

Reading Strategies for Elementary Students

Fluent readers use a variety of strategies to understand text (whether it is a chapter book, a scientific magazine or a cookie recipe). Research shows that efficient reading strategies can be taught and that the key to using these strategies effectively is practice.

What follows are tips by the experts to help your child practice reading. These strategies have been identified by research as “best practices.” The strategies are divided into categories for novice readers, decoding readers (readers who have can match sounds and syllables to letters) and fluent readers—but please know that **all** readers can benefit from each strategy. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

For Novice Readers:

Strategy Number 1

Don't leave home without it

Bring along a book or magazine any time your child has to wait, such as at a doctor's office or for a long car ride. Always try to fit in reading.

Strategy Number 2

Once is not enough

Encourage your child to re-read favorite books and poems. Re-reading helps children build fluency, speed and accuracy.

Strategy Number 3

Dig deeper into the story

Ask your child questions about the story you've just read. Ask, "Why do you think Charlie did that? What else could he have done?"

Strategy Number 4

Take control of the television and video games

It's difficult for reading to compete with TV and video games. Encourage reading as a time free of other distractions and create cozy places for reading throughout your home.

Strategy Number 5

Be patient

When your child is trying to sound out an unfamiliar word, give him or her time to do so. Prompt your child to look closely at the first letter or letters of the word.

Strategy Number 6

Pick books that are at the right level

Help your child pick appropriate books so that he or she has lots of successful reading experiences. Eventually, your child will be able to use the “five finger test” where he or she reads the first page, and if there are five unknown words then the text should be saved for later.

Strategy Number 7

Play word games

Start with three-letter words take turns changing the first consonant (mat to fat to sat); the final consonant (from sat to sag to sap); and the middle vowel (from sap to sip to sop).

Strategy Number 8

I read to you, you read to me

Take turns reading aloud at bedtime. Children enjoy this special time with adults.

Strategy Number 9

Gently correct your young reader

When your child makes a mistake, gently point out the letters he or she overlooked or read incorrectly. Many beginning readers will guess wildly at a word based on its first letter.

Strategy Number 10

Talk, talk, talk!

Talk with your child every day about school and things going on around the house. Sprinkle some interesting words into the conversation, and build on words you've talked about in the past.

Strategy Number 11

Write, write, write!

Ask your child to help you write out the grocery list, a thank you note to Grandma, or to keep a journal of special things that happen at home. When writing, encourage your child to use the letter and sound patterns he or she is learning at school.

Strategy Number 12

Read with your child every day

This is possibly the most important point of all. Set aside a regular time each day to read with your child. It doesn't have to be for more than 15 minutes, but the benefits from setting aside a bit of time to read with your little one can be amazing. Create a nook on the couch, bring along a few loved toys, cuddle up with a favorite book and, most importantly, have some fun. If you don't treat it as a chore, neither will your child.

For Decoding Readers:

Strategy Number 13

Tell family tales

Children love to hear stories about their family. Talk about a funny thing that happened when you were young and weave in descriptive words to build vocabulary.

Strategy Number 14

Create a writing toolbox

Fill a box with drawing and writing materials. Find opportunities for your child to write, such as creating a party supply list, thank you notes, or birthday cards.

Strategy Number 15

Create a book together

Fold pieces of paper in half and staple them to make a book. Ask your child to write sentences on each page and add his or her own illustrations.

Strategy Number 16

Do storytelling on the go

Take turns adding to a story the two of you make up while riding in a car or plane. Try making the story funny or spooky. Point out the relationship between words. Explain how related words have similar spellings and meanings. Show how a word like *knowledge*, for example, relates to a word like *know*.

Strategy Number 17

Quick, quick

Use new words your child has learned in lively flash card (that they make themselves) or computer drills. Sometimes these games help kids automatically recognize and read sight words and more challenging multi-syllable words, especially those that are used frequently.

Strategy Number 18

Echo reading/partner reading

Echo reading—the child's voice is close behind the adult reader's voice as they read a favorite book or try out a new piece, or **partner reading**—the child and the adult reader read a piece in a duet- are both strategies that can help your reader become more fluent in reading. These strategies are to reading what running alongside a child trying to ride a two wheeled bike is to bike riding—the adult supports until the child can do the act independently.

Strategy Number 19

Reading to others

Have your child read to a younger student; this sets a purpose for reading and encourages your child to read with expression in order to be understood by the listening audience. If a younger friend or sibling is not available, then your child can read into a tape recorder or perhaps to Grandma over the phone or on Skype or even to a dog!

For Fluent Readers

Strategy Number 20

Look for clues

With your child, turn the chapter and heading titles into questions. Then, read the text for the answers. Also, skim graphs, charts and pictures BEFORE reading to get clues about the text.

Strategy Number 21

Use prediction strategies

Ask your child what he or she thinks is going to happen next in the story. You can do this at the end of each page, or at the end of a chapter for older readers.

Strategy Number 22**Encourage your child to relate what is happening in the story to his/her own life**

This is a good way to enable your child to relate to the events of the story, and a powerful strategy for boosting reading comprehension as we are always more stimulated when we are affected personally.

Strategy Number 23**Ask questions while you read with or to your child**

Be sure to ask your child questions about what has happened in the story you are reading, such as “Why do you think Percy spent time in the water?” or “Why do you think the author set the story in New York City?” Ask a mixture of factual questions (the what) and more complex inferential questions (the why and the how). This enables you to monitor your child’s understanding of the text.

Strategy Number 24**Use the ‘retelling strategy’**

For particularly intricate stories, it is useful when you ask your child to retell what has happened. This sequencing of key events can be verbal, written, or in pictures (little boxes) and can be done either at the end of the story or at the end of each section.

Strategy Number 25**Teach your child summarize**

Show your child how to summarize a story in a few sentences. You may want to encourage your child to visualize the setting, characters and action in his or her mind. This will help your child practice identifying main ideas.

Strategy Number 26**Crack open the dictionary**

Look up words together to talk about their uses and meanings. Your interest in building your own vocabulary is important for your child to see.

Strategy Number 27**"Are we there yet?"**

Use the time spent in the car for wordplay. Talk about how jam means something you put on toast as well as cars stuck in traffic. How many other homonyms can your child think of? When students are highly familiar with the meaning of a word, they have less difficulty reading it.