

At Home Activities to Promote Literacy

Rhyme Challenge: Whether you are in the car, walking home from school, or sitting poolside, Rhyme Challenge is an easy game that requires no set up, clean up, or materials whatsoever. We often play it in the car or sometimes even at the dinner table.

For Rhyme Challenge, one person chooses a word and says, *I challenge you to think of as many rhymes as you can for "cat" (or any word)*. And the next player says as many words as he can that rhyme with that word. Both players keep count. I try to model saying the given word with the rhyming word so my little ones stay on track with rhymes (*Cat, bat. Cat, hat. Cat, mat. . .*), but this isn't necessary for older kids.

Some kids love any challenge, so adding rhyme to the mix just ups the fun – and the learning.

Also try:

- Having one person choose a word then take turns saying just one rhyming word, one right after the other.
- "Speed rounds," where we yell out rhyming words as fast as we can. Or, you can do "slow rounds" – it really depends on the day.

<http://www.scholastic.com/parents/blogs/scholastic-parents-raise-reader/3-best-rhyme-games-kids>

Reading Tour: Simple word recognition is an important part of learning how to read and write. Have your child label common household objects and refer back to them later by creating his own tour! A reading tour is a simple and fun way for your child to practice reading and writing words. Help your child build a bank of vocabulary words by creating your own pointer for the reading tour. With some decorative supplies, markers, and rulers or spoons, your child can create a beautiful pointer to take the family on a house-wide reading tour to show off all the words he knows.

Using the marker and the sticky notes, help your child label common objects around the house. For example, your child can label windows, doors, plants, the couch, towels, tables, chairs, clocks, curtains, and so on. As he sticks on each label, be sure to have him read the word back to you.

Help your child decorate an assortment of objects to be used as pointers. For example, wrap silver and gold ribbon around a ruler and secure with glue or tape to create a magic wand. Or decorate a wooden spoon with some permanent markers and a little paint to make it look like a favorite storybook character such as a scarecrow or spaceman, or a favorite icon such as a flower or planet.

You can also use scissors or a sharp cutting tool to round the edges of and cut a large, round window out of the flat "swatter" portion of a clean, unused fly swatter. Note: make the window opening about the same size as the sticky notes. Decorate the rest of the fly swatter with stickers and other small decorations to create a candy or flower wreath pointer.

Store the pointers in a handy, special place such as a tall gift box or an umbrella stand garnished with fancy ribbon.

Now when family comes to visit, have your child select a pointer and take the family on a reading tour!

Basic Reading Comprehension: Find a book you think is really terrific, and can't wait to read to your child. Give yourself a treat, and read it front to back, just by yourself...no kid yet! What do you like about it? What does it teach?



Now go back, looking at each “spread” (the two pages you see when you hold the book open). Ask yourself a question: what’s the most important thing happening in these two pages? This will vary, of course: it may be a change in the action; it may be a new character; it may be the way a main character is feeling.

For at least five spreads, jot an open ended question that you can ask your child to get at this main idea. Let’s say, for example, that you’re reading “Curious George.” You’ll want to avoid closed ended questions such as “what color is George’s fur”—this will feel too simple to your child, and too much like a quiz. Instead, ask questions about George himself: “How does George feel about his broken bicycle?” Narrow your focus on predictions: “Do you think he can get it fixed?” Put your sticky note on that page.

Now read the book with your child, and savor it together. Each time you get to a sticky note question, pause and talk it over.

As you approach the end of the story, you will have had a rich conversation. Now, bring it to a close by holding the book shut for the very last page or two. Ask: “Okay, after all this, what do you think will happen?” Join your child in making predictions, and then read together. How do you feel at the end? Did the author surprise you? What do you think?

Practice Reading with Newspaper Highlights: Introduce the newspaper and a highlighter to your child and you’ve got daily literacy practice at your fingertips! First show your child how to use a highlighter. Explain that you need to swipe, rather than color, with this special tool, and it makes words appear brighter than the other words around them.

Now explain that even though the newspaper is full of teeny print, there are still words that have been learned by your child that are all over the page. Pretty grownup stuff, if you think about it!

Next, pick a literacy skill of focus for the day. Perhaps your child is working on a sight word this week, such as “they.” Have him search through the newspaper and highlight the word “they” as often as he can find it.

The next day, choose a different skill or focus. Maybe today he’ll look for all the words he can find that start with the same letter as “Wednesday.” You could also have your kid highlight a few of the words he doesn’t recognize, and then look up the definitions as a way to improve his vocabulary.

You’ll want to set a weekly goal for your child and write it on the calendar beside the week. At the end of the week, if he has reached his goal, reward him for his efforts. Take him out for ice cream or a movie. It will be the “highlight” of his day!

Grocery Store Decoding: This quick and easy activity teaches kids how to break words down by introducing them to word families. With little more than a stack of magazines and a spiral notebook, you can help your child tackle common word families and start him on the road to reading success.

What’s a word family? Word families are groups of words that share a common ending as well as a common sound. All words containing the “ook” ending, for example, are in the same word family: hook, book, took, look, etc.

Start by looking through the magazines or grocery store advertisements with your child for a picture of a product that contains a word family chunk in its name. For example, if you find a picture of grapes, you can use the “ape” word ending for the activity. You can use any picture that’s simple enough to build a word family around.

After selecting a picture, have him cut it out and glue it at the top of the first page of the notebook.

Review the word ending with him. How does it sound? Under the picture, have him spell out the word family. Example: for dog food, write the letters “-og” under the picture.

Now ask him to write all of the words he can think of that end in "og" and are pronounced the same. Give him a few hints to get him started, then let him take the reins. Words he could write could include dog, fog, smog, jog, log, etc. Encourage him to sound out each word as he writes it down.

Over the course of the school year, continue to add more pictures to the notebook for new word families. As he becomes more familiar with the activity, he can start choosing his own sound chunks to focus on. The more he practices, the better he'll be at recognizing word families!

Be creative! Look for possible product names to use everywhere in your environment. You can choose names of restaurants, stores, toy brand names—anything he may be familiar with. The more creative you can get the more likely he will be to remember that word family.

<https://www.education.com/activity/first-grade/ela/reading/>

Journal: Journaling can be a useful activity for children. It gives them a private venue to keep a daily record of their thoughts, feelings, and ideas, and can motivate children to express themselves more than they otherwise would. However, children can have short attention spans, and may quickly tire of journaling or run out of ideas to write about. If you'd like your children to develop a habit of daily journal writing, plan to provide them with the needed supplies and encourage them to write through prompts and other fun writing exercises.

Help your child find a suitable journal. To excite kids about the prospect of daily journaling, start by purchasing them a suitable paper-copy journal. Take the kids to your local office-supply store and ask them to look through the aisle containing journals and notebooks. Allow the kids to pick out a journal which appeals to them; they'll be more inclined to write in a fun, personalized journal.

Younger kids may appreciate brighter, fun-colored journals, or journals that they can decorate and put stickers on.

Give kids access to fun writing prompts. Kids may be unsure of what to write when you first start teaching them to journal daily. You can help overcome this inertia by providing kids with writing prompts. These ideas will give kids something to write about and help them feel confident expressing ideas on the page. If you're struggling to come up with sufficient writing-idea prompts on your own (especially if your kids want more than one prompt each day), look for prompts online. There are several websites that list fun, simple writing prompts for kids to try. For example, ask children to write one or two pages about:

Something interesting they saw or heard that day,

- A favorite family memory,
- Their own daily emotions and experiences, or
- Their favorite book, movie, or TV show.

Model journaling for children. If kids view journaling as a chore, show them that you're willing to journal alongside them. This should incline the kids to be more open to spending time writing, since children often imitate behaviors that they see adults model. Sit with your kids in their room or at the kitchen table and share the journal writing experience. Have your child write the sounds and words he knows while you help to write words that are too difficult.

Have your child draw a picture that corresponds to the writing they have just completed. This helps them to visualize what they have written.

Encourage children to re-read their own journal entries. Revisiting previous journal entries will allow children to see how much their writing has improved over the months, and also is great reading practice.

<http://www.wikihow.com/Teach-Kids-Daily-Journal-Writing>