

# Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

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## Book Picks



### ■ *Melonhead* (Katy Kelly)

Adam Melon, aka Melonhead, fancies

himself an inventor.

His school is entering an invention contest, and Melonhead thinks he has a chance at winning.

The only problem is that he can't seem to stay out of trouble. Follow his hilarious adventures in this first book of the Melonhead series.



### ■ *Edgar Allan Poe's Pie: Math Puzzlers in Classic Poems* (J. Patrick Lewis)

Poetry and math come together as brainteasers are woven into poems inspired by the works of famous poets. You'll also find short biographies of Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, and other poets.

### ■ *Unusual Chickens for the Exceptional Poultry Farmer*

(Kelly Jones)

Moving to the country is another jolt in Sophie Brown's life. She's already missing her *abuela*, who recently died.

To cope, Sophie writes letters to her grandmother and others, describing life on the farm, including the chickens with super-powers! A clever story told in letters, quizzes, to-do lists, and more.



### ■ *When the Beat Was Born*

(Laban Carrick Hill)

Clive Campbell came to the Bronx from Jamaica as a young teen and wanted to be a DJ for dance parties. This picture-book biography shows his passion for rhythm and rhyme that eventually helped give birth to hip-hop.



## Vocabulary for every subject

*Convection, peninsula, addend*—your child needs to know specific words to understand lessons in science, social studies, and math. Try these ideas for helping him explore and use words from each subject area.



### Picture the words

Visualizing a word's meaning can cement it in your youngster's mind.

Suggest that he look at photos and diagrams in books or online. Then, on index cards, have him write and illustrate the word. *Example:* For *refraction*, he might draw a straw "bent" in a glass of water.

### Explain aloud

Encourage your child to delve deeper into definitions by teaching the words to you. If he's learning about *savannas*, he could describe their climate, tell you which animals live there, and point out a savanna on a map. He'll expand his

understanding of the term as he finds ways to explain it to you.

### Play games

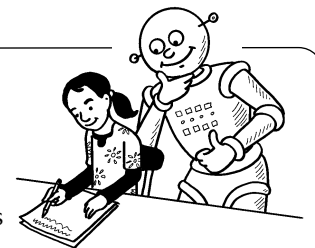
Do fun activities that will help your youngster use, recognize, and remember new words. For instance, play Jeopardy or charades with vocabulary words. Hold a contest to see who can find the most vocabulary words in newspapers or magazines. Start the day with a "vocabulary word of the day," and encourage family members to use it in conversation. ("Look—that sign is shaped like a *rhombus*.")

## Strong starts and fine finishes

It takes practice to write an effective beginning and ending for an essay or a report. Share these tips with your youngster.

**Introduction:** The opening sentence is like the emcee—it welcomes your audience and hints at what's to come. Experiment with openings to find the most inviting one. You might pose a question ("When was the first robot built?"), present a fact ("The earliest known robot had wings"), or use a quote ("A scientist named Nolan Bushnell once said, 'I cannot imagine the future without robots'").

**Conclusion:** The last sentence offers a snapshot of the important ideas you presented. Reread your paper and ask, "What do I want my readers to remember?" Then, write a line with that in mind. ("Robots seem like new technology, but history shows they've been around for a long time.")

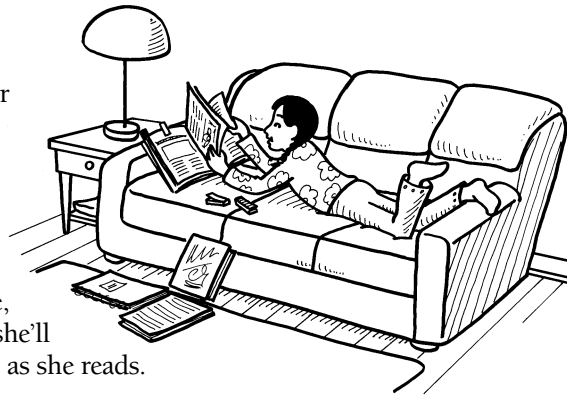


# Previewing chapters

Taking a sneak peek at a textbook chapter before reading it will help your child focus on the information she needs to learn. Suggest these strategies.

**Questions.** Your youngster can look over the end-of-chapter questions and jot down details she wants to find. For example, if a question asks “What causes acid rain?” she’ll know she should look for “acid rain causes” as she reads.

**Subheads.** These bold-faced headings act as signposts pointing the way to material in the chapter. Have your child scan the subheads and predict which ones will answer her questions. She might, for instance, expect the



“Dangerous precipitation” section to explain the causes of acid rain.

**Graphics.** Textbooks often use pictures, charts, and maps to explain ideas. Your youngster can look over the illustrations and captions before she reads. She’ll “pre-learn” some material, making details easier to grasp when she reads the text.

*Idea:* Your child may like previewing with sticky note “flags.” She could mark sections she thinks will be useful and even color-code them, putting yellow flags on facts, purple ones on examples, and so on. 📌



## Create a story mural

Turn a family read-aloud into a family art project with this activity. You’ll enjoy a book together, and your youngster will build reading comprehension skills.



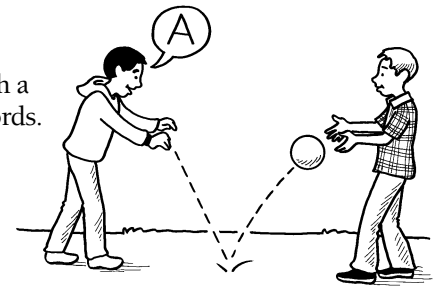
Choose a book, and read the first chapter aloud. Then, on a large sheet of paper, use crayons or markers to begin a mural illustrating the story. For example, if you’re reading *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* (E. L. Konigsburg), you might draw a floor-plan of the museum. Each evening, read and illustrate another chapter, and tape the new panel to the previous one.

*Tip:* Draw a picture of each character on a separate slip of paper. Let your youngster move the characters from place to place on the mural to recap last night’s action before you read the next chapter. 📌

## Fun with Words Spell check

Let your child team up with a buddy to work on spelling words. Here are five fun ways.

1. Take turns choosing a spelling word and writing it crossword-style on graph paper, one letter per square. Try to connect all of the words.
2. Challenge each other to write a sentence using the most words from the list.
3. Time the other person as you call out words for him to write or type. Repeat any that he misspelled.
4. Spell a word while bouncing a ball back and forth, saying a letter for each bounce. Do it again, but spell the word backward.
5. Together, invent silly ways to remember words with tricky parts. For instance, “What’s a pirate’s favorite part of *calendar*? The AR at the end!” 📌



## Q&A What’s your opinion?

**Q** When my daughter has to write opinion pieces for class, she has trouble backing up her viewpoint. Is there a good way to practice?

**A** Sure! Try giving her a notebook for recording opinions. On the first page, she can write a question that begins “Would you rather...” Any question, silly or serious, will work. *Examples:* “Would you rather be a cheetah or a chimpanzee?” “Would you rather cook a meal or clean up after one?”

Below it, have her write her answer and give three reasons—based on facts, just like she’ll need to do for school assignments. If she chooses a cheetah, she might say, “Cheetahs can run 70 miles per hour. It would be amazing to run that fast!”

Afterward, she could ask family and friends to add their opinions on her question. How would they back up their vote? Then, suggest that she add a new question to give—and collect—opinions about. 📌



**OUR PURPOSE**

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote their children’s reading, writing, and language skills.

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