

Part I

“7 Specific Things You Can Do At Home To Help Your Child Read Better This Summer”

Today, reading is more important than ever before. Reading is a natural process that most children learn easily. Here are some things any parent can do to help their child read better. Be sure to read each one carefully, and schedule activities that involve these ideas.

1 – Make Reading Important

Every parent communicates values to their children. Every parent does that by giving time and attention to the things that they value most. In some families it might be a particular T.V. show that people watch. In other families it might be keeping a particular area of the house clean, or turning lights off when you leave a room.

The first step in improving a child’s reading is to make reading for yourself as important as some other things. To make it important, do the following:

Plan a time for reading – Things that are really important are planned for, and other activities stop to make time for the most important ones. For instance, in almost every house, sometime between 5 and 7 in the evening, dinner will be eaten. Everyone in the house knows when dinner is served. In the same way, set aside a specific time for reading.

Cut out the distractions – Turn off the T.V. and stereo, find a place that is quiet, and don’t try to read while watching a ballgame.

Let them see you reading – Most of us learn from example. If you are reading things that you find interesting, children will get the idea that reading is important to you.

2 – Read With Your Child

There are many ways to do this. Make sure you try all of them.

Read to your child. Every child likes to be read to. Especially read stories that they aren’t yet able to read. This will make them more interested in wanting to read better. Help your child discover that stories in real books take as long as is needed to tell their stories, and are different than T.V. Television makes all stories 30 or 60 minutes long.

Let your child read to you. Children “beam with pride” when they can read to you. Make sure you pay attention to what they read. They may ask you questions about it later.

Read “chorally” – both of you at the same time. This will help them read fluidly and will be fun for both of you.

3 – Help Them Sound Out Words

This should be a fun process, not like schoolwork. Make it a game. Take turns sounding out words. Pick out 5 words for your child to sound out, and reward him or her for it. Keep these sessions short, especially with younger students or with those who have difficulty.

Here are some ideas about how to help sound out words:

Identify the sounds within words

Look for smaller words within bigger words

Break the words up into smaller parts

Identify prefixes and suffixes

Talk about the meaning of words

Again, keep the session SHORT!

4 – Build and Use Word Cards

Put words on 3x5 cards and “flash” them to your child until he can read them all at a glance. Make up a set of cards with 15 to 20 words. Write the words using lower case letters unless the words are proper names.

You can keep these cards in the car and do them as you drive, or pick a time each day to go through them. As they become good with one set of cards, make another set.

You can even make your own word games.

Let kids add words that they are interested in (sports terms, heroes, news, etc.)

5 – When Reading, Stop And Discuss What Is Going On In The Story

This will help them focus not just on the words, but the meaning of what they are reading. Ask questions like:

“What do you think will happen?”

“What has happened so far?”

“How would you make the story different?”

“Did you like this story? Why?”

6 – Help Your Child “Visualize” (Make Mental Pictures) While They Are Reading

The better they are at this, the better they can understand what they read. Try these activities:

Have them draw a picture on paper of what is happening in the story. Then have them tell you about it.

Talk about the mental pictures they are making. Ask “What color is _____?” or “What does so-and-so look like?”

Have them close their eyes and “build a picture” as you read to them. Let them read to you and you do the same thing.

7 – Make Reading Non-Stressful

Read what they want to read. Let them pick out stories or books that are interesting to them. Let them re-read books that they like. Let them read books that are easy if they want to.

Tell them, “When you get tired, I’ll read.” Let them read until they get tired, or it gets too difficult, and then you take over.

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Although we promised you 7 things you can do, here are a few more “bonus” activities.

8 – Encourage, Praise, And Reward Reading

Some people are afraid that they will “bribe” kids. There is nothing wrong with rewarding kids for doing something you feel is good for them to do. Give them something for every 5 or 10 books that they read. Set it up so that it is easy for them to “win” (without putting you in the “poorhouse”).

9 – Make The Library A Place That You Go Often

Mark on your calendar days you will go to the library. Is it every Monday?, every other Thursday? Write them down so that they become a regular part of your summer activities. Let children pick out books to read. If they are young enough, take them to story hour. Help them find books that will be of interest to them.

Once you have library books, make SURE you read them.

(Here is one for slightly older students)

10 – Try Having Parent and Child Read The Same Book To Themselves, Then Talk About It

What parts did both you and your child like? What would the two of you have changed? What were your favorite parts?

Part II

What if there are larger difficulties with reading than these simple steps solve?

Why do some people find learning and school to be easy while others struggle?

There are a number of foundational, or underlying skills, that are necessary in order for academic (school) work to make sense. In many students one or more of these skills is simply underdeveloped. Most people develop these skills as they grow throughout childhood. These skills seldom develop together in a predictable pattern. They do develop at different rates and at different ages.

By the time a child is in second or third grade, these skills are usually in place. But for up to 30% of the population, there are still some “holes” that need to be filled in.

What do these skills look like in a student?

They can take several forms, including:

- Unable to sit still for any length of time
- Very clumsy, has poor coordination
- Alternates using left and right hands
- Has trouble buttoning clothes or tying shoes, or is extremely sloppy looking
- Can't pay attention for very long on one task
- Loses place easily while reading or doing other close work
- Has difficulty copying from the chalkboard or a book, constantly looks up and down, and frequently makes seemingly careless errors
- Holds head very close to paper or book, or inclines head far to one side when reading or writing
- Moves entire head when reading instead of just moving eyes
- Does written work very slowly, or doesn't complete work
- Can't organize or remember visual information
- Can't match “seeing” with “doing” – often labeled as poor eye-hand coordination (in sports, arts and crafts, etc.).

There are any number of programs that can be used to strengthen underlying thinking skills. Since we work with struggling students, we have found we can make the most impact on students when we focus on these 5 areas:

Attention Span and Concentration: not being distracted by other students or activities

Motivation: taking the initiative to complete assignments and homework and to attend school

Memory Skills and Understanding: the ability to absorb material and pass exams

Speed of Learning: reducing the time it takes to complete assignments and homework

Handling Tougher and More Complex Activities: reading and problem solving

We are privileged to use some of the finest, most comprehensive “tools” with students. These tools, or programs, can make remarkable changes in student learning in a very short period of time.

If your child struggles with school and you want to examine some ways to change that struggle, please call us. Our one-on-one sessions are fast paced and fun, and most important, they aren't like regular school. It is possible to make a major impact on how well a child learns. And you can see real results in as little as a few weeks. If you are ready to end the struggle of schoolwork, we may be able to help. Let us know right away.