

Discussing characters can help *build* character



You already know how important it is to help your child develop good character. Yet there are only so many times you can say, “Be nice!” or “Don’t do that!” before you start to worry your message isn’t getting through.

Children don’t always think about why they act the way they do. However, they are often quick to point out the poor behavior of others—“Kim isn’t being fair!” Put this to work by using books to teach your child the attributes of good character.

You can use both fiction and nonfiction books. Ask your child questions about fictional characters’ actions. Or share a biography of a person whose traits you’d like your child to emulate. After reading a story, ask your child to analyze the actions and feelings of the characters. Ask questions like:



Jack Hollingsworth

- **What do you think** of Ramona? Why do you like her?
- **How does Joey feel** when Michael is rude to him?
- **What could Ann do** rather than take the book from her classmate?
- **Do you know anyone** who does things like this?
- **What would you do** if you were her friend or sister?

Reading with your child leads to school success



Fewer families than ever before are setting aside a time for reading with their children on a daily basis. But reading with your child regularly is the *single most important way* to impact his school success. Even 20 minutes a day makes a difference! Here's why:

- **Every school subject involves reading.** Your child has to read in English, science, history—and yes, even math! Being able to read well—and read many different kinds of material—will definitely make the difference between learning about a subject and understanding it well.
- **Reading affects test success.** Your child has to read and comprehend to study for a test. And he also has to be able to read and understand the directions just to take the test! Filling out an answer



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sheet incorrectly—or failing to show his work when it's required—could be the difference between passing and failing.

- **What your child reads now will help him later.** Children who read (and are read to) are often exposed to more words, which gives them larger vocabularies. If your child plans to go to college, he'll have to take the SAT or ACT—and both have an entire section devoted to reading and vocabulary!

Get creative if your child doesn't enjoy reading



Despite parents' and teachers' best efforts, some children claim not to like reading. But reading will be a part of their daily lives forever! If your child doesn't like reading, start *now* to change that dislike.

To get your child more interested in books, think about her other interests. Does she enjoy writing? Does she like to draw? Is she very social? Use these interests to go "beyond the book." You might suggest that she:

- **Talk about a book with friends.** Your child and a few friends can all read the same book. Then they can talk about it. What were their favorite parts? Did everyone like the book? Why or why not?
- **Write a different ending to a favorite story.** Some children like to create stories more than they enjoy reading them.



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- **Read aloud.** See if she can read to a younger child—or even to adults at a retirement home. Seeing others' enjoyment just might show her how fun reading can be!
- **Design a new cover for a book.** Have her think about the mood of the story. She might use dark colors to depict a scary story, or bright colors for a happy one.
- **Create a cartoon strip** to illustrate a particular scene in a book.

Reviews boost writing skills and comprehension



Students need to know how to read, how to understand and remember what they have read, and how to write about it. It may sound like a lot—but writing a book review forces your child to use all of those skills! You can encourage your child to do this regularly with:

- **A reading journal.** Give your child a special notebook—or even suggest that he start a simple text file on your computer. Encourage him to write down the title and author, a brief summary and his opinion of the book.
- **A family book review.** This is like a shared reading journal for everyone in the family! Include the same information as in a personal reading journal, but also mention when the book was read, who read it and for what ages it would be appropriate.



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If a family member reads a book that has already been reviewed, he or she can just add his or her opinion.

- **Online reviews.** Offer to post one of your child's short reviews online. (Libraries and booksellers often allow this.) The idea that others will read his writing may motivate your child to do his best. Remember: Never reveal identifying information about you or your child!

Do you know if your child is reading at grade level?



Research shows that a student's inability to read at or close to grade level while in school can greatly affect her future. In fact, high school dropouts often cite not

being able to read as their main reason for

dropping out. Don't let your child be one of them.

Work with your child's teacher to make sure your child is reading at grade level.

First, make an appointment to meet with your child's teacher. Then make a list of questions you would like to ask. That way, you're less likely to forget to mention something important. Here are some questions to get you started:

- **Is my child at grade level in reading?** What about in other subjects?
- **What are my child's test scores in reading?** What do her test scores mean?



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- **In your class, do you separate** students by reading level? Which reading group is my child in?
- **What can I do at home** to help my child improve her reading skills?

With your child's teacher, develop a plan of action. List what you will do at home to help your child, along with anything the teacher will try at school. Schedule a future conference to discuss your child's progress.

Children's interests help parents choose books



Parents often ask teachers and librarians how to find the “right” book for their children. But the truth is that you have an expert on book selection right in your home: your child!

Children are most likely to read about a subject that interests them.

It makes sense—after all, if a book bores you, you will be more easily distracted and less likely to actually stick with it.

Here is a word find, with some popular topics of interest hidden vertically and horizontally. With your child, find the words hidden in this puzzle. Ask him if he'd like to read about any of these topics. If not, don't worry! Ask him what topics he would like to read about instead—and continue the conversation next time you're at the library or bookstore.

D C I N S E C T S N
I O N P D A P S I C
N O S T R N C A C O
O K O M E R H I N M
S I X N M P I E P E
A N I M A L S T A D
U G B M Y S T E R Y
R C A R S P O R T S
S P A C E R R S S N
P L A N T S Y S X A

animals
art
cars
comedy

cooking
dinosaurs
history
insects

mystery
plants
space
sports