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# **The Road to Reading Success— The Elementary School Years**

**One of a series of Parent Guides from**



**Elementary Version**

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## Learning the Lingo

What's the difference between reading-related terminology and quantum physics? Quantum physics is easier to understand. Still, it's a good idea to have a basic grasp of certain "academic" reading terms, especially if you hear them tossed around in relation to your child. Below are some of these intimidating-sounding terms, along with their not-so-scary definitions:

# A

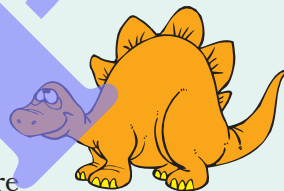
- Age equivalent scores:** A type of scoring that takes into account the average age of students who receive the same score as an individual child. The individual child's score, then, is said to be similar to younger students, to students his own age, or to older students. For instance, if an eight-year-old's reading assessment score is determined to be similar to that of the average twelve-year-old, the younger child would be considered advanced. (Can also be assessed by grade as "grade equivalent scores.")
- Alliteration:** The repetition of an initial letter sound; often found in tongue-twisters ("Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers").
- Assessment:** A gathering of data to determine a student's overall performance. While assessments may take into account individual test scores, they are not tests themselves. Rather, tests are but one component used in making an assessment.
- Basal reader:** A book used to teach reading. Typically, the same words are used over and over in each succeeding book, with new words being added regularly.
- Blending:** Combining individual sounds to form a word. For instance, /mmm/ /ooo/ /nnn/ can be blended into *moon*.
- Cloze:** Fill-in-the-blank stories that require a child to use clues from the text to figure out what comes next. ("Jacob knew not to touch the fire because the flames were \_\_\_\_.") Cloze assessments can be used to evaluate things like reading comprehension and vocabulary.
- Criterion-referenced assessment:** An assessment in which a child's score is compared against a predetermined "acceptable" score (instead of against other students). This score is then judged to be either above or below that standard.
- Decoding:** When a child uses what he knows about the "spelling-sound relationships" and pronunciation rules to figure out how to pronounce written words.
- Diphthong:** A sound that starts with one vowel and gradually changes to another vowel within the same syllable, such as /oi/ in *foil*.
- Fluent reading:** Smooth, easy reading (silent or aloud).

Think Outside the Book (continued)

More ways to make your home reader-friendly:

- **Enjoy wordy games.** From Scrabble® to Hangman, there's no end to the "literary" games you can play. While you're at it, don't forget activities like 20 Questions, which will boost your child's vocabulary skills by encouraging her to come up with creative queries.
- **Limit TV watching.** Books are fabulous, but they can have a tough time competing with a loud, flashy TV. So don't let them. Instead, limit your child's television time to an hour or two per day, and encourage her to spend more time reading. And, experts say, a child should never have a TV in her bedroom.
- **Develop incentives for reluctant readers.** If your child balks at books, make reading more attractive. Consider rewarding her—such as with stickers or a trip to the playground—for each age-appropriate book she tackles on her own.

- **Make reading a part of everyday life.** If you're cooking dinner, ask your child to read you a recipe. If you're busy folding laundry, suggest that she read you a magazine article while you finish.
- **Tie reading into the things she loves.** If your child is obsessed with dinosaurs, search out some titles on the Jurassic period. If she can't get enough of racecars, go to the library for some books on how the speedsters work and where they're made.
- **Put books before movies.** Lots of popular children's stories—from *Harry Potter* to *Holes*—have leapt to the big screen. If your youngster is desperate to see one, let her—after she's read the book.



- **Read together.** Sharing stories doesn't have to be shelved along with your child's footie pajamas and pacifier. All kids, even older elementary schoolers, benefit from reading aloud with their parents. If yours balks, suggest that you take turns—you read a chapter to her, then she reads one to you (just don't doze off while she's reading!).
- **Take the pressure off.** Don't turn every trip to the library into a quest for the literary Holy Grail (i.e., the perfect book). Instead, give your child room to browse. Rather than herd her toward the same section each time, let her explore a different area. How about nonfiction? Poetry? Photography?
- **Give books as gifts.** Did you ever notice that birthdays and holidays seem to pop up every single year? To make these special occasions even more so, give books. It can be as simple as digging up one of your old favorites from the attic and giving it to your youngster, or as elaborate as splurging on a huge coffee table tome. Either way, it'll be priceless.

