south dakota
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Learning. Leadership. Service.

Dec. 2025

READING tips

Welcome to the fourth addition of the Reading and Behavior Tips Newsletter created for families and caregivers of elementary students.

Each month you will find activities, tools, and strategies gathered from educators and leaders in their fields that you can do at home with your child. Enjoy and have fun!

Tip:

Kids love to track their achievements. Use sticker charts, charts they can color on, or create other ways to track and watch their list of books grow. Use the attached chart to let your child(ren) mark their reading.

After 10 days have been filled in, celebrate! You can even tie that celebration into reading:

- take a trip to the library and find new books
- illustrate and hang up the drawing of a favorite story
- act out a story for the family
- play word games



Reading:

The third of the five essential components that make up the Science of Reading is fluency. Fluency is the ability to read a text accurately, quickly, and with expression. It is important because fluent readers are better able to focus their attention on what the text means; they do not have to concentrate on decoding words. Fluent readers can recognize words and comprehend at the same time. Their reading sounds natural, as if they are speaking.

Fluency develops as a child has many opportunities to read aloud with a high degree of success. The text you choose to practice with should be reasonably easy for your child and contain mostly words that are known or easily decoded. The text should be relatively short and can include stories, nonfiction, and poetry. Poetry can be especially fun to practice with because of the rhythm, rhyme, and meaning.

Here are some activities to help your child become a more fluent reader:

Repeated Reading of Decodable Texts

- Model reading the passage or poem using nice expression and pacing so your child knows what it should sound like.
- Encourage your child to read it aloud multiple times during the week.
- Help your child track progress with goals for accuracy and/or expression.
- Celebrate with a family performance on Friday night!

Echo Reading

- Choose short, decodable texts or fluency sentences.
- Read a line aloud using proper phrasing and tone.
- Your child can read the line and mimic your expression.
- Continue line by line until the passage is done.

Choral Reading

- Read together at the same time from the same text. Encouraging your child to match your pace and expression.

Phrase-Cued Reading

- Start with a short sentence or passage
- Add slash marks to mark out phrases
- Model reading it and pausing at a slash
- Allow your child to practice it multiple times

Behavior:

We've talked about setting up rules and expectations at home for your child. Once those are established, it's important to teach, acknowledge, and prompt your child to use them.

Sometimes, your child may still need a little behavior correction. Providing a quick correction or redirection will help your child remember the expectations and rules.

For example, if you observe your child being unkind to others and want to provide a correction:

1. Quickly correct by stating what you saw, "That was not kind to your friend."
2. Re-state the expected behavior, "We do not take a toy away from someone without asking for a turn and waiting."
3. Provide an opportunity for a positive interaction,
   "Please give the toy back and try again. How can you ask your friend for a turn?"
4. Provide your child with positive feedback. "That was a kind way to ask for a turn."

A redirect can be even quicker.

1. "Remember, we don't just take a toy away from a friend. Please give it back and wait until he/she is done playing with it to ask if you can have a turn."

Whether providing a correction or a redirect, the goal is to be calm, brief, and allow an opportunity for the child to practice doing the skill the right way.

It's important that you provide more praise statements than corrections. Remember to tell them what they are doing right. Some research tells us that children need to hear five acknowledgement and praise statements for every one corrective statement. Plus, you'll see more of what you notice. If you notice and acknowledge that your child picked up his toys, put her dirty dishes in the sink, washed his hands before dinner...that's what your child will do most often. Sometimes your children may need a correction or a redirect but not as often as they need to hear you say what they are doing right.

You can also decrease unwanted behaviors by teaching an alternative. For example, if you don't want your child to run into the house in muddy shoes, teach him/her to take the shoes off and put on the slippers that are waiting by the door.

We appreciate your feedback

Please fill out this quick survey to help us meet your needs.

south dakota DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Learning. Leadership. Service.