

25 Fun Ways

is designed to make the activity of reading a pleasurable experience for all children, whether or not they struggle with learning.

K-GRADE 2

1. A NOTEBOOK OF SOUNDS

Create an alphabet of pictures with your child.

DIRECTIONS: Choose a sound and ask your child to cut out pictures of things that begin with that sound. Have her glue the pictures onto paper. Label the page with the letter that makes the sound. For example, the page titled “P” might include pictures of a pig, a pencil, or a pipe. Use a 3-hole punch to fill a notebook. Collect the whole alphabet!

K-GRADE 2

2. NOT SO BORING BOARD GAMES

Roll the dice and put a homemade game into action with friends and family.

DIRECTIONS: You and your child can create an original board game by drawing stepping stones or a path of squares from “Start” to “Finish” on a poster board. Next, write fun action items in some of the spaces, like “make a funny face,” “hop on one foot,” “bark like a dog,” or “wiggle your nose.” Then, draw numbers, letters, words, and symbols (e.g., stars, triangles, hearts, etc.) in the other spaces. With your child, write rules for the game, such as “Turn around once before you roll the dice” or “If you land on a square with a star, move backwards two spaces.”

K-GRADE 2

3. MAKE A MARK

Encourage your child to think about favorite books and characters—and create keepsake bookmarks to remember them by.

DIRECTIONS: Cut construction paper into various shapes and sizes. Decorate the bookmarks with favorite book titles, quotations from books, character names, and the various decorating materials listed above. To protect the bookmarks, laminate them or cover them with clear contact paper. (Be careful of decorative items that may prevent books from closing properly and cause damage to the spines.) The final products can make great gifts for relatives and friends, too!

K-GRADE 2

4. TWISTED WORDS

Putting words together was never this kind of workout!

DIRECTIONS: On a pad of paper, make a list of words, three or four letters long, spelled using various combinations of vowels, consonants and diphthongs (e.g., “th” and “ph”). Using the sheet from Twister®, or by making your own version, print a letter or diphthong in each of the 24 circles. Call out a word for your child to spell and have her place a hand or foot in each circle containing one of the word’s letters. Of course, the more the merrier with this game—the twisting really gets complicated when two or more kids have to share the circles!

K-GRADE 2

5. NOTES FROM THE HEART

Make reading personal by writing your child fun and supportive messages.

DIRECTIONS: Write notes to your child with words of encouragement, such as “Have a good day,” “I love you,” and “You are a great kid.” Or, identify something your child can be proud of, such as “You were very helpful today” or “Thanks for doing such a great job cleaning your room.” Surprise him frequently with letters. Mail them to him, hide them under his pillow, put them in his lunch bag, stick them in his sock drawer, or tape them to the mirror in the bathroom.

K-GRADE 2

6. SCAVENGER HUNT

Turn a popular party game into a real reading adventure.

DIRECTIONS: Make a checklist of things for your child to find around the house. Include simple household items like:

- A can of vegetables starting with the letter “B”
- Something in the garage with a “T” in its name

Set a time limit and see how many items on the list your child can find. Be sure to reward her regardless of how many items she actually finds.

K-GRADE 2

7. PEN PALS

All kids love getting mail! Letters from pen pals give them reading materials to look forward to.

DIRECTIONS: Recruit a family member or friend to write or email letters to your child on a regular basis. Ask the letter writer to include lots of questions for your child to answer: What was the best thing that happened to you this week?

How is the family pet doing? Have you read any good books lately—what were they about? Ask your child to read the letters to you out loud and encourage him to respond within a week’s time. For younger children, read the letters aloud and ask them to dictate their responses to you. Make sure that the child’s pen pal can maintain his commitment to keeping the correspondence going for as long as your child can!

INGREDIENTS

- **Writing/ mailing materials**
- **Email access (optional)**
- **Paper • Pencil • Coupons**
- **Construction paper**
- **Pencil**
- **Scissors**
- **Five 3" x 5" index cards**

GRADE 3-5

8. VOCABULARY SQUARES

Create building blocks for a better vocabulary.

DIRECTIONS: Take 15 index cards or cut out small squares from construction paper and write a noun, adjective, adverb, verb, or a connecting word (e.g., she, happy, gently, went, and, etc.) on each one. If you have different colored paper, use a specific color for each type of word (i.e., yellow for nouns, purple for verbs, etc.).

Give your child some blank cards and ask her to construct sentences with the words provided; have her use the blank cards to add words. As your child gets older, the words can become more complex. For younger children, cut out pictures and glue them to each card. Be creative. There is always a new story to tell.

Optional: If you have access to old wooden blocks that you can re-use or square wood cuttings (with no rough edges or splinters), use them to create three-dimensional vocabulary blocks.

GRADE 3-5

9. MARKET MATCH

Turn grocery shopping into a match game.

DIRECTIONS: Ask your child to help you make out a list of items you need from the market. Wherever possible, specify the brand names of the products to add complexity. For example, ask her to write "StarKist®" or "Chicken Of The Sea®" rather than simply "tuna fish." This will encourage her to read the labels rather than just identify the item by location or packaging. When you are at the store, have your child read the labels and match them to the items on your list. If you use coupons, have her match them to the items, as well. See Tip #12 (Dinner Time) for a related idea.

GRADE 3-5

10. CARD CATALOG

Keep track of books as your child reads them.

DIRECTIONS: Your child can make his own card catalog using 3" x 5" cards and a box. For each book he reads, have him write the title, author, brief plot summary, and evaluation on a card; for example, "This book was interesting because..." "I had fun reading about these characters because..." "This book was too hard," "I wish this book had been longer," etc.

To store these cards, your child can decorate a box incorporating themes from his favorite books or things he most likes to read about.

GRADE 3-5

11. TREASURE HUNT

Help your child uncover treasures through reading.

DIRECTIONS: Hide your treasure/reward somewhere in or around the house. Write down instructions to a location in the house on individual pieces of paper and hide them, as well. Each clue should direct your child to another hiding place until she finally finds the treasure. For example, direct your child to the refrigerator door, where the following clue is taped, "Look behind the blue chair in the living room." The clue behind the blue chair might read, "Nice start, now look under your bed." As your child's vocabulary increases, make the clues more difficult.

GRADE 3-5

12. DINNER TIME

Cook up some reading fun with your child in the kitchen.

DIRECTIONS: Plan a meal with your child and compose a menu with several items, such as salad, vegetable, entree, and dessert. Ask your child to look up recipes for each item from the cookbook and make a list of the necessary ingredients you'll need to buy at the grocery store. (Good, kid-friendly recipes can often be found on the packaging of food items such as cereal and raisins, as well.) At home, have him carefully read the recipe, help measure the ingredients, and then cook the meal together.

For a fun finishing touch, ask him to make place cards for each person who will be at the dinner table. See Tip #9 (Market Match) for a related idea.

GRADE 3-5

13. DICTIONARY GAME

It's never too early to teach your child how helpful a dictionary can be.

DIRECTIONS: In a group, have one person choose a word out of the dictionary without telling anyone the definition. Start with the "A" section. Have everyone else in the group either guess out loud, write down or illustrate what they think the mystery word means and then share the answers to see who comes closest to guessing the actual definition of the mystery word. Take turns looking up words, moving through each letter of the alphabet.

GRADE 3-5

14. MUSIC TO READ BY

Music can help make reading seem less of a chore for your child and more of a joy!

DIRECTIONS: Have your child read the verses to her favorite popular songs (most cassettes and CDs come with lyrics printed inside.) Read the verses again as you listen and sing along to the music together. If someone in your family plays an instrument, buy music books that feature lyrics and ask your child to accompany them in an impromptu performance!

Some kids benefit from listening to music when reading, usually something with few lyrics, so as not to distract them. Music such as jazz, classical, and even folk can provide consistent, rhythmic background noise that can enhance some children's concentration skills.

GRADE 3-5

15. CAPTAIN CAPTIONS

Even television can teach your child reading skills!

DIRECTIONS: Check your television controls for a "Closed Captioning" button.

If your set doesn't have one, try pressing the "Mute" button; some sets defer to captioning when the Mute function is on. Choose one of your child's favorite programs, making sure that it doesn't have too much rapid dialogue, and encourage him to read the dialogue rather than listen to it.

GRADE 3-5

16. DETECTIVE TIME

Have your child solve the alphabetical mystery.

DIRECTIONS: Create a code by assigning each letter of the alphabet a different code letter. Write a message to your child in code and have her decipher it. Once she's comfortable with the concept, ask her to reply in code back to you.

Alphabet Letter: A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Code Letter: N H J L V P C O T I W E X D R B F Y G Z A Q K U S M

Coded Message: Ib j y qxa! Decoded Message: This is fun!

GRADE 3-5

17. REPORTING LIVE

Bring out the budding journalist in your child.

DIRECTIONS: Pick a special "news night" in your household and review the newspaper with your child. If your newspaper has a weekly feature for children, focus your efforts there; otherwise, focus on sections of interest to your child (e.g., sports, entertainment, even the comics section for younger children). Ask your child to read the article and then report back to you as a real television reporter might. He can involve other family members as interview subjects or even use props.

You can create a "microphone" by wrapping some construction paper around the cardboard tube from a roll of paper towels and then attaching a big ball of tin foil to the top.

K-GRADE 5

18. LISTEN TO YOUR CHILD READ ALOUD

Make reading aloud a normal part of the day, but limit the time depending on your child's age and reading skill level.

DIRECTIONS: Begin with a book or other reading material your child can read easily, ideally one level below his instructional level. Your child's teacher or the children's librarian at the public library can help you choose a text to help reinforce his skills rather than present a new challenge. Have your child read the material aloud for a certain amount of time each day. At the end of each paragraph, go back and review difficult words and ask questions about what was read.

K-GRADE 5

19. PLUGGED IN!

New technologies can help a child work around certain difficulties and make reading a lot more fun.

DIRECTIONS: Introduce your child to the many different and fun ways technology can deliver information and encourage reading. From low-tech tools, such as educational television shows, to more high-tech tools, such as computer software programs aimed at improving phonics and other reading skills, technology can increase children's independence and confidence so they are able to accomplish certain tasks—such as reading assignments—on their own.

K-GRADE 5

20. TEACHING THE VALUE OF BOOKS

Show your child how books can be a valuable part of everyone's lives.

DIRECTIONS: Reward your child with books or with an extra bedtime story. Ask friends and relatives to give books as gifts, requesting that they make the gift more special by inscribing a note to your child inside. If the books are ones that they loved as children, ask them to explain to your child why this book meant so much to them. Remember to take a book with you wherever you go—the doctor's office, the bus, the park—and encourage your child to do the same. She may be surprised how often a book can come in handy!

K-GRADE 5

21. FLASHCARDS

Update a tried-and-true method our grandmothers used.

DIRECTIONS: Make your own flashcards to help improve your child's reading vocabulary. Buy index cards or cut sheets of paper into large squares. Choose words your child is having particular problems with and print them on the fronts of the cards. On the backs, write the definition of each word. Have your child read the word on the front but be prepared to turn it over to provide some help if needed. (For younger children, put a picture or an icon of the word on the back of the card in place of the definition.)

K-GRADE 5

22. READ ALOUD TO YOUR CHILD

Encouraging a child's interest in reading at an early age is an important step toward inspiring a child to read for a lifetime.

DIRECTIONS: Choose material based on your child's current interests. (They might change overnight, so be prepared to change topics accordingly.) Upon reaching a natural stopping point, ask questions about what you both just read—the "Who, What, Where, When, and Why's" of the story—and discuss your child's thoughts about the text and even the pictures.

If your child has an older sibling, turn the task of bedtime stories over to her. Younger children will see reading is for everyone, and your older child will feel a sense of accomplishment in taking over one of your important tasks.

K-GRADE 5

23. FAMILY READING TIME

Reading can be fun for the whole family.

DIRECTIONS: Set aside 20 minutes three times a week when the whole family can come together and spend time reading mail, books, magazines, catalogs—whatever you enjoy—to show that reading is a necessary skill for everyone.

K-GRADE 5

24. HOT! HOTTER! HOTTEST!

Reward your child for his growing interest in reading.

DIRECTIONS: Help your child choose a goal, such as reading five “fat” books over the summer. Help him reach that goal by taking him to the library to select and borrow books. Draw a goal chart in the form of a thermometer. Track your child’s progress by filling the “mercury” of the thermometer as he takes steps toward reaching his goal, with points marking “Hot,” “Hotter,” and “Hottest.” Choose a proper reward and give it to your child when the mercury reaches the “Hottest” section of the thermometer.

K-GRADE 5

25. READ ANYWHERE

Be willing to experiment with different locations that best accommodate your child’s reading needs.

DIRECTIONS: Not all kids do their best reading in their bedrooms. Sometimes, the isolation of being alone in a room can be too distracting—not to mention too tempting to do something other than read! Work with your child to figure out if there is some other place in the house where he can read—maybe it’s at the kitchen table while you prepare dinner or in the living room while you read the newspaper. Experiment with different locations and listen to your child’s feedback on what he thinks is or isn’t working.

For more tips visit:

<http://www.schwablearning.org/pdfs/25funways2BW.pdf?date=9-12-03>