

# Dad's Playbook

## COACHING KIDS TO READ

### Be the Best Coach You Can Be!

Every minute you spend reading and talking with your child pays off. But dads can use some simple skills to help their kids be even better readers—like knowing what kinds of questions to ask when you're reading a story together.

The booklets listed below break down the "secrets" of being a great literacy coach with your kids. All of them can be ordered for free by calling 1-800-228-8813, or by visiting [www.nifl.gov](http://www.nifl.gov).

#### **A Child Becomes a Reader— Proven Ideas for Parents from Research**

*Birth through Preschool*

#### **A Child Becomes a Reader— Proven Ideas for Parents from Research**

*Kindergarten through Grade Three*

#### **Put Reading First Helping Your Child Learn to Read— A Parent Guide**

#### **La Lectura es lo Primero**

#### **Helping Your Child Become a Reader**



## Getting in the Game

### Reading: Easy as ABC, right?

Most kids learn to talk by talking with other people. They hear—they listen—they speak. Learning to read? That's harder.

Reading doesn't come naturally. You have to learn it. The sticks and circles we call letters are symbols. Basically, letters stand for sounds. In the big picture, they help us communicate when we can't talk face to face. If we couldn't read, we'd never know the wisdom of William Shakespeare, Langston Hughes, or Yogi Berra.

Our alphabet has only 26 letters, but it's one of the most powerful tool kits on the planet. When you put letters together, into syllables, words, sentences, and paragraphs, you get the script for Star Wars, a Martin Luther King speech, The Grapes of Wrath, a letter, or instructions for how to build a tricycle.

Reading lets us into the whole world. It gets us in the game. Reading is power. And, let's face it, good readers make more money.

Teaching someone to read is complex. But while teachers are doing their thing in the classroom, parents can do things to make time with their children pay off in big ways.

Reading with your child every day certainly helps, whether it's a book, a street sign, or a cereal box. But researchers have found that parents can help even more by building five skills that kids need to become readers.

**What are these five skills? See pages 4 & 5.**

**READING  
DOESN'T COME  
NATURALLY.  
YOU HAVE TO  
LEARN IT.**

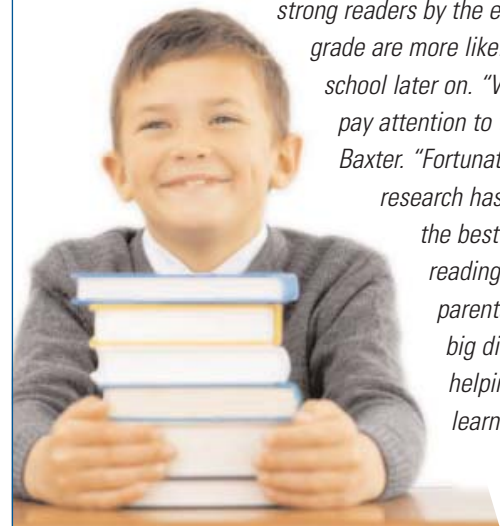
### **THIRD GRADE:** *Why is it so important?*

*Educators have discovered that if a child can't read fluently by the end of third grade, he may not become a strong reader. And the road ahead will be much more difficult.*

*"In fourth grade, students start using their reading skills as a tool for learning other things," said Dr. Sandra Baxter, director of the National Institute for Literacy. "They have to read well because the subjects get harder. Teachers have less time to help kids catch up on reading skills they don't have."*

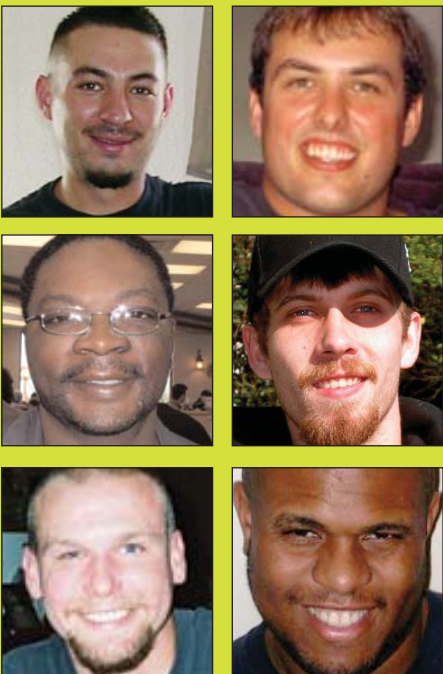
*That's why parents need to stay in constant touch with their children's day care providers and teachers from kindergarten through grade three. It's important to make sure that children's reading skills are developing "on schedule."*

*In fact, research has shown that children who aren't strong readers by the end of third grade are more likely to drop out of school later on. "We should all pay attention to that," said Dr. Baxter. "Fortunately, the research has also shown us the best ways to teach reading, and how parents can make a big difference in helping their children learn to read."*



## 20 Dads

How do dads help their kids learn to read? See inside for the stories of 20 fathers.



# 10 Dads.

## How they help their kids learn to read!

**Yes, guys read. And they can give their kids the best shot at a bright future by helping them learn to read too. Here are stories of dads from around the country, talking in their own words about how they do it. Many of these dads discovered they were already doing a lot of the right things, and doing it in personal, special ways. For more stories of fathers helping their kids learn to read, turn to page 6.**



### Jorge

**Cable TV technician  
Father of three, 2 years, 3 years, 5 years old**

I have three children and I read to them in English so they can learn more. At the same time I read to them, I also am learning better English myself. My father is illiterate and I taught myself how to read.

I want my children to know how to read for themselves. I read the newspaper in English, and for my work, it's all in English. I'm a cable TV manager technician and I teach others how to fix cable TV.

I buy books for my children at a bookstore in Tijuana. If there's a book sale, I'll buy books at a store. I have been coming to the library (family literacy program) for three months. I pay attention to my children. It's most important to know who they are and what they like and don't like.

We practice writing out letters and I teach them the sounds of the letters. I'll sound out the letter and have them practice writing it out, while sounding it out themselves.

To get their interest, I sing songs with them first, like the ABC song and other word songs and songs in Spanish to motivate them to read. I sing it wrong and they correct me. I go into detail and explanation of letters and sounds to my children. I also do homework and math games with them. They ask me questions and I help them. If I don't understand a word myself, I'll look it up in the dictionary.

**"We practice writing out letters and I teach them the sounds of the letters."**



### Matt

**Licensed electrician  
Father of one, 2 years old**

I have my daughter on weekends and we read every night while she is with me, mostly before she goes to bed. Isabel likes certain books and wants me to read them to her over and over again. We got a fish book when we visited the

aquarium. It is an alphabet book and she likes it too. We read small children's books with colorful pictures.

My daughter walked and started saying her first words early. I think she has a big vocabulary for her age and that's probably because we read and talk to her a lot. I even read to her before she was born! I think her mother is more into the acting, maybe more animated when she reads. I do some vocal changes, but I'm more straightforward with my reading. Isabel likes to flip the pages.

I like to see her reactions, the way she picks up on things, like naming the animals in the pictures. We have fun with books and she makes up funny words. She likes to turn the pages and now she knows that you read a book from front to back. I sometimes run my finger under the words as I read so she will see how print goes from left to right.

She is only two, so she is not reading yet, but if she hears a word she doesn't know, she always asks what it means. I talk to her and name words and tell her what they mean. We play with words and she repeats everything I say. She learns fast. I want her to enjoy reading and to do it of her own free will beyond schoolwork. She sees me write in the notebook that her mother and I use to share information. She knows that we are communicating with each other through writing.

**"She likes to turn the pages and now she knows that you read a book from front to back."**



### Brian

**Chemical operator  
Father of two, 5 years, 12 years old**

I want my son and daughter to be able to read and understand what they're reading instead of just going through and then later on ask questions. I want them to understand that in this day and age if you don't read and learn a lot of things, someone can be like a wolf in sheep's clothing. If you don't read the fine print and understand what's going on, then you're basically putting yourself in a hole.

I like reading to them and seeing how they are bent on your every last word, waiting to see what the outcome is. I like seeing their reactions. I love sitting down on Sundays. There's just something about Sundays. It's my time to sit around with the family.

I want them to be very articulate. There's a lot of different words in the dictionary that many people don't really know. It's about being able to comprehend—being able to see a word and if you don't understand it go in the dictionary and figure it out. I try to tell them the importance of speaking clearly and understanding how people perceive you when you speak. A lot of that has to do with reading. You can't extend your vocabulary if you don't read.

My daughter is in kindergarten so she brings songs home from the school. She starts humming and singing and we're like, "what's that song?" She might not be saying a lot of the words right so it brings us back to our childhood. We sit there arguing about what the words were.

My daughter has a diary. She'll come home and she'll ask for her diary and she'll be jotting little letters down and she'll say, "Daddy, read my diary." And I'm looking at it and it doesn't spell anything but I try to make her think I know what it says and try to keep her motivated. And my son, he's 12, he'll say, "That doesn't spell anything." But then I'll ask her to tell us what it says. And she'll say, "I can't tell you." But she'll whisper in my ear. So it just helps her out just to jot things down.

**"You can't extend your vocabulary if you don't read."**



### Taape

**Warehouse worker  
Father of one, 2 years old**

This is my first child, so I want to do it right. I hope to have more children. Every kid will have something for me to learn.

I want my son to grow up and be able to read. Then he can decide what his goals are for himself. As long as he can read, he can learn more about it later. For me, the first time I was in the U.S. I was put into second grade. I didn't understand anything and they dropped me down to first to learn how to read.

My wife is more into books than me and she's stricter. He has to pay attention when she uses books with him. The only way my son listens to me is if I'm singing or dancing. His favorite book plays the chorus of Old MacDonald—"E-I-E-I-O!" is his favorite part, he loves that. If I start singing that to him, he starts dancing. My wife uses his ABC blocks. She says a letter in his name and he has to point to it. He repeats it back, but he doesn't know his letters yet. She will write out his name and give it to him. He just scribbles on it. My wife and I play Scrabble and he'll watch.

On the way here today, we made a quick stop at the store and I sang to my son while he danced in the shopping cart. Every time I sing a song in the store, he'll dance. We sing in both Samoan and English. We speak both in the house. TV helped me a lot to learn English and I like to use TV with my son. Right now, he'll grab a book if he really wants us to read it. I know my son is enjoying hearing me read when he's smiling and laughing. If you stop, he wants you to keep doing it over and over and over and over.

**"She will write out his name and give it to him. He just scribbles on it."**

## Thanks!

**The National Institute for Literacy and RMC Research Corporation express their thanks to the fathers who agreed to be interviewed. We admire the fine work they are doing with their children.**



## Ernest

**Construction worker**  
**Father of two, 6 years, 8 years old**

Reading was very, very scary for me at school. I remember when I thought I had to read, my hands would be so sweaty that the sweat would drop on the desk. They had me checked out and said I had a reading disorder. I got better in high school. I had a

tutor in 10th grade who is still in my life if I need tutoring or help. It's very important to help my kids now.

My oldest daughter was struggling. I'm the one who can talk to her about that situation and can relate. If she doesn't know a word I break it down bit by bit and pronounce it in syllables so she has an idea of how to put it together. That's how I learned. When I first noticed she was having problems with her reading it didn't really affect her. She's unique because she was still wanting to learn even if she got frustrated. She loves to go to school. She's a fighter and doesn't give up.

I tell my children it is important to be able to read because, suppose you're traveling and can't read the road signs—you wouldn't know how or where to get off the highway.

I would really like to do a lot of traveling but sometimes I'm afraid because what if I couldn't read the signs. I could get lost. That's why I tell my children it's important to read and I try to read to them whenever I can.

I go over spelling words with them. They know how to write our name and address. I also help them with writing homework. When she brought homework with math problems she had to write out in words, we used the names of some of her friends in the class to write out the problems.

My wife and I take time for our kids to help them study, to help them learn—and that we are behind them 110%. I want them to have what I never had. I am successful, but it was a struggle for me and I feel that if I'm behind them, as their father, it won't be so hard for them. I know I have smart kids. I want the best for them.

***"If she doesn't know a word I break it down bit by bit and pronounce it in syllables so she has an idea of how to put it together."***



## Mark

**Antique car restorer**  
**Father of three, 6 months, 3 years, 5 years old**

When I read to my children I try to make it theatrical. I try to put something into it to make it more enjoyable. I would call it trying to get them to imagine that they're actually there. I work on their imagination. You can see excitement in their faces.

We generally try to read at least one book apiece for each one of the girls. So they each end up getting two books read to them in one night. We haven't actually sat down and read to the baby yet. But he's in the room.

I know that for myself, reading to the girls has helped me read better. I was never one for reading. I didn't really like to read a lot. In the automotive business we're in, we do research. You have to be able to read the manual. If you're trying to diagnose a problem, or anything, a wiring diagram, you have to read. That's all the ability you really need to know well to learn how to do anything. You can be able to wire a light fixture, or put in a furnace or whatever—build a house, build a boat.

My kindergartner is wanting longer books now. It's okay to read that five-page book you can get done in two minutes but she'd rather sit for half an hour and listen to an entire story. Then she'll say "well, I'm going to read this book." She'll just sit there, looking at the pictures more than reading the book but she'll study it page after page. I've seen her a couple of times in the morning asleep with a book lying across her chest.

***"My kindergartner is wanting longer books now."***



## Fred

**Press operator,**  
**Youth Detention Center leader**  
**Father of four, 4 years, 9 years, 10 years, 15 years old**

On the days Juicy doesn't go to day care I try to spend the day with him. When the rest of the kids get home at 3 o'clock from school, I make sure they do their homework or I make sure they read. We have a quiet time from 4 to

5. It's just strictly reading. No TV. We have plenty of books, so I'm like, "pick a book out." I want my children to know that reading is positive. The way to learn is to read.

After they read I'm almost like a teacher—I want them to write out what they read to make sure they're getting it. Instead of just reading it and saying, "okay, this is what just happened," I want them to put it on paper too. I want to make sure they really understand what they just read. I didn't have it that way. I wish I would have.

They are learning faster than I did. Especially if they're interested in something, it has their full attention. My parents took time with us, but not like they should, because they didn't know.

I teach them they have the potential to do anything. I take it like a cuss word when they say, "I can't do something." I always explain to them, "Don't be afraid to make mistakes. It's fine. That's how you learn." Especially with Juicy—we just went over the ABCs. He wasn't sure. I said, "Be sure... even if you're wrong. I'm going to tell you if you're wrong or right."

***"We have a quiet time from 4 to 5. It's just strictly reading. No TV."***



## Mike

**Construction worker**  
**Father of one, 9 months old**

I work every day so I'm only able to play with my daughter from four to seven or eight. I like to spend those hours with her. We usually keep the TV off. I read to her every day. I think she likes that we're on the floor when I read, though

sometimes I walk around and dance while I read, with her in my arms. I think she's having fun. I think she's going to want us to read to her all the time. When I read, I act it out, I use different voices. I'm shy, but not with my kid. I don't mind looking like an idiot as long as she's laughing.

We were given a lot of books at the baby shower. The person who threw the shower for us asked people to start a library for Hailey. We get books by mail, I don't know where they're from. And we're right next door to the library and they have a lot of sales. You can fill a box for a dollar.

I ask Hailey all the time, "who's your dada?" and point to myself. I echo her sounds. And she copies me. She sort of screeches. If she does one, I might do two or three back, and she copies me. Sometimes when we say "no" she stops, but then does whatever it was again. We say "no" and she stops, then does it again. It's almost like she's doing it to get us to talk to her.

***"I echo her sounds. And she copies me."***



## Alejandro

**Construction worker; business owner**  
**Father of three, 2 years, 3 years, and 7 years old**

My older son likes me to read about soccer and my younger son likes books with dogs and other animals. I sometimes read a couple books at one time, one about soccer and one about animals—I read from one for a little while and explain about the animals

and then I read from the other and explain the soccer. I set aside special time every day to be with my daughter to either help her with homework or read with her.

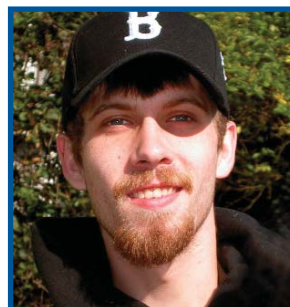
Their mother is very focused when she reads to them. She looks at pictures with the kids and explains all the details. I may explain a few details, but not like she does. My daughter reads like she has learned in school. She reads the whole book first, by herself. Then if she needs help understanding something or would like to talk about something we go back through page by page. She will read to me too.

When the boys don't understand a word, I will show them the object or a picture, and I will continue to ask them about it until they know what it is. I teach my kids words more in Spanish because it is easier for me. We have some books from Mexico that I use to help them learn the letters and Spanish words.

I have taught my children the names of the tools I use. I play music and have a band that practices in my house. The boys like to play the instruments and I try and teach them the lyrics to the songs.

I really enjoy the moment of being with my kids and helping them learn. We don't have that much time with our kids when they are young, so I just enjoy this time with them as much as I can.

***"When the boys don't understand a word, I will show them the object or a picture, and I will continue to ask them about it until they know what it is."***



## Jesse

**Press operator, molding factory**  
**Father of one, 11 months old**

I know reading to her now will help her learn down the road. But right now it's fun to entertain her, to see the way she looks when she's happy. It's all about her. She just lights up, she's giggling, she's enjoying it. It makes me feel good. It's hard

to entertain babies sometimes—sometimes nothing will work—but books usually work pretty easy with her.

I perform when I read. I do whatever I have to do. I change my voice with the character. Whichever way the character is, I try to role-play it. She loves this one book that has a girl and sea animals in it. So I play the crab, the lobster. I'm not that good at doing a girl's voice, but I do my best.

We get books from anywhere. At WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) they give us books. I have some books from when I was a kid. We go to the bookstore in the mall, and let her pick out a book. She's drawn to bright colors, and books you can touch or books that make sounds. She likes to push things, so I see if she can comprehend the buttons on the remote.

I hope reading is as important to her as it was to me. The more she reads as a kid—starting off small, going into longer books, and more complex words—the easier it's going to be in the higher grades. It's great to see her begin to learn. There's nothing better than to be able to pass it on to my child. I'm not going to force her, or punish her, like "you have to read this," but we'll have a certain time of day, and we'll make reading a regular part of her schedule.

***"I perform when I read. I do whatever I have to do. I change my voice with the character."***

# 1-2-3-4-5

FIVE SKILLS  
CHILDREN NEED  
TO BE READERS  
BY 3RD GRADE

## 1 Spoken Words

**Before your child ever sees a word on the page, he or she will hear thousands and thousands of words—spoken words. Every spoken word is a series of sounds.**

**Say the word “football.”** Now say it again, slowly.



Take it apart. Stress each little sound, from the “f” sound at the beginning to the “l” sound at the end. “Football” has six sounds in it. A child who can tell these sounds apart is on the way to becoming a reader.

**Children need to hear how sounds in words go together.** “Hat,” “bat,” “fat,” “cat,” and “rat” are almost the same word—but most people don’t wear cats on their heads on cold days. Only the beginning sounds in these words are different. But that one letter makes a huge difference.

When you help a child hear and play with sounds in words, you’re getting him ready to read, to see those differences between words when they’re written down.

### IT’S CALLED PHONEMIC AWARENESS

Teachers call knowing how language sounds “phonemic awareness.” You can start working on phonemic awareness when your child is a baby. Even saying silly words like “coochie coo” begins to make language sounds more familiar. Children should have a good sense of phonemic awareness by the time they start preschool.

### HOW CAN A DAD HELP?

Play games with words. If you see a boat, say to your child, “hey, look at that coat in the water!” She will know it’s a boat, and probably tell you so! At dinner, ask your son to pass you his fish...he’ll correct you right away that you meant his dish, not his fish.

### HINT

**Play with sounds in all parts of words (beginning, middle, and end): like “job,” “joy,” and “jog,” where the difference is at the end of the words. Rhyming is also important. Listen for rhyming words in songs, rap, and poems. Play a game: who can come up with three words that rhyme with “cool” the fastest?**

*Teachers call knowing how language sounds “phonemic awareness.”*

## 2 Written Words

**The leap from talking to reading happens when a child starts to see how written letters stand for the sounds of speech. It’s like learning a code.**

Take the word “rocket.” The sounds you hear when you say “rocket” are represented by letters, or letter pairs: r, o, ck, e, and t.

**rocket**

As young readers get better, they recognize words as soon as they see them. After all, you don’t want to have to figure out the words “the,” “and,” and “from” every time you read them.

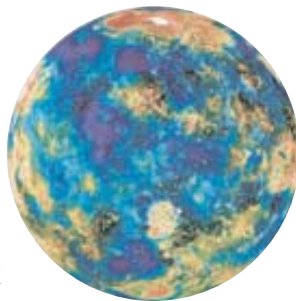
Another great bonus of knowing the rules of how written letters sound? When a reader sees words he doesn’t know, he can use his knowledge of letters and sounds to figure them out. Learning the rules of letter

sounds takes lots and lots of practice.

You would think it would be easy, since there are only 26 letters! But sometimes “e” makes an “eee” sound, sometimes it makes an “eh” sound, and sometimes no sound at all! And there are exceptions to the rules too. Who would figure that “igh” makes a sound like “eye,” like in “high” and “sigh?” Young readers will spend a lot of time learning these rules and variations.

### IT’S CALLED PHONICS

Teachers call this knowledge of how letters represent sounds “phonics.” Children can start learning about phonics when they are about four years old. That’s when they start to pay more attention to letters and words in books. They will learn a lot about phonics up through first grade. In second grade, they should know most of the phonics rules.



### HOW CAN A DAD HELP?

Words are everywhere. Think of every word as a chance to help your child become a better reader. Look for words on signs, maps, billboards, cereal boxes, money, and birthday cards. Point out words to your child wherever you see them. Say them out loud. Take time to sound them out and show how the letters and combinations of letters make sounds. For example, standing at a street corner, watch for the sign to turn from “WALK” to “DON’T WALK,” and see who can shout the word “DON’T” first!



kitten  
mitten

*Teachers call this knowledge of how letters represent sounds “phonics.”*

# 3 Word Power

*If your child lives to the ripe old age of 100, she could learn more than 20 new words a day and never know them all. Of course, no human being knows every single word of English. But the more words a person knows, the better he can read and speak.*

Learning new words starts early—the names of colors, animals, relatives, and things around the house. A child might pick up some words you use at work, just by hearing you talk. She will certainly learn a lot of new words from watching television, listening to music, and going to school. She will learn most words by hearing and saying them.

Knowing lots of words comes in handy when a child starts to read. Children use the words they already know to make sense of words they see written down. Suppose your child sees the word “courage” in a book. As he sounds it out, it might dawn on him that the sounds are making a word he already knows. Knowing the word ahead of time helps him read it faster.

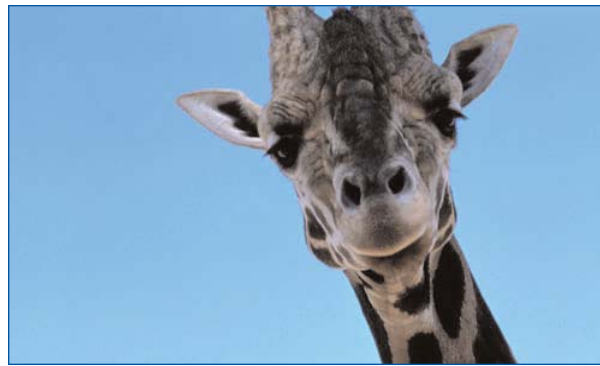
## IT'S CALLED VOCABULARY

Teachers call the knowledge of words, and what they mean, “vocabulary.” You can start building a child’s vocabulary from day one, when you say your daughter’s name or point to a giraffe in a book (and say “giraffe” out loud). A child needs to know about 1,900 basic words to communicate. Most first graders know about 10,000 words.

## HOW CAN A DAD HELP?

Building vocabulary is like building a strong foundation, brick by brick. See a helicopter flying overhead? Having spaghetti squash for dinner for the first time? Going to Cincinnati to visit your brother? Point all of these new words out to your child. Try adding three new words every day (when you go for walks, read the newspaper together, or watch a movie). The world is full of new things to learn and explore.

You, dad, are the best tour guide out there!



## QUIZ

*How many words are there in the English language? A thousand? A million? Somewhere in between—about 850,000 at last count, and growing every day.*

*Teachers call the knowledge of words, and what they mean, “vocabulary.”*

# 4 Reading Smoothly & Easily



*Remember when you first tried driving a stick shift? How the car stalled? The jerky motion you thought would tear the engine apart? That’s what early reading is like. You might have heard your son or daughter trying to read a page, getting stuck on words. That’s normal for young readers but, like driving, the goal is to move ahead smoothly and easily.*

Like learning how to drive or swing a bat, learning how to read takes practice. The more you read, the better you get at it. It’s that simple. Along the way, young readers need coaches (like you) to get them through the rough spots, and to cheer them on when they get it right.

## IT'S CALLED FLUENCY

Teachers call the ability to read accurately and quickly “fluency.” Fluent readers recognize lots of words on sight, without having to sound them out. Eventually, they get so fluent they can look at groups of words and get their meaning right away. Fluent readers sound natural when they read out loud. And they can focus on the meaning of what they are reading, rather than trying to decode word by word.

## HOW CAN A DAD HELP?

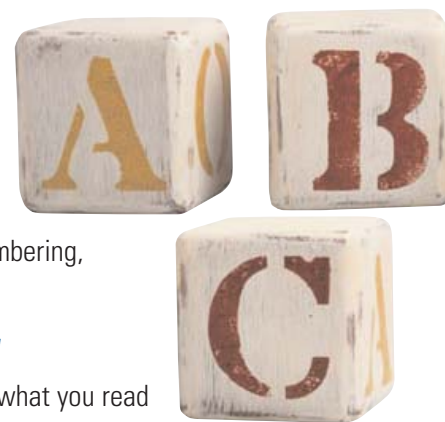
This one’s easy: the way to fluency is to listen to your child read the same pages repeatedly until your child smoothes out all the “bumps in the road.” Reading those favorite books over and over again—as you’ve been doing all along—has been moving your child down the road. Sometimes, you can take turns reading sentences in a book.

*Teachers call the ability to read accurately and quickly “fluency.”*

# 5 Knowing What It All Means

*We read for a reason. To get swept away by a great story. Or find out what happened in last night’s game. Or figure out how to put together a bicycle. (Good luck!) There is no point to reading if it doesn’t help us understand something.*

That’s why we spend so much time helping kids learn how to read. Eventually, they will read for a purpose. If your daughter can read the words on a page, but doesn’t understand what the words mean, she’s not really reading. Reading uses a reader’s own experience and knowledge of the world, and of words, to make sense of what she reads. Research over 30 years has found ways parents can help their children become better at understanding, remembering, and communicating what they read.



## IT'S CALLED COMPREHENSION

Teachers call the ability to understand what you read “comprehension.” Does your child understand the details, the meaning, and the ideas behind what she is reading?

## HOW CAN A DAD HELP?

Ask questions. It’s a great way to know whether your young reader really understands what he reads. And it stimulates his brain to think and ask questions himself. When you’re reading a story with your child, stop and ask questions once in awhile: why did that character do that? What do you think would happen next? What would you do in that situation? Don’t just ask questions about books—do it about everything you see and do with your child—from what’s for dinner to what the coach should do on the next play.

*Teachers call the ability to understand what you read “comprehension.”*

# 10 More Dads.

## How they help their kids learn to read!

Yes, guys read. And they can give their kids the best shot at a bright future by helping them learn to read too. Here are stories of dads from around the country, talking in their own words about how they do it. Many of these dads discovered they were already doing a lot of the right things, and doing it in personal, special ways.



### Cecil

**Retired grocery store manager**  
**Father of three, 9 years, 13 years, 15 years old**

I like the fact that I am actually doing something with them that is very positive and rewarding for their future. I get books from the library, the school library, and sometimes we pick up books in the stores.

Sometimes we receive books as presents.

I especially love poems and I would really like to get some West Indian poetry. It would be good to share with my kids.

When I'm doing something, like cooking, I follow the instructions exactly. I suppose I haven't thought about some of the things as modeling, but I see my children checking the receipts, as I do.

***"I especially love poems and I would really like to get some West Indian poetry."***

My daughter is very detailed; she likes to read every single thing. She doesn't want to miss anything. She's like me; I follow all the directions exactly. All my children read differently. I have one son that reads all the instructions before he starts something; like yesterday he was trying to learn how to clean the VCR heads. My other son tries things out before he reads the instructions.

When I was growing up I remember I had struggles with reading. It was my biggest hurdle. When I got past it everything came easier. I wish that more dads would read with their children and build their child as a strong reader.



### Stephen

**Stay at home parent**  
**Father of two, 4 years, 6 years old**

My son is learning his letters and numbers, so I ask him to sign and date all of his artwork. My daughter writes at school and she likes to write down things for me at home. She calls it dictation when I have her write a note to help me remember something or write a list for the

grocery store. My daughter is beginning to learn to read and my son benefits from watching her. He is anxious to be able to read on his own.

I have been reading to my children since they were born so they are very attentive when we read together. I enjoy the closeness with them. They participate in the story and it is a good way to be with my kids. I guess it's not as much fun when I'm tired, but I never think of it as a chore because they enjoy it so much. I wish I had been encouraged to read more when I was a child. It is so superior to television. We moved our TV to the basement.

***"I talk about stories and show them I'm really into reading. They see me read."***

I talk about stories and show them I'm really into reading. They see me read. I think my son is the same kind of reader I am; he will stay up later at night to look at books and pretend to read. They have lots of books in their rooms and they sit in their rooms and read early in the morning, even before my wife and I are awake. I volunteer at their school and take a small group of children aside to read with them.

I just want them to love to read and to know that it is a way to explore the world around them. They like to know and ask a lot of questions about words. I explain the meaning and sharpen their understanding. They are good talkers so we like to talk together.



### Darien

**Carpenter and interior decorator**  
**Father of five, 9 months, 3 years, 6 years, 7 years, 8 years old**

I tell my kids that being bored is nothing but a state of mental bankruptcy. You can always find something to do. If you're bored, pick up a book.

Bring me a book and I'll read it to you. I want my

kids to understand that you need to read for knowledge. It gives you more than you can obtain just from ordinary everyday life. That's why I started my own library.

I didn't really like to read until I got about 19 or 20 years old. They love to read. They will pick up a book any time and bring it to me and want to read it. My older two are really good readers.

When they first started reading they didn't understand how to express the feeling in the words. I tell them, "Feel what you read, don't just read just to be reading. Feel it so you know exactly what he's saying, how he's saying and why. Try to figure out how the writers try to make you understand what they're writing." And I show them, this kind of writer writes this way. Another writes this way.

My older two kids like to rap so they rhyme everyday. They like to rhyme. I help them sometimes. I might say, "That's not a rhyme. Think of this word. But you got to add meaning to it, too... so that it makes sense."

I like knowing that me reading to them is making them happy. I love to see their faces and their excitement. They enjoy it. I do too. You know, just that half hour to hour that we spend reading books is just a happy time.

***"Feel what you read, don't just read just to be reading."***



### Richard

**Aluminum siding installer**  
**Father of one, 4 years old**

She asks almost every night to read. She likes to sit down with books every night and read herself a story. She likes reading as much as she likes playing with her baby dolls. She's gets excited about it. If you sit there and read something to her, her attention stays.

She doesn't get up and run off or decide it's time to watch TV. She's just getting to learn the words now. I try to show her some of the easier words so she can try to pick them up. It's not too hard for her to pick up new things. We had to watch things we said even when she was a little over two.

I know from a couple of our family members that their kids act like reading is more of a chore rather than something they want to do. When she does it she thinks of it as fun. When she was three she spoke more clearly and had a better vocabulary than a lot of the five year olds she was with.

All you have to do is explain something to her and she picks it up. She's got three or four children's CDs with music. She's got all kinds of flashcards—little songs my wife learns with her at school. She went to preschool in the summer and learned songs. My wife does the songs with her. She also plays with a lot of puzzles. I help her learn words just by talking to her, explaining things to her, letting her be around. If I say something, she'll ask what's that and I'll just explain it to her. Or if she asks me what something is, and I'll tell her and she remembers it from there. She knows a lot of the easy words like cat or dog the ones that are easy to teach her but when it comes to the longer words it's harder to get her to realize them. We just started working on some of them for her to start reading.

***"When she was three she spoke more clearly and had a better vocabulary than a lot of the five year olds she was with."***

## Thanks!

The National Institute for Literacy and RMC Research Corporation express their thanks to the fathers who agreed to be interviewed. We admire the fine work they are doing with their children.





## Christopher

**High school senior**  
**Father of one, 5 months old**

I read to my baby at night before she goes to sleep. If she's fussy or not feeling well we read to settle her. I like to read to her. When I lay her down she looks at my mouth and she tries to make the same shapes as my mouth, she just looks as if she is

trying hard to do what I do. She likes listening to my voice.

She is only a baby, but she likes looking at books. She has just found her hands and she likes to touch books and she enjoys books that have textures. She reaches out and touches the different textures and I tell her the words. I show her what I'm reading and when we do anything I am always talking to her and telling her words. Like if we are eating, I give her the spoon or the napkin and I tell her the words. I try to tell her everything.

When I was young I was real nervous reading and did not like to read aloud in class, particularly when it was a word that I did not know. I want her to know that if she comes to a big word that she does not know that she is not to give up but be confident.

Reading is a whole other level of bonding. I want her to know that dad can help her as much as her mom and when she goes to school. I want her to know that she can come to me for help and that I will always be there to help her at any time. I remember my mom reading to me. I always had to ask my dad to read to me, but I want my daughter to know that I will read to her without her asking me to do so.

***"She has just found her hands and she likes to touch books and she enjoys books that have textures. She reaches out and touches the different textures and I tell her the words."***



## Sergio

**Automotive technician**  
**Father of three, 3 years, 4 years, 9 years old**

I taught myself how to read because my father is illiterate. I want a different outcome for my children.

I read every day at night with the children. I love to read and use it for myself. I think it's important for my children to learn more new words

and to speak and read better. It's always fun to read with my children. I like to see how happy they get when I read something to them. My nine-year-old reads before bed and more and more I have to take the book away from her so she'll go to sleep. The younger ones still don't read on their own. But, they all love it and Sundays, if I don't want to read to them, they protest.

My children bring books home from school and we subscribe to a Book Club and get a new book every month. I want them to make a habit of reading to learn more, speak better, and become more involved in the community.

With my nine-year-old, I'll use her homework to learn new words. With the younger ones, we do ABCs and vowels at home. And we play Mexican bingo with letters, or the Concentration game to find the pairs. If they don't understand a word I'll give them examples with the word in it. If I'm out with them, I'll answer any questions.

I openly communicate with them. My children are confident of themselves. They are able to speak to others.

I think parents should have an interest in what their children are reading and also to read for themselves to see how it does make a difference in their life.

This interview was translated from Spanish.



## Theodore

**Water delivery person**  
**Father of two, 4 months, 2 years old**

I don't really read outside of reading to my kids. I may read the newspaper every once in awhile, look at the sports section. I read to my children once a week, mostly at night, bedtime. I heard it makes them smarter.

I'm not a really good reader, but my wife is. She's more up on reading, reads more often. She reads to the kids maybe three or four times a week. Luke likes to watch us read. He'll open a book and mumble stuff and act like he's reading. Sometimes he'll stay on a page for a long time. He likes funny books and rhyming ones. Mainly when he sees a book, he says, "read, read, read, book, book, book," and he sits on our laps. Our four month old is around when we do this and watches. Maybe he will want to read later.

My parents only read the Bible, nothing else. While you need to do that, you need to do more. You read to achieve. You get smarter when you read and your life gets easier. I didn't like reading in school. I was scared to read. I'd get all silent and embarrassed and feel stupid because I would stumble and not know how to say a word. If you teach your kids more words and read more, they'll do better. I want to give my kids something I didn't have when I was younger. I don't know why they didn't read much to me. Maybe it's because they didn't have time. But I was so embarrassed in high school when I would stumble and didn't know words. This is important.

***"He'll open a book and mumble stuff and act like he's reading. Sometimes he'll stay on a page for a long time. He likes funny books and rhyming ones."***



## James

**Employment coordinator**  
**Father of two, 3 months, 17 months old**

Since I don't see my kids all day, reading to them is a 20 minute excuse to talk to them. It allows me some alone time, some one-on-one with them. Second, it's important for them to hear my tone of voice when I'm reading. That way, they don't just know the

disciplinary voice. It's a great excuse to talk with them and learn their likes and dislikes, what makes them happy. That's the third reason.

My wife makes fun noises and voices with the kids. With me, it's straight down the line. We relate what we saw that day to what we read that night. For example, if we saw a car that day, I'd emphasize that at night. Say we were reading a book with a car in it—I would point out the picture of the car and use it in another sentence, like, "Taylor and Dad rode in a car on the way to the store." We repeat songs we hear on kids' shows, and we rhyme sometimes at night. Also in the car, we sing and listen to kids' songs. Really, no place is immune. Even when the kids aren't there, I find myself humming those kids' songs, at work, wherever. They are stuck in my head.

It's so hard to get involved later if you don't get involved early. They start learning independently later, but they will have so much more trust in you if you are involved in the learning process. Maybe this will be the only time in my life I can read to or with my kids, so I do it.

***"We relate what we saw that day to what we read that night."***



## Mark

**Independent truck driver**  
**Father of two, 9 months, 4 years old**

When Mark goes to bed he wants me to read a story to him. I don't mind reading. We get a lot of books from the library. Sometimes if we go to the grocery store and he sees something he likes I usually buy it for him.

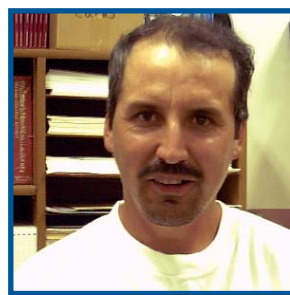
He's not reading yet. They're working on it in preschool. He seems a little smarter than me. He can probably operate the computer better than I can. I know reading helps if you're planning to get a good job. Right now through his preschool we like him to get him to spell his name, read his name. We cut out the letters and put them on contact paper.

I teach him different words. If he doesn't understand a word, we try to explain it to him, what it means. I read them different material. Mom will sit down with a map to show him the cities where I am. He'll talk to me on the phone and she'll show him where I am on the map.

I work on my old truck when I can. I know he likes to help with that. He'll be inquisitive and ask what I'm doing. He likes to help. If I crawl up underneath the truck to check on an air line or something he's right there with me. We bought him a little ride-on truck so if we're washing the van or I'm washing the truck, then he'll wash whatever.

The little girl, when I read him a story last night, she came in the room, sat on my lap. Right now she wants to tear the pages out, but she seems interested. I enjoy sitting down with the kids to read.

***"He'll talk to me on the phone and she'll show him where I am on the map."***



## Celestino

**Nursery worker**  
**Father of two, 5 years, 8 years old**

We get books from the school library, the community library, and from book stores. My boss also gives me his children's old books. I usually read to my children two or three times a week. Usually at night before they go to bed. I enjoy reading together.

There is nothing I don't enjoy about it.

My daughter loves books, story books. She gets so happy to hear the stories. She feels like she is part of the story. We have read the same books over and over again and she does not get tired of them. She reads like me. I stop a lot to explain things about the story to her and why things happen. Now that is the way she reads too.

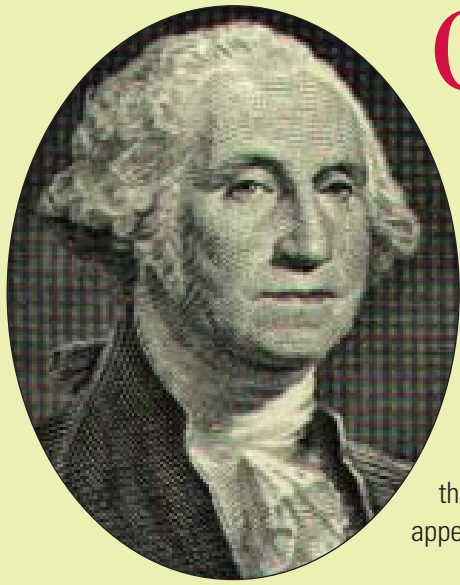
My wife does not read English, but she will tell our children stories or will read books to them in Spanish. Most of the books we get are in English and I read those books to them. I try to get books in English to help them learn English better.

When we work in the garden, I have taught them the names of all the plants. They know corn, beans, and squash. And they know tomatoes because they don't like tomatoes. I help my son write phrases and practice his letters. I have gotten books for him that teach how to write letters and words, and we practice together.

***"We have read the same books over and over again and she does not get tired of them."***

# Word Play

Fun stuff to do with your kids!



## Got Five Minutes and a Buck?

Here's a quick word game to do with your kids (some preschoolers can do this, and most kindergartners and older children). Take a one dollar bill and ask your kids to search for the following words. These are **words hidden inside words** that appear on the dollar, so it will take some looking! This is a great way to get kids tuned in to letter combinations and how letters come together to make words. Who can find the most? Winner gets a dollar! (Some of these words appear more than once!)

ATE	WASH	PUB
AM	NOT	VAT
RUST	TEND	ASH
DOLL	SURE	TAR
ON	SECRET	ERA
EAT	ERIE	SERVE
SEA	DEPART	PART
TON	UNIT	MEN

## Got Game?

Can you get from GAME to GAME (the first and last words in this list)? Start at the top of the list. Change only one letter in each word to make a word that matches the next definition. We started it for you.

- This is the beginning of the **G A M E**

Change one letter in GAME to describe:

- A horse with a hurt leg **L A M E**

We'll give you a little help on the next one, too. Keep going! Change one letter in LAME to spell

- A green fruit **L \_ M E**

Now you're on your own!

Change one letter in the word above to get:

- What clocks measure \_\_\_\_\_
- A square on the floor \_\_\_\_\_
- Run a four minute \_\_\_\_\_
- Where flour is made \_\_\_\_\_
- Climb a \_\_\_\_\_
- It connects classrooms \_\_\_\_\_
- Not short \_\_\_\_\_
- A monkey has one \_\_\_\_\_
- Ice from the sky \_\_\_\_\_
- Post office business \_\_\_\_\_
- A place to shop \_\_\_\_\_
- Not a girl \_\_\_\_\_
- A strong wind \_\_\_\_\_
- You've reached the end of the **G A M E**

Answers: GAME, LAME, LIME, TIME, TILE, MILE, MILL, HILL, HALL, TALL, TAIL, HAIL, MAIL, MALL, MALE, GALE, GAME

## Mix It Up!



Believe it or not, if you mix up the letters in CLINT EASTWOOD, you get OLD WEST ACTION. HARRISON FORD might have predicted his movie adventures if he had known his name spells out FINDS A HORROR. And WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE would probably be humbled to know that the letters in his name can be rearranged to say I'M A WEAKISH SPELLER.

These are called anagrams, and sometimes anagrams of famous names can result in strange coincidences.

Anyone's name can be anagrammed. Sometimes the results are interesting, sometimes they don't make much sense, but anyone can give it a try! You and your son or daughter might want to see if you can anagram your names yourselves. Write down your names and see what words you can find in them by moving the letters around. Try to use ALL of the letters in a name to make a proper anagram. You can make as many words as you like. Sometimes anagrams even make whole sentences (see the example below). It helps to put each letter on a little piece of paper so you can move them around more easily.

If you need a little help, try this free website: <http://www.anagramgenius.com/server.html>. The site will give you the best anagram for a name. And if your name happens to be Sidney Poitier, you can say YET I DO INSPIRE.

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The National Institute for Literacy, an agency in the Federal government, is authorized to help strengthen literacy across the lifespan. The Institute works to provide national leadership on literacy issues, including the improvement of reading instruction for children, youth, and adults by sharing information on scientifically based research.

Sandra Baxter, Director  
Lynn Reddy, Deputy Director

The Partnership for Reading, a project administered by the National Institute for Literacy, is a collaborative effort of the National Institute for Literacy, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to make scientifically based reading research available to educators, parents, policy makers, and others with an interest in helping all people learn to read well.

This Partnership for Reading publication describes some strategies proven to work by the most rigorous scientific reading research available on the teaching of reading. The research that confirmed the effectiveness of these strategies used systematic, empirical methods drawn from observation or experiment; involved rigorous data analyses to test its hypotheses and

justify its conclusions; produced valid data across multiple evaluators and observations; and was accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts. This publication also was subject to two reviews; one by staff from the Institute of Education Sciences, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the U.S. Department of Education, and the National Institute for Literacy; and one by external reviewers. For detailed information on the review processes, contact The Partnership for Reading at the National Institute for Literacy, 1775 I St, NW, Suite 730, Washington, DC 20006.