you get the idea)

21. **Silly String** - With a long length of string, "write" words in cursive, using the string to shape the letters.
22. **Back Writing** - Using your finger, draw each letter on a family member's back, having them say the word you wrote when you're done. If they don't guess it, try again slower. Then, switch!
23. **Telephone Words** - Translate your words into numbers from a cell phone keypad.
24. **Flashwriting** - In a darkened room, use a flashlight to draw letters in the air.
25. **Secret Agent Words** - Number the alphabet from 1 to 26, then convert your words to a secret spy number code.
26. **Etch-A-Word** - Use an Etch-A-Sketch to write your words.
27. **Pyramid Words** - Write your words, adding or subtracting one letter at a time. The result will be a pyramid shape of words. (Sound tricky? It's not! For the word catch, you would write "c" on the first line. The next line, below it, would be "ca". Then, "cat". Next, "catc". Finally, "catch". If you outline them, the shape should be a triangle, or pyramid. Voila!)
28. **Words Without Vowels** - Write your words, replacing all vowels (a, e, i, o, u) with a line. Then, give them to a family member and see if they can guess the word (like Hangman)!
29. **Words Without Consonants** - Same as above, but replace all consonants with lines.
30. **Dirty Words** - Use a stick or other object to write your words outside in mud or sand.
31. **Spell 'n Eat** - Spell your words by arranging alphabet pasta or Alphabits cereal. Then eat them!
32. **Reversed Words** - Write your words in ABC order - backwards!
33. **Magazine Words** - Find your words in an old magazine/newspaper, and cut them out and glue on a piece of paper.
34. **Cheer Your Words** - Pretend you are a cheerleader and call out your words! Sometimes you'll yell, sometimes you'll whisper!
35. **Sound Words** - Use a tape recorder and record your words and their spelling. Then listen to your tape, checking to see that you spelled all the words correctly.
36. **X Words** - Write two words having one common letter so they criss-cross.
37. **Other Handed** - If you are right-handed, write your words with your left, or vice versa.
38. **Speedy Gonzalez Words** - Get a timer. Set it for 3 minutes (or you can challenge yourself and set it for less!). See how many words you can write before the timer goes off. Challenge a sibling!
39. **Trace-A-Word** - Write your words, then carefully trace around each one with a colored pen or pencil. If you do it a few times with a few colors, you'll have a work of art!
40. **Record Your Words** - On a phone or other voice recorder, record yourself spelling your words out loud. Then, play it back, checking to see if you spelled them correctly.

Can you think of another way to practice your words? If so, go for it! The sky's the limit!

# Reading At Home...

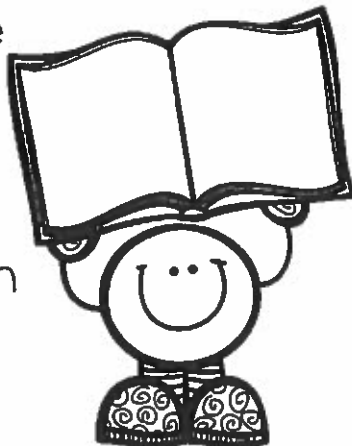
- Can Make A HUGE Difference!



## Choose Books That Are At An Appropriate Reading Level For Your Child

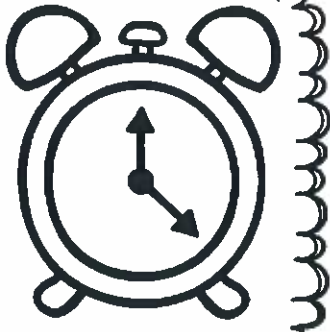
☐ Use the five finger rule. Open the book to any page and ask your child to read. Put up a finger every time your child does not know a word. If you have put up more than five fingers before the end of the page, this book is too hard for your child.

- ☐ Choose books that match your child's likes and interests.



Keep plenty of reading materials in your home: books, magazines, newspapers, and comic books. Children enjoy having a variety of reading materials!

15-20  
minutes is  
plenty for  
a beginning  
reader!



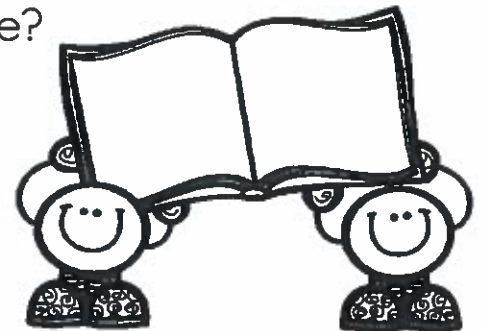
## How To Read With A Beginning Reader:

- Encourage your child to use his/her finger to point to each word.
- Read a sentence and have your child repeat it.
- Take turns reading a sentence each or a page each.
- Talk about the story as you read it. What do you think will happen next? What does this story remind you of? How do you think this character feels?
- Don't be afraid to read the same book again! Repeated reading helps build reading fluency!



## Check For Understanding

- ✓ Start the book by making predictions. What do you think will happen in this story?
- ✓ Ask questions and make comments during the reading process.
- ✓ After reading a book, have your child tell you the events from the story in the correct order.
- ✓ What was the problem in this story?
- ✓ How did the character feel when...?
- ✓ Encourage your child to make connections. Does this story remind you of another book you read, an event in your life, a movie?



## Read Books Online!

There are many fun and interactive websites for literacy.

Here are a few FREE online resources:

[www.starfall.com](http://www.starfall.com)

[www.speakaboos.com](http://www.speakaboos.com)

[www.spellingcity.com](http://www.spellingcity.com)

[www.wegivebooks.org](http://www.wegivebooks.org)

<http://interactivesites.weebly.com>

# 3 KEY IDEAS FOR PARENTS about the Common [CORE]

## Thinking Deeply

The Common Core emphasizes critical thinking. It requires students to analyze more, discuss more, evaluate more, justify more and explain their thinking & understanding deeply, especially in writing. *Take-Away: Really thinking deeply is hard. Let it BE hard, help them talk it out.*

## Integrating Learning

The Common Core emphasizes learning across disciplines (reading with math & social studies standards combined into one task). Students spend more time working together with different settings, structures & tools. *Take-Away: Problems & solutions happen everyday in the real world.*

## Showing How They Know

The Common Core emphasizes proof & evidence. Long gone are the days of worksheets, fact memorizations and skill & drill. Students are not taught this way and they are not assessed this way. *Take-away: The new tests will require students to explain how they know.*

## Supporting The Common Core at Home

- ① Ask \*why\* when children tell you they want something or want to do or not do something.
- ② Use the word \*because\* after "No" or "Not tonight..."
- ③ Give reasons—you to them and them to you.
- ④ Encourage questions & explore answers (especially questions whose answers are not yes or no.)
- ⑤ Explain & discuss issues or problems in your house, neighborhood, & community. Brainstorm solutions.
- ⑥ Compare how things are alike and different—videos, movies, food.
- ⑦ Look for patterns
- ⑧ Describe & categorize stuff.
- ⑨ Tell your children what you value & why.
- ⑩ Encourage & celebrate opinions.

# How do I help my child become a better reader?



If they are reading a **Fiction** book ask them....

- Who are the main characters and what traits can you infer about them?
- How have the characters changed during the book?
- What questions do you have as you are reading?
- Is the story written in first or third person point of view?
- What is the author's purpose? Persuade, Inform or Entertain?
- What is the problem in the story? How do you think it will be solved?
- What do you predict will happen next?
- Could the story happen in real life?
- How are you similar to the characters? How are you different?
- What is the theme of the book? What lesson did the characters learn?
- Write a summary of the story using Somebody, Wanted, But, So, Then...
- What was your favorite part and why?
- Did you like the ending? If not, how would you change it? Write your own ending.

If they are reading a **Non-Fiction** book ask them....

- What do you think you will learn from this book?
- What do you already know about this topic?
- What questions do you have as you are reading?
- What is the main idea of the text?
- What is the author's purpose? Persuade, Inform or Entertain?
- What text features were used in this text? How did they help your understanding?
- What did you learn from this text?
- Do you have any questions after reading this?
- Were there any unknown words in this text? How did you find out their meaning?
- Where could you find more information on this topic?
- Write a summary of this text- remember to include the main idea and supporting details.

Help your child become a better **writer** by encouraging them to write about what they read!