

Boost your child's reading and writing skills with conversations

In elementary school, teachers expect students to think about what they've read, and then draw conclusions. To give your child the practice he needs to develop this ability:

- Ask questions that require him to think. If you watch a TV show together, talk about it afterward. "Why do you think the character did that?" or "Do you think things like that happen in real life?"
- Share your thoughts when you haven't made up your mind. You might say, "I am still not sure who I'll vote for in the mayoral election." Then talk about the strengths of the people running for that office. Your child may have some great insights.
- Set aside time to read together—and then talk about what you've read. Some families make one meal a week their "reading dinner." Everyone brings a book to the table. After a few minutes of reading, family members talk about what they've read and ask questions about what everyone else has read.
- Make the most of car time. Parents know that the best talks often take place in the car. So ask your child about what's going on in his life. Listen to his answers.
- Keep a shared journal. Try reading the same book. Take turns writing notes to each other about your reactions to what you've read.

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