

Strategies Packet for Parents and Students For Improving Reading, Writing, and Mathematics Skills

Parent Strategies and Activities *For Improving Their Child's Reading and Writing Skills*

The following suggestions are intended to help increase your child's understanding of reading and develop his or her confidence in the learning process. Choose two or three of the following strategies and continue to implement them for the remainder of the year. These methods will also be effective during the summer months.

General Reading and Writing Improvement Strategies:

- Read to your child.
- Model good habits by reading in front of your child.
- Check your child's assignment notebook daily.
- Provide a consistent, daily study period without distractions.
- Help with specific skills (e.g., phonics or comprehension).
- Use reading software, if available.
- Visit the public library frequently.
- Join public library summer reading programs.
- Provide opportunities for your child to attend theater performances, musicals, etc.
- Limit TV or video games.
- Provide activities that relate reading to daily life.
 - Have your child write the menu for dinner.
 - Have your child locate letters and words on food containers.
 - Have your child help write a shopping list and have them check off the items on the list as you shop.
 - When traveling, write words in a grid and have your child color in the boxes as they see the words on signs.

Vocabulary Development:

- Notice street and store signs together and talk about what they say and mean.
- Build vocabulary by talking to your child regularly.
 - Talk about the people you see and the types of jobs they have.
 - Talk about the colors and shapes of things you see.
 - Sing songs you both know.
 - Talk about the places you're going and what you see along the way.
 - Ask your child specific things about their day.
- Open-ended topics are especially good for building vocabulary. Have your child answer questions like:
 - The only thing I could think of was...
 - One night I woke up so scared that...
 - Sometimes I have strange feelings about...
 - I am happiest when...

- I was so angry I...
 - When I grow up I want to be...
 - My family...
 - A trip I'd like to make
 - On the weekend I would like to...
 - My favorite television show....
- Provide vocabulary skills materials such as vocabulary workbooks or crossword puzzles.
- Play word games (such as Scattergories®) to help develop word choice and categorizing skills.
- Read a challenging book aloud to your child to give exposure to higher level words.
- Label objects around the house with sticky notes.
- Describe objects using a simile or metaphor (e.g., the car is as red as an apple, or the clouds are like cotton balls).

Word Study:

- Play word games.
- Practice word play with your child by saying words and having them say a rhyming word.
 - Practice synonyms and antonyms by saying a word and having your child say a word that means the same or the opposite.
 - Play games such as, "I'm thinking of a word. Who can guess a letter in it?"
 - Say one letter of the alphabet and have your child name the next three letters in order.
 - Say a letter and have your child name the letter that comes just before that letter.
 - Locate pictures in magazines and practice identifying the beginning and ending sounds of each picture .
 - Play word games such as Hangman® or Scrabble®.
- Have your child look in old magazines and cut out pictures of people, places and things (nouns), and then have them categorize the pictures any way they want.
- Say a letter and then have your child name an animal or food that begins with that letter (or, to further challenge the child, try having them name an animal or food that ends with that letter).
- Name an animal, object, or country. Have your child use the last letter of that word and think of a word in the same category that begins with that letter, then take turns with subsequent words.
- Circle words in a newspaper or magazine that start with the same letter or are in the same word family (e.g., words ending with -ing or -unk).
- Color code weekly spelling lists.
- Color the consonants blue and vowels red.
- Color the word family blue and the beginning letter red.
- Have your child post their weekly spelling words on a sticky note and put it on the bathroom mirror.

Reading Comprehension:

- Read a story or have your child read.
- Have your child pick their favorite part.
 - Ask your child to think of alternative solutions to a problem.
 - Have your child predict what will happen next.
 - Ask your child to change the ending.
 - Make up a sequel.
- Use books and follow-along cassettes.
- Have your child make a list of things that could never happen, things that might happen, and things that are sure to happen.

- Monitor your child's reading by:
 - Asking literal questions about the facts.
 - Asking inferential questions about what they think it means.
 - Asking critical questions about how they might use the information, like:
 - ▶ Why did the author choose to use this particular word?
 - ▶ How could the author have explained this better?
- Compare and contrast movies and videos with previously read books.
- Provide high interest literature, including magazines.
- Provide reference materials and activities that encourage your child to use reference skills.
- Read newspaper articles with your child and discuss events in the news. Discuss:
 - What is the importance of the news?
 - What might happen as a result of these events?
 - What actions might have led to different results?
- As children become more conscious of their larger society, they might begin to think about and investigate some of the following areas:
 - Providing food for the growing population of our nation
 - Living on the moon
 - Living peacefully with other nations
 - The impact of inventions on everyday life
- After watching a movie, have your child retell the movie from beginning to end in the correct order and, using details, describe the scenes.
- While you're reading to your child or when your child is reading to you, have them create their own movie in their mind; have them draw pictures of the story.
- When reading together, after each paragraph ask the child 'wh' questions (Who? What? Where? When? Why?) to see if they are comprehending.

Writing:

- Encourage your child to keep a journal (it can be for travel, family events, or even feelings).
- Encourage letter writing, pen pals, and thank you notes.
- Have your child write a declarative statement, interrogative question, and exclamatory sentence about a picture in a magazine. An example would be: There is a barn on the farm. What animals live in the barn? There are baby chickens hatching in the barn!
- Have your child write a story, song, poem or article about a family event and then read it back to an adult.
- Have your child write a conversation using correct punctuation. The conversation could be between two of their favorite TV characters, two characters in a book, or even two members of their family.
- Students who become interested in certain aspects of the news should be encouraged to write letters requesting information or commending the actions of some person in the news. If, for example, a student has been studying the work of the Supreme Court, she might write to one of the justices regarding a decision made on a case.
- Encourage students to write to their Congressperson. These representatives of the people are glad to supply information about current affairs—new bills being considered, their opinions regarding certain issues, government-printed pamphlets which are highly informational, and so on. They will often respond to letters that request information or ask questions.

Student Strategies and Activities

For Improving Reading and Writing Skills

Choose two or three of the following strategies that you are not already implementing, but would be willing to do to help you increase your learning:

- Read silently _____ minutes each day.
- Study or read _____ minutes every night.
- Complete daily assignments.
- Keep a daily assignment notebook.
- Study concepts taught in class every night, regardless of whether an assignment has been given.
- Study for tests.
- Study spelling words every night.
- Identify the vowels and consonants in spelling words.
- Write spelling words as many times as the word has syllables.
- Write words that rhyme with your spelling words.
- Attend review sessions prior to a test.
- Ask questions when you don't understand.
- Be willing to do extra work.
- Create a journal or a reading project.
- Be responsible for taking daily work home.
- Get a pen pal and write letters to each other.
- Focus on daily learning.
- Write stories at home and read them to an adult.
- Read a variety of fiction and non-fiction material.
- Play Hangman®.
- Tutor a friend or younger student.
- Limit TV and video games.
- Write a review following attendance at a play, musical, or special event.
- Read books at a higher level.
- Keep a vocabulary log or create a project of new words, synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, suffixes, prefixes, and/or multiple-meaning words.
- Prepare a report using reference skills.
- Visit the public library often.
- Read at least five books this summer!

Parent Strategies and Activities

For Improving Their Child's Mathematics Skills

The following strategies are intended to help your child to increase his or her understanding of mathematics and develop their confidence in the learning process. Choose two or three of the following strategies, and continue to work toward them for the remainder of the year (as well as the summer months).

General Mathematics Improvement Strategies:

- Encourage participation in enrichment activities outside of the classroom.
- Check your child's assignment notebooks daily.
- Monitor daily work and be aware of the content being studied.
- Provide activities that enrich and relate mathematics to daily life:
 - Talk about how many bowls to put out for dinner.
 - Fold napkins in different shapes.
 - Have your child count similar items as you put away groceries.
 - Have your child help measure ingredients for recipes.
 - Give your child change to count out in order to pay for small purchases at the store; have older children calculate the change.
 - Ask your child to compare prices of items by asking things like, "Which can of beans costs more?"
 - Allow your child to weigh the fresh produce; have older children calculate the price by multiplying the price per pound by the number of pounds.
 - Read the days and dates on a calendar, talk about the number of days in the month, the number of days remaining until a special event, etc.
 - Draw a scale map of your home and determine the best escape route in case of an emergency.
 - When traveling, write numbers on a grid and have your child color in the box as they see the numbers on signs or license plates.
- Provide your child with a mentor (such as an adult, neighbor, community member, or high school student).
- Use computer software to enhance mathematics skills at home.
- Provide a consistent mathematics activity at home using family mathematics activities:
 - **Dice.** Each person rolls the dice and has to correctly add, subtract, or multiply the numbers.
 - **Dice and Money.** Each person rolls a die and gets the number of pennies as dots shown. When someone gets five pennies they trade it in for a nickel, dime and so forth until they're trading for a dollar.
 - **War.** For two people, give each person 13 cards from a deck of cards, have each person flip a card, then have your child decide whose card has the higher value to determine who wins the set of cards. In a tie, place three additional cards face-down, then turn the last card up; the higher card on that turn wins all the cards. Play until one person has all the cards in the deck.
 - **Newspapers and Magazines.** Find numbers in print and cut them out, then glue them in the correct order onto a larger sheet of paper.
 - **Store.** Keep empty food containers, write different prices on them, then play Store by using a calculator to add up the prices for different purchases.

Computation:

- Count orally by twos, fives, or tens.
- Complete connect-the-dot pictures.

- Have your child make a number book which contains a page for each numeral from one to ten. On each page, have your child mount clippings from newspapers and magazines illustrating that number concept (two dogs, three ducks, or four horses). As your child progresses with number recognition, they can add to the book and add numerical figures used in various ways.
- Count and pair objects found around the house, and determine whether there's an odd or even number of items.
- Review mathematics facts at home, in the car, waiting in line, or during other downtime.
- Provide your child with verbal mathematics problems. "Take the number five; add six; multiply by three; subtract three; divide by five. What's your answer?" Speak slowly at first until your child gets better at solving these mental problems; then speak more quickly.
- Help your child identify advertisements in signs, newspapers, and magazines that use percentages.
- Encourage your child to read nutrition labels. Have them calculate the percent of fat in each item.

Geometry:

- Fold a sheet of paper in half and have your child draw a shape along the fold; cut out the shape and unfold the paper to see a symmetrical shape.
- Look around the house for different geometric shapes, such as triangles, squares, circles, and rectangles.
- Use household items (such as toothpicks, marshmallows, straws, twist-ties, sticks, or paper) to construct shapes.
- Help your child recognize and identify real-world examples of right angles (the corner of a book) and parallel lines (railroad tracks).
- While driving together, direct your child to look for objects with the same size and shape.

Measurement:

- Teach your child how to set the kitchen timer when you're cooking.
- Draw an analog clock face with the hour and minute hands showing eight o'clock. Ask your child to write the time shown.
- Arrange various objects (books, boxes, and cans) by various size and measurement (length, weight, and volume) attributes. Talk with your child about how they are arranged using comparison words like taller, shorter, narrower, wider, heaviest, lightest, more, less, about, and same.
- Use a standard measuring tool (a ruler, a tape measure, or a yardstick) to measure objects located in the house.
- Gather a tape measure, a yardstick, a ruler, a cup, a gallon container, and a scale. Discuss the various things you and your child can measure with each.
- Review equivalent names for measurements. For example, "How many cups in a pint?"
- Encourage your child to incorporate such terms as whole, halves, thirds, and fourths into his or her everyday life.

Statistics, Probability, Graphing:

- Open a pack of Skittles® or M&M's® and make a bar graph showing the number of each color found inside the pack.
- Look through your science textbook and find three examples of different types of graphs.
- Find the coordinates of places on a state map.
- Watch the news for a week, write down the temperatures for each day, then graph the weather temperatures for the week.
- Track the scores of ball games played by your favorite team, then graph these scores over a period of several weeks.
- Have your child make a list of things that could never happen, things that might happen, and things that are sure to happen.

Problem Solving:

- Encourage your child to figure out answers to real-life situations: "We have one can of tuna, and we need five. How many more do we need to buy?"
- Ask questions that involve equal sharing. For example, "Seven children share 49 baseball cards. How many cards does each child get?"
- Help your child look up the population and land area of the state and city in which you live and compare these facts with those of other states and cities.
- Visit the web site for the U.S. Bureau of the Census at www.census.gov and have your child write three interesting pieces of information that he or she learned from the web site.

Algebraic Concepts:

- Encourage your child to count and recognize pattern and color in the environment by discussing what they see:
 - What color is the wall in the hallway?
 - What color is your mathematics textbook?
 - What is the number on the house across the street?
 - How many objects are left on the table if I take one away?
 - How many exits are there from the school building?
 - How many swings are on the playground?
- Have your child look for patterns on building, rugs, floors, and clothing.

Student Strategies and Activities

For Improving Mathematics Skills

Choose two or three of the following strategies that you are not already implementing, but would be willing to do to help you increase your learning:

- Play I Spy™ looking for different shapes.
- Begin a shapes museum by collecting common objects that represent a variety of shapes and label the shapes; for example, an empty oatmeal box is a cylinder and could represent a circle.
- Memorize mathematics facts.
- Make up games using numbers to play with younger siblings or friends.
 - Count the number of steps between two places, then have another person see if they can walk the same distance in more or less steps.
 - Play War the card game. For two people, give each person 13 cards from a deck of cards, have each person flip a card, then have your child decide whose card has the higher value to determine who wins the set of cards. In a tie, place three additional cards face-down, then turn the last card up; the higher card on that turn wins all the cards. Play until one person has all the cards in the deck.
- Start a family coin collection jar; keep track of the amount of money that is going into the jar by logging each deposit in a journal.
- Create a journal or project of mathematics activities.
- Complete daily assignments.
- Keep a daily assignment notebook.
- Study the concepts taught in your school at night, even if an assignment has not been given.
- Study for tests.
- Attend review sessions, prior to a test, even if they are held during recess, at lunch, or before or after school.
- Ask questions when you don't understand.
- Be willing to do extra work.
- Participate in mathematics enrichment activities.
- Tutor a friend, brother, sister or younger student.
- Be responsible for taking daily work home.
- Check assignments and tests for mistakes before turning them in.
- Work slowly and carefully.
- Visit the U.S. Bureau of the Census web site at www.census.gov and find three interesting things about a place you might like to visit or you heard about on the news.