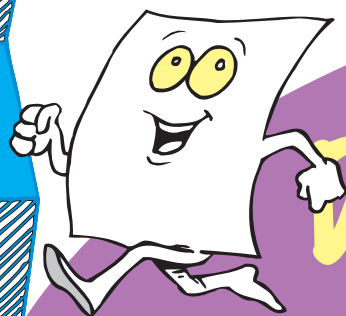


Look for a photo in the local section of a person or place your child will recognize. "Look, there is our grocery store. Why do you think a picture of our grocery store is in the paper?" Give your child time to respond, then ask more questions to extend your conversation and your child's learning. "Who are these people in the photo? Do you remember the time we went to the grocery store and there was no milk? What other stores are nearby?" Then, read the photo caption or the article and talk about why the photo is in the newspaper. If the store is changing in some way – being remodeled or expanded or closed – talk about how that will change your routine. Connecting learning to children's everyday experiences helps them understand that print has meaning.

Often, the local section includes a chart or graph that displays information, such as your community's economic growth, unemployment rates or approval ratings of candidates in a political race. These graphic representations offer a new opportunity to talk with your child about what's happening in your area. Ask first if your child knows what the graph is intended to show and what kind of graph it is – bar, line or circle? Ask questions that require her to interpret the information presented in the graph. What is being measured, and is it increasing or decreasing? Interpreting data is a great way to develop problem-solving skills that your child can use in school and throughout life.

Check out the community calendar with your child to find out what special events are currently taking place. Even young children can share in the community's excitement about a new birth at the zoo or a victory parade for a local team just back from a tournament. Ask your child to write these special events on your family calendar. Staying informed about your community's events helps children practice their reading skills and encourages them to stay connected to the things happening around them.

When parents read and talk with their children about the important happenings occurring in the world and in the community, they are not only fostering literacy and learning, but also a sense of being a caring, informed citizen. The world and local news sections of the newspaper can start your child on a journey that will last a lifetime.



## Dear Tabby

Dear Tabby,

**My 4-year-old brother does not know his alphabet letters. What can I do to help him learn them?**  
– Concerned Sis

Dear Concerned,

You are sweet to be concerned about your brother's early literacy skills. One of the easiest things to do is to show interest in letters yourself. Pick a "letter of the day" and point it out to your brother whenever you come across it. "There's the Burger Shop. Do you see a g there?" "Can you help me circle every g on the front page of the newspaper?" "Look, the g is the first magnetic letter on the refrigerator." Sing the "ABC Song" as you put the magnetic letters in order. Repeated exposure, and your interest, will pay off.

Dear Tabby,

**My granddaughter reads very haltingly and without any expression. What can I do to help her?**  
– Anxious Granny

Dear Anxious,

There are a number of ways to improve fluency. One is to be a model yourself when you read by grouping words, using lots of expression and pausing at punctuation. Another is to do paired reading with your grandchild: You read a few sentences, then your granddaughter reads a few, etc. The third way is through repeated reading of the same passage. Also talk to your granddaughter's teacher about her decoding and vocabulary skills, which may need improvement as well to help her read more fluently.

Dear Tabby,

**My middle-school student says he hates to read. He is a good reader, but doesn't ever read outside of school. What can I do to encourage his reading?**  
– Frantic Father

Dear Frantic,

Not to worry! Just consistently provide written material that might interest your child. A comic book, an Internet site about a favorite sports team, or a magazine featuring a popular singing group all count as reading material. Use the newspaper to point out neighborhood happenings or local sporting events that he might want to know more about. Model a love of reading yourself with books from the library, newspapers and magazines. Your child will soon discover for himself all the fun advantages to reading.