

Activities for grades three through six: Encouraging the young reader

Activity 2: Good books make reading fun

Stories for young children should be of all kinds – folktales, funny tales, exciting tales, tales of the wondrous and stories that tell of everyday things.

What you'll need:

A variety of interesting books

What to do:

- An essential step in learning to read is good books read aloud. Parents who read aloud to their children are teaching literacy concepts simply by sharing books. Encourage your children to listen, ponder, make comments, and ask questions.
- Be flexible enough to quickly abandon a book that does not appeal after a reasonable try at reading it. No one is meant to enjoy every book. And no one, especially a child, should be forced to read or listen to books that bore.
- Even after children have outgrown picture books they still enjoy hearing a story read aloud. Hearing a good story read well, especially if it is just a little beyond a child's own capabilities, is an excellent way to encourage independent reading. Not all books are best read aloud; some are better enjoyed silently.
- There are plenty of children's books that are twice as satisfying when they are shared a chapter at a time before bed or during long car rides. There are some books that children should not miss, books that they will want to hear many times and ultimately read for themselves.
- Young children want to read what makes them laugh or cry, shiver and gasp. They must have stories and poems that reflect what they themselves have felt. They need the thrill of imagining, of being for a time in some character's shoes for a spine-tingling adventure. They want to experience the delight and amazement that comes with hearing playful language. For children, reading must be equated with enjoying, imagining, wondering, and reacting with feeling. If not, we should not be surprised if they refuse to read. So let your child sometime choose the story or book that they want you to read to them.

Give your child many opportunities to read and write stories, lists, messages, letters, notes, and postcards to relatives and friends. Since the skills for reading and writing reinforce one another, your child's skills and proficiency in reading and writing will be strengthened if you help your child connect reading to writing and writing to reading.

Activity 2 Artful artists

Children love to be creative when it comes to drawing, and illustrations add visual imagery to stories.

What you'll need:

- Drawing paper
- Pens and pencils
- Magic markers or crayons

What to do:

Find a fable, fairy tale, or other short story for your child to read. Then ask your child to illustrate a part of the story he or she likes best or describe a favorite character. Have the child dictate or write a few sentences that tell about this picture.

Activity 3 Shopping your way with words

Use your weekly shopping trip as an opportunity to help your child develop reading and writing skills.

What you'll need:

- Paper and pencils
- Newspaper ads
- Supermarket coupons

What to do:

As you make out your grocery shopping list, give your child a sheet of paper and read the items to him or her. If the child asks for spelling help, write the words correctly for him or her to copy or spell the words aloud as your child writes them.

Ask your child to look through the newspaper ads to find the prices of as many items as possible. Your child can write these prices on the list and then look through your coupons to select the ones you can use. Take your child to the supermarket and ask him or her to read each item to you as you shop.

Activity 4 Cookbooking

Cooking is always a delight for children, especially when they can eat the results!

What you'll need:

- Easy-to-read recipes
- Cooking utensils
- Paper and pencils

What to do:

Show your child a recipe and go over it together. Ask your child to read the recipe to you as you work, and tell the child that each step must be done in a special order. Let your child help mix the ingredients. Allow your child to write down other recipes from the cookbook that he or she would like to help make.

Activity 3. Dictionary words

A dictionary is a valuable learning tool, especially if your child makes up his or her own booklet of words that are challenging.

What you'll need:

- Paper and pencils
- A stapler
- Old magazines
- Newspaper and supplements

What to do:

Encourage your child to make a dictionary by putting together several sheets of paper for a booklet. Ask your child to write at the top of each page a new word he or she has recently learned. If the word can be shown in a picture, have him or her look through magazines and newspapers to find pictures that illustrate the words and paste them on the correct pages.

Have your child write the meaning of each word and a sentence using each new word. Your child can then use some or all of these sentences as the basis for a creative story. Have your child read this story to you and other family members.

Activity 4. Journals

Keeping a journal is a way for your child to write down daily events and record his or her thoughts.

What you'll need:

Two notebooks - one for your child and one for you!

What to do:

Help your child start a journal. Say what it is and discuss topics that can be written about, such as making a new friend, an interesting school or home activity just completed, or how your child felt on the first day of school. Encourage your child to come up with other ideas. Keep a journal yourself and compare notes at the end of the week. You and your child each can read aloud parts of your journals that you want to share.

Activity 3 Greetings and salutations

Everyone loves to get mail, especially when the card has been personally designed.

What you'll need:

- Paper and pencils
- Crayons and magic markers
- Stamps and envelopes

What to do:

Ask your child to list the birthdays of family members, relatives, and friends. Show your child some store-bought birthday cards with funny, serious, or thought-provoking messages. Your child can then create his or her own birthday card by using a folded piece of paper, making an attractive cover, and writing a short verse inside. Then your child can mail the cards to friends and relatives for their birthdays.

Activity 4 Giving the gift of reading

Reading a book is more fun when you have a homemade bookmark to mark your spot.

What you'll need:

- Pieces of lightweight cardboard
- Pens and pencils
- Paper
- Crayons and magic markers

What to do:

Provide your child with a piece of cardboard about 6" long and 2" wide. On one side of the bookmark, have your child draw a picture of a scene from a book he or she has read. On the other side, ask your child to write the name of the book, its author, publisher, publication date, and a few sentences about the book. After making several of these bookmarks, you might ask the child to send them to friends and relatives as gifts accompanied by a short note.

Activity 5 Let your fingers do the walking

The telephone book contains a wealth of information and is a good tool for reading and writing.

What you'll need:

- A telephone book, including the yellow pages
- Paper and pencils

What to do:

Have your child look through the yellow pages of the telephone directory, select a particular service, and write a clever or funny ad for it. Have your child read this ad to you. Help your child to find your own or a friend's listing in the white pages of the telephone book. Explain the different entries (for example, last name and address), along with the abbreviations commonly used.

Activity 3 Map your way to success

Children love to read road maps and this activity actually helps them with geography.

What you'll need:

- A road map or atlas
- Paper and pencil
- Stamps and envelopes

What to do:

When planning a vacation, let your child see the road map and help you plan where you will drive. Talk about where you will start and where you will end up. Let your child follow the route between these two points. Encourage your child to write to the Chamber of Commerce for brochures about places you will see on your trip.

Activity 3 What's in the news?

Newspapers are a form of daily communication with the outside world, and provide lots of learning activities for children.

What you'll need:

- Newspapers
- Scissors
- Colored pencils

What to do:

- Clip out an interesting news story and cut the paragraphs apart. Ask your child to read the paragraphs and put them in order.
- Ask your child to read a short editorial printed in your local newspaper and to underline all the facts with a green pencil and all the opinions with an orange pencil.
- Pictures fascinate children of all ages. Clip pictures in the newspaper. Ask your child to tell you about the picture or list adjectives to describe the picture.

- Do you take your child to the movies? Have your child first look up the movie page by using the index in the newspaper. After a movie has been chosen, have your child study the picture or text in the ad and tell you what he or she thinks the movie is about.
- Have your child pick a headline and turn it into a question. Then the child can read the article to see if the question is answered.
- Ask your child to clip food coupons from the newspaper for your grocery shopping trips. First, talk about which products you use and which you do not. Then the child can cut out the right coupons and put them into categories such as drinks and breakfast items. You can then cash in the coupons at the store.
- Pick out an interesting article from the newspaper. As you are preparing lunch or dinner, tell your child that you are busy and ask him or her to read the article to you.
- Many newspapers publish materials especially written for children, such as the syndicated "Mini Page," "Pennywhistle Press," and "Dynamite Kids." In addition, some newspapers publish weekly columns for children, as well as tabloids and summer supplements written by educators.

Activity 2 Using television to stimulate reading

What child doesn't enjoy watching TV? Capitalize on this form of entertainment and use TV to help rather than hinder your child's learning.

Some important ideas to consider before turning on the TV: Limit in some way the amount of TV your child watches so as to leave time for reading and other activities. Decide how much time should be set aside for watching TV each day.

Serve as an example by limiting the amount of TV you yourself watch. Have time when the TV set is off and the entire family reads something. You may want to watch TV only for special shows. Before the TV set is turned on, encourage your child to select the programs he or she wishes to watch. Ask your child to give you the reason for the choices made.

In addition, watch some of the same TV programs your child watches. This helps you as a parent share in some of your child's daily activities.

What you'll need:

- A TV
- A TV selection guide
- Colored highlighters
- A calendar page for each month
- Paper and pencils

What to do:

- Ask your child to tell you about favorite TV characters using different kinds of words.
- As your child watches commercials on television, ask him or her to invent a product and write slogans or an ad for it.
- Encourage your child to watch such programs as *Reading Rainbow*. Urge older children to watch such programs as *60 Minutes* and selected documentaries. These programs are informative. Discuss interesting ideas covered in the programs and direct your child to maps, encyclopedias, fiction, or popular children's magazines for more information.
- Have your child name 10 of his or her favorite shows. Ask your child to put them into categories according to the type of show they are, such as family shows, cartoons, situation comedies, sports, science fiction, or news and information. If you find the selection is not varied enough, you might suggest a few others that would broaden experiences.
- Prepare a monthly calendar with symbols such as a picture of the sun to represent an outdoor activity or a picture of a book to represent reading. Each time your child engages in a daily free time activity, encourage him or her to paste a symbol on the correct calendar date. This will give you an idea of how your child spends his or her free time. It also encourages a varied schedule.
- Ask each child in your family to pick a different color. Using the TV listing, have each child use this color to circle one TV program that he or she wants to watch each day. Alternate who gets first choice. This serves two purposes. It limits the amount of time watching TV and it encourages discriminating viewing.
- Devise a rating scale from 1 to 5. Ask your child to give a number to a certain TV program and to explain why such a rating was given.
- Have your child keep a weekly TV log and write down five unfamiliar words heard or seen each week. Encourage your child to look up the meanings of these words in the dictionary or talk about them with you.

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