

Helping Your K-5 CHILD Become a STRONGER READER

Practical Reading Strategies
for Parents to Use at Home

Build Skills.
Boost Confidence.
Inspire a Love of Reading.

For

- ✓ Struggling Readers
- ✓ Emerging Readers
- ✓ Confident Readers
- ✓ Advanced Readers



Word Branch
EDUCATION

NURTURING READERS. GROWING CONFIDENCE. INSPIRING FUTURES.

A Practical Guide for Supporting K–5 Learners

Helping your child become a stronger reader does not require you to be a teacher. Small, consistent moments of reading, conversation, and encouragement can make a big difference. This guide offers simple strategies parents can use at home to support children from kindergarten through fifth grade.



1. Make Reading Part of the Daily Routine

Consistency matters more than long reading sessions. Set aside time each day for reading, even if it is only 10–20 minutes.

Try:

- Reading together before bed
- Letting your child read while you read nearby
- Reading recipes, signs, directions, or menus together
- Keeping books in easy-to-reach places

The goal is to help reading become a normal and enjoyable part of everyday life.





2. Read Aloud—Even When Your Child Can Read Independently

Reading aloud helps children develop vocabulary, comprehension, listening skills, and a love of stories.

As you read, pause occasionally and ask:

- “What do you think will happen next?”
- “Why do you think the character did that?”
- “What has happened so far?”
- “Does this remind you of anything?”

For older elementary students, choose books that may be above their independent reading level. They can still benefit from hearing more complex vocabulary and stories.

3. Help Beginning Readers Sound Out Words



When your child encounters an unfamiliar word, give them time to try.

Encourage them to:

1. Look at the letters.
2. Say the sounds they know.
3. Blend the sounds together.
4. Try the word again in the sentence.

For example, a child reading ship might say:

/sh/ /i/ /p/ → ship

Avoid immediately giving the word whenever possible. A few seconds of productive struggle can help children build stronger decoding skills.



4. Focus on Understanding, Not Just Finishing

A child can read every word correctly and still not understand what they read.

After reading, ask simple questions such as:

- What was this mostly about?
- What was the most important part?
- Who were the main characters?
- What problem occurred?
- How was the problem solved?
- What did you learn?

Keep the conversation natural. It should feel more like talking about a movie than taking a test!

5. Build Vocabulary Through Everyday Conversation

Vocabulary growth does not only happen during reading lessons.

Use interesting words in everyday conversations and briefly explain what they mean.

For example:

“Today was exhausting. That means I am extremely tired.”

Encourage your child to ask about unfamiliar words and celebrate their curiosity.



6. Encourage Rereading



Rereading a familiar passage can improve:

- Fluency
- Accuracy
- Expression
- Confidence

If your child struggles through a passage the first time, try reading it together and then let them read it again.

The second or third reading is often smoother—and that success can be very motivating.



7. Choose Books Your Child Actually Enjoys

Not every child will love the same books. Some prefer:

- Graphic novels
- Mysteries
- Fantasy
- Animals
- Sports
- Humor
- Science
- History

Reading does not have to look like a traditional chapter book. Magazines, comics, nonfiction books, poetry, and informational texts can all support reading growth. Interest is a powerful reading motivator.

8. Use the “Just Right” Book Rule



A book should provide some challenge without causing constant frustration.

A simple guideline is the five-finger check: Choose a page and have your child read it. Hold up one finger for each word they do not know.

- 0–1 words: The book may be easy.
- 2–3 words: The book may be a good independent reading level.
- 4–5 words: The book may be challenging and better for reading together.

Remember: Children can enjoy both easy books and challenging books!



9. Connect Reading to Real Life

Show your child that reading has a purpose beyond school.

Ask them to help read:

- Recipes
- Game instructions
- Maps
- Store signs
- Menus
- Schedules
- Directions
- Online information

These everyday experiences help children understand that reading is a useful life skill.

10. Praise Effort and Growth

Try to praise specific actions instead of simply saying, “Good job!”

For example:

- “I noticed you went back and reread that sentence.”
- “You worked hard to sound out that word.”
- “You figured out the meaning by using clues from the story.”
- “That passage was much smoother the second time.”

Specific encouragement helps children recognize the strategies they are using successfully.



Strategies by Grade Level

Focus on:

- Letter recognition
- Letter sounds
- Rhyming
- Beginning sounds
- Blending simple sounds
- Listening to stories

Kindergarten

Try games, songs, magnetic letters, and short books.

Focus on:

- Phonics
- Blending sounds
- Decoding words
- Sight word recognition
- Reading simple sentences
- Building fluency

First Grade

Encourage your child to point to words as they read and practice short passages more than once.

Focus on:

- Reading with expression
- Understanding main ideas
- Finding supporting details
- Vocabulary
- Making inferences

Third Grade

Encourage your child to explain why they think something happened.

Fourth Grade

Focus on:

- Deeper comprehension
- Summarizing
- Vocabulary development
- Comparing ideas
- Using evidence from the text

Ask: “What in the text makes you think that?”

Focus on:

- Analyzing texts
- Comparing sources
- Identifying themes
- Drawing conclusions
- Supporting ideas with evidence

Fifth Grade

Encourage your child to discuss what they read and form their own opinions.

When to Consider Extra Reading Support



Every child develops at a different pace, but additional support may be helpful if your child consistently:

- Avoids reading
- Struggles to sound out words
- Reads very slowly or with difficulty
- Frequently guesses at words
- Has trouble remembering what they read
- Becomes frustrated or anxious during reading
- Is not making expected progress

Early support can help address difficulties before frustration grows.

The Most Important Strategy: Keep It Positive

Reading should not become a daily battle. If your child is frustrated, take a break, offer support, and try again later.

Your encouragement matters. Celebrate progress, no matter how small, and remember that confident readers are built one skill—and one successful reading experience—at a time.

A few minutes of meaningful reading each day can help your child build skills, confidence, and a lifelong relationship with books.





Thank You!

Thank you for downloading *Helping Your K–5 Child Become a Stronger Reader*. I hope the strategies in this guide give you practical, encouraging ways to support your child’s reading journey at home.

With 23 years in education, I have seen how the right support, consistent practice, and a little encouragement can help children grow into stronger and more confident readers.

If your child needs additional support, Word Branch Education offers personalized tutoring with a focus on reading intervention and enrichment. Whether your child is struggling with foundational skills, decoding, fluency, comprehension, or vocabulary—or is already a strong reader who needs an extra challenge—individualized instruction can help meet them where they are. I also created Roots of Reading, a science-based reading program designed to help young learners build essential foundational reading skills through structured, engaging activities and instruction.

My goal is simple: to help children build skills, gain confidence, and discover that reading can be something they enjoy.

Thank you again for allowing me to be a small part of your child’s learning journey!

Warmly,
Catherine Rayburn-Trobaugh
Word Branch Education

Helping children build strong roots for a lifetime of learning.

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