

# Home & School

## Working Together for School Success

### CONNECTION®

December 2019

Frazier Elementary Schools - Kelly Lombard, Principal  
Title 1



## SHORT NOTES

### Spot the object

Finding hidden pictures is not only fun—it also improves your youngster's attention to detail. Try a book from a series like *Where's Waldo?* (Martin Handford) or *I Spy* (Jean Marzollo). Or search the internet for "hidden pictures." She can print out the pages or play online.

### Tell the truth

Show your child that being truthful matters—even in situations where no one would know the difference. For example, if you leave a store without noticing an item under your cart, let him see you return to pay for it. Explain that being honest is the right thing to do and it makes you feel good.

### The best gifts

This holiday season, help your youngster brainstorm presents that don't cost a lot of money. For instance, she might make a book of coupons that family members can redeem ("Good for one dog wash"). Or the two of you could bake muffins for teachers and neighbors.

### Worth quoting

"Kindness is like snow. It beautifies everything it covers." *Kahlil Gibran*

## JUST FOR FUN



**Q:** Why did the walrus stand on the marshmallow?

**A:** So she wouldn't fall into the hot cocoa!

## We're a family of readers

When families share a love of reading, children develop stronger literacy skills and are more motivated to pick up a book. Here's how some of our readers have made reading a family affair.

### After-dinner novel

"We pick a novel all ages can enjoy—often one my wife or I enjoyed as a child—and take turns reading a chapter a night. The kids look forward to it, especially if we stopped at a cliff-hanger the day before. After each chapter, we share our opinions of the book and say what we think will happen tomorrow."

### Reading adventures

"Every time we visit the library, we look for books related to someplace we're going soon. Before a visit to the aquarium, we found nonfiction books about sharks and dolphins. And before a trip to my sister's apartment in the city, we read about skyscrapers, subways, and taxis."



### Treasure hunts

"When my son first learned to read, he searched for free reading 'treasure.' He'd collect maps from parks and malls, brochures from the vet's office, and even fortunes from cookies. Soon, our whole family was adding to the 'treasure chest.' We've learned a lot, like how dogs communicate and what fun things there are to do at our favorite park."♥

## Clearing out clutter

Try these ideas for decluttering during winter break, and your youngster will start the New Year with organized spaces to work and play:

- Have your child sort through her backpack and study area. She could file old tests and quizzes, save favorite papers and projects, and discard anything she won't need when school starts again.
- Let your youngster start a donation box in her closet for outgrown clothes and toys. Once the box is full, decide together where to donate it—she'll discover the satisfaction that comes from helping others.
- Suggest that your child label separate containers for smaller items like erasers and sticky notes. Putting them into the correct bins gives her practice with sorting and makes school supplies easy to find at homework time.♥





# I can handle that!

What is your child capable of doing for herself? Probably more than she realizes. Encourage her to become more responsible with these tips.

**Manage a social life.** Let your youngster call friends to set up her own get-togethers. She can also RSVP to birthday parties and pick out and wrap gifts. If she's sleeping over at a friend or relative's house, ask her to pack her own overnight bag herself.

**Do minor repairs.** Teach your child how to use a screwdriver and other tools safely. You can watch as she puts her



know-how to work fixing a younger sibling's toy or tightening a loose doorknob.

**Track "inventory."** Is your youngster running low on crayons, shampoo, or her favorite cereal? Have her keep a list on the refrigerator.

**Cook food.** Your child can learn to make sandwiches and salads, mash potatoes, and whisk eggs. With supervision, she could peel and chop vegetables and use the microwave. *Idea:* Encourage her to be creative in the kitchen and come up with her own recipes.♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Connect with history

Become history "tourists" in your own town. These activities help your child learn about history and make connections to what he's learning in school.

#### Exhibits

Visit historic sites and museums. Your youngster may learn how people made hand-dipped candles or crafted armor. Encourage him to ask staffers questions about the time period. He might inquire about chores children did, for instance.



#### Historical markers

These plaques tell what happened in specific locations. Perhaps a one-room schoolhouse once stood in your town or a famous inventor was born nearby. Stop to read and discuss the markers. *Tip:* Search for markers near you at [hmdb.org](http://hmdb.org).♥



### Drugs: Start a conversation

It's never too early to discuss drugs with your youngster. In fact, opening the lines of communication now will pave the way for more serious conversations as he gets older. Consider this advice.

● **Begin with questions.** Find out what your child knows about drugs.

What has he learned in health class or heard from other kids? Using his knowledge as a starting point will lead to a more meaningful discussion and allow you to correct misconceptions.

● **Discuss safety rules.** When you take medication or give any to your youngster, read the instructions together. Explain that taking more than directed is dangerous and that he's not allowed to take medicine without your permission. *Note:* Be sure to keep your medicine cabinet locked.♥



### Motivated from within

**Q:** My daughter told me that her friends "all" get rewards for good grades and she wants to get rewards, too. How should I handle this?

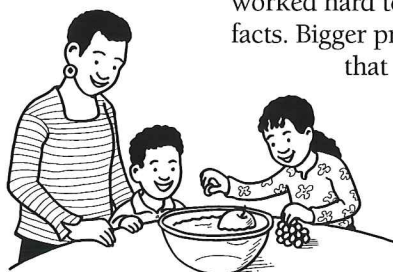
**A:** Help your child see that doing well is a reward in itself. That way, she won't get in the habit of depending on rewards like money or stickers.

First, encourage her to focus on the excitement of learning rather than just on her grades. Say she aced a science test. Of course you're proud of her and you'll let her know it. But also

ask her to explain a concept or show you an experiment or activity she did in class. ("You answered that an apple floats but a grape sinks—I'd like to see that!")

Also, help her see how her effort leads to natural rewards. If she brings home a good math grade on her report card, you could say, "Great job. I know you worked hard to learn multiplication facts. Bigger problems will be easier now that you've memorized those."

Over time, she'll realize how rewarding it is to learn new things, work hard, and succeed—without rewards from anyone else.♥



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ISSN 1540-5621



# Math+Science Connection

Beginning Edition

Building Excitement and Success for Young Children

December 2019

Frazier Elementary Schools - Kelly Lombard, Principal

Title 1

## TOOLS & TIDBITS

### Twice as big

Have your child draw a picture of a favorite object—say, a boat or a dinosaur. Now ask him to draw it again in different sizes, twice as big or half as big. He'll enjoy drawing while he learns about bigger and smaller.

### Snack on science

Use fruit to sharpen your youngster's observation skills. Cut grapes, apples, and oranges in half so she can compare the cross-sections. Which ones contain seeds? Are the colors the same or different inside and out? Let her draw and label what she sees. Then, make fruit salad and enjoy the sweet snack together.



### Book picks

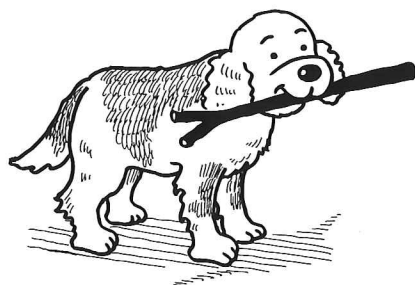
Every second counts in a championship soccer game! *Game Time!* (Stuart J. Murphy) is a soccer story that helps readers tell time.

*Where Do Puddles Go?* (Fay Robinson) invites youngsters to find out what happens to water after it rains.

## Just for fun

**Q:** What do you call a boomerang that won't come back?

**A:** A stick.



## Winter addition

These winter-themed activities encourage your youngster to add objects, practice addition facts, and find missing numbers—no snow required.

### Dig in the snow

Fill a baking dish with sugar, and bury dry beans in the "snow." Your child can use a slotted spoon to dig up two scoops of beans and make them into an addition problem. If the first scoop has 7 beans and the second has 8, she would say " $7 + 8 = 15$ ." Have her count the beans to check her answer, then scoop up more to create a new problem.

### Match the mittens

To work on facts to 10, let your youngster trace around each of her hands 5 times on paper and cut out the 10 "mittens." She should label the left mittens 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, and the right ones 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. Now she should make pairs that equal 10 and say each addition fact (" $5 + 5 = 10$ "). Suggest that she decorate each pair so the mittens match!



### Throw the snowballs

Help your child find missing addends (numbers that are added together). Give her 20 cotton balls to throw into a bowl. Can she figure out how many landed in the bowl? If she missed 4, she would think, "Four plus what equals 20?" Then she could count up from 4 to 20 or subtract  $20 - 4 = 16$ . Finally, she should count the balls in the bowl to check.

## An erupting volcano

Your child can watch a "volcano" erupt right before his very eyes with this hands-on model.

1. Go outdoors together, and help your youngster scoop soil (to represent a volcanic mountain) into a small plastic or paper cup.
2. Over newspaper, poke a small hole in the bottom of the cup. Have your child hold the cup in the air and insert an open toothpaste tube into the hole from the bottom. The toothpaste represents magma (melted rock).
3. What happens when your youngster squeezes the tube? (The "magma" swirls up through the "mountain" and eventually erupts as "lava.")



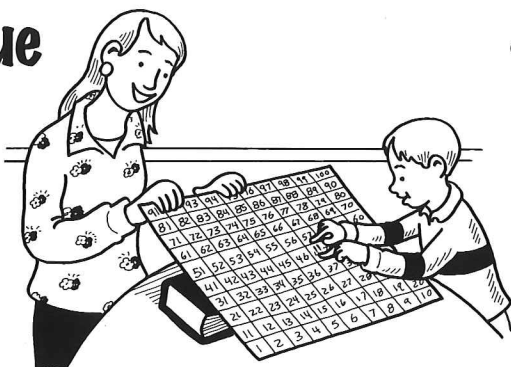


# Play with place value

A hundred chart is a great tool for exploring place value. With this topsy-turvy version, your child can look at numbers in a different way! He'll work with numbers that get bigger as they climb up the chart—just as a block tower grows taller from bottom to top.

Draw a 10 x 10 grid. Starting in the bottom left corner, help him write 1–10 across the bottom row. Continue across each row until he writes 100 in the top right corner. Then, try these ideas.

**Find my number.** Pick a number, and give your youngster clues to find it. For 57, you might say, “My number is 10 more than 47.” He would place his finger on 47 and either



count forward by 1s to 57 or move up 1 row to add 1 ten ( $47 + 10 = 57$ ). How are 47 and 57 similar? (They each have 7 ones. Adding 1 ten only changed the number in the tens place.)

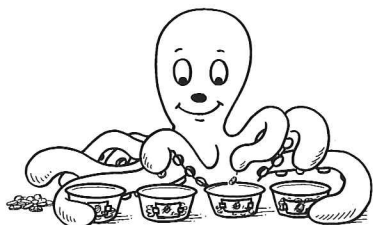
**Identify the tens and ones.** Cover a number (say, 65) with a bingo chip. Encourage your child to use surrounding numbers to figure out how many tens and how many ones the covered one has. Ask him what the other numbers have in common in the same row (6 tens) and column (5 ones). How many tens and ones are in the hidden number? (Answer: 6 tens and 5 ones, or 65.)



## Q & A What's that coin?

**Q:** My daughter is learning how to recognize coins in school. How can she practice at home?

**A:** Let your child set up a coin station. Give her four bowls—one each for pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters—and put her in charge of sorting spare change.



Suggest that she make coin-rubbing labels for the bowls. She can tape each coin to a table, cover it with white paper, and rub lightly with the side of an unwrapped crayon. Help her write each coin's name (“quarter”) and value (“25 cents”) on its label.

Then, it's her job to match spare change to the rubbings and sort coins into the correct bowls. Soon, she'll recognize the coins automatically. *Idea:* She could count by 1s, 5s, 10s, and 25s to get the totals.

## SCIENCE LAB

### Musical glasses

Why are some musical notes higher or lower than others? This experiment shows your youngster how pitch works.

**You'll need:** empty glass, pencil, measuring cup, water

**Here's how:** Ask your child to gently tap the side of the glass with the pencil. What does she think will happen to the sound if you pour water into the glass? Slowly fill the glass with water as she taps repeatedly.

**What happens?** The sound gets lower in pitch as you add more water.

**Why?** Striking the glass creates a sound wave that travels from the glass through the water. Water slows down the vibrations—so the more water, the slower the vibrations and the lower the pitch. When there's less water, the vibrations are faster, and the pitch is higher.

**Idea:** Suggest that your youngster measure different amounts of water ( $\frac{1}{4}$  cup,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup,  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup, 1 cup) into several identical glasses. She can tap the glasses to play a tune!



## MATH CORNER

### Gingerbread glyph

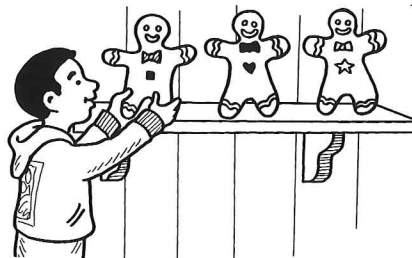
A *glyph*, or a pictograph, lets your youngster represent and analyze data. Try this family glyph activity to share information about your favorite things.

**Materials:** brown construction paper or cardboard, pencil, scissors, markers

Together, list survey questions and assign a gingerbread decoration to each possible answer. *Examples:* “Which season do you like best? Winter = round button, spring = square button,

summer = star button, fall = heart button.” “Which meal is your favorite? Breakfast = red bowtie, lunch = blue bowtie, dinner = yellow bowtie, brunch = green bowtie.”

Have each family member draw and cut out a gingerbread “person” and decorate it to show his favorites. Now compare them. How many people like summer the best? How many more people chose dinner than lunch?



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# Math+Science Connection

Intermediate Edition

Building Understanding and Excitement for Children

December 2019

Frazier School District

Title I

## INFO BITS



### Math palindromes

A palindromic number reads the same forward and backward, such as 424 or 123,321. Your youngster can stretch her math thinking by creating math problems with palindromes as the answers. *Examples:*  $2 \times 212 = 424$ , and  $1,000,000 - 876,679 = 123,321$ .

### Welcome, winter!

In the northern hemisphere, December 21 is the winter solstice—the first day of winter and the day with the fewest daylight hours of the year. Have your child look up sunrise and sunset times in the newspaper or online. What does he notice? (We get

a little more sunlight each day after the winter solstice.)



### Book picks

■ Your youngster will have fun calculating area in *The Original Area Mazes: 100 Addictive Puzzles to Solve with Simple Math—and Clever Logic!* (Naoki Inaba and Ryoichi Murakami).

■ In addition to stunning photographs, *A Drop of Water: A Book of Science and Wonder* (Walter Wick) provides experiments to teach your child about the properties of water.

### Just for fun

**First snake:** I hope I'm not venomous.

**Second snake:** Why?

**First snake:** I just bit my tongue!



## Word problems? No problem!

A word problem contains a lot of information. Your youngster's job is to zero in on what exactly he's being asked to do. Once he figures that out, solving the problem may be a snap. Share these strategies.

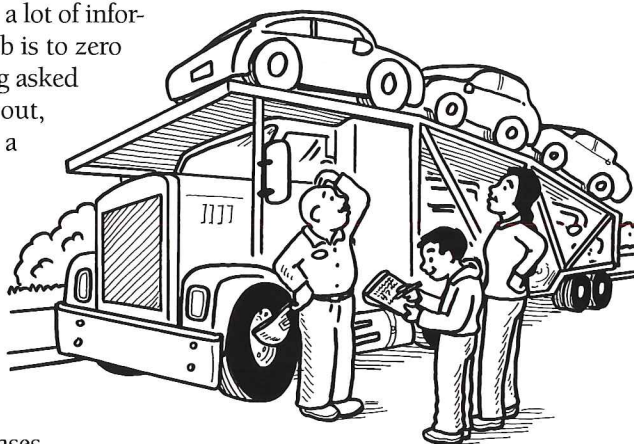
### List key details

Have your child read the entire problem and list facts it tells him. Say he needs to figure out how many trophies can be displayed in a school lobby.

He could write, "2 display cases, 5 shelves per case, 6 trophies per shelf." Then he can solve:  $2 \times 5 \times 6 = 60$  trophies. *Variation:* Encourage him to draw a picture showing what he knows.

### Use easier numbers

Suggest that your youngster replace larger numbers with smaller ones. He might use 35 and 7 for 3,540 and 789. Then he can focus on *how* to solve rather than on harder calculations. For instance, should he add, subtract, multiply, or divide? Once he understands the



steps involved, he can swap the original numbers back in and solve.

### Check for reasonableness

If a car carrier holds 10 cars, how many trips must the driver take to transport 47 cars? Encourage your child to pay close attention to the context of a problem. That will help him decide whether his answer makes sense. He may realize that while  $47 \div 10 = 4$ , remainder 7, it isn't possible to take 4.7 trips. That means 5 trips are required. 📦

### Code a snowman

No computer is required for this wintry coding activity. Your child will learn basic computer programming as the two of you write code for each other to draw a snowman on graph paper.

**Make a key.** List commands you'll use, such as  $\downarrow$  = move down 1 square,  $\rightarrow$  = move right 1 square, ■ = shade in the square, and ● = draw a circle.

**Write code.** Direct each other to draw the outline of a snowman by writing strings of commands from your key. Now add commands for decorating the snowman. *Example:* ●●● $\downarrow$ ● means make a column of three round buttons.

**Follow.** Trade codes and draw. Check each other's snowmen against your codes—do they match? 📦





## Use fraction benchmarks

What does  $\frac{3}{8}$  of a sandwich look like? If your youngster compares it to a familiar fraction (a benchmark), she'll know it's close to  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a sandwich. She can try these tips for visualizing benchmarks and using them to solve fraction problems.

**Walk to benchmarks.** Let your child line up five "benches" (perhaps kitchen chairs) equally spaced along a path. She should label them 0,  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{3}{4}$ , and 1.

Take turns telling each other where to stand. *Example:* "Walk  $\frac{5}{8}$  of the way down the path." Your youngster would think about which bench  $\frac{5}{8}$  is closest to. ("Hmm,  $\frac{5}{8}$  is close to  $\frac{4}{8}$ , which is  $\frac{1}{2}$ .") Then, she can find the right spot (halfway between  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $\frac{3}{4}$ ).



**Estimate with a number line.** Have your child draw a number line with benchmarks at 0,  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{3}{4}$ , and 1. Suggest that she fold her paper in half, then in half again. When she unfolds it, she can write the benchmark fractions on the fold lines.

She could use her number line to estimate before she adds fractions so she knows whether her answer is reasonable. Perhaps she is adding  $\frac{1}{3} + \frac{1}{5}$ . She might think, " $\frac{1}{3}$  is a little greater than  $\frac{1}{4}$ , and  $\frac{1}{5}$  is a little less than  $\frac{1}{4}$ . And  $\frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{4} = \frac{1}{2}$ , so the answer has to be close to  $\frac{1}{2}$ ."

## Q & A Be a persistent problem solver

**Q:** My son gets frustrated when he can't figure out the answer to a math problem right away, especially if there are multiple steps. How can I help him?

**A:** Try asking your youngster questions that help him think through the problem to find the solution.

What kinds of questions should you ask him? Try these: "Can you explain what you've done already?" "Where did you get stuck?" "What is the last step you understood?" "What do you think the next step might be?" "Is there another method you could try?"



And here's an idea to help him help himself. Suggest that he write each of those questions on a separate index card. The next time he's stuck, he can pull one out to get moving again.

Finally, let him know that mistakes are part of the learning process—and "sticking with it" will help him in all subjects.

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## SCIENCE LAB

### Brrr! Keeping animals warm

Whales and seals survive in very cold climates thanks in part to their layer of blubber (fat). Your child can feel how that natural insulation works with this experiment.

**You'll need:** 2 quart-size plastic bags, bowl of ice water, tablespoon measure, shortening (or margarine)

**Here's how:** Have your youngster put his hand in one bag and briefly plunge it into the bowl of ice water. How did it feel? Then, he should measure 8–12 tbsp. shortening into the second bag. Let him stick his bag-covered hand into the shortening-filled bag and squish the shortening around so it surrounds his hand through the plastic. How does his hand feel when he places it in the water this time?

**What happens?** In the first bag, his hand will feel very cold. But when his hand is protected by shortening, he won't feel much cold at all.

**Why?** The shortening acts like blubber, providing insulation that retains the heat from your child's hand—keeping his hand warm.



## MATH CORNER

### The angles in my name

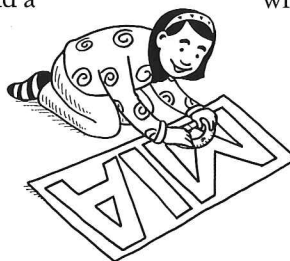
Letters contain lots of angles! Build your youngster's geometry skills with these games where family members find the angles in the letters of their names.

**1.** Each player uses a ruler and a pencil to write her name in large block capital letters. *Idea:* Let your child make one for your pet, too.

**2.** Now everyone measures each of their angles with a protractor and

labels them. For instance, an I has four 90° (right) angles, and perhaps the top of an A has two 115° angles.

**3.** Each person adds up the total degrees of all the angles in her name. The person with the highest total wins.



Play again with the names of your favorite sports teams, foods, or colors. Your youngster can even do this activity with her spelling words.



# Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

December 2019

Frazier Elementary Schools - Kelly Lombard, Principal

Title 1

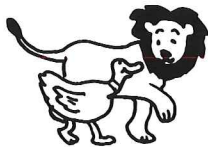
## Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites



### ■ *How to Be a Lion* (Ed Vere)

Some lions believe there's only one way to be a lion and that Leonard is not doing it right. He's gentle and quiet, and his best friend is a duck!



When the other lions try to bully Leonard into changing, he must stand up for himself.

### ■ *A Ticket Around the World*

(Natalia Diaz and Melissa Owens)

Where would your child go if he had a ticket to any place in the world? The little boy in this book invites readers to explore 13 countries with him—and learn about languages, food, geography, cultures, and more along the way.



### ■ *Anne Arrives* (Kallie George)

The Cuthberts plan to adopt an orphaned boy to help on their farm, and they're disappointed when they get Anne instead. But Anne is determined to prove herself. The first book in the Anne series, in which *Anne of Green Gables* is adapted for beginning readers.

### ■ *Light Makes a Rainbow*

(Sharon Coan)

Learn all about rainbows in this non-fiction book. Simple explanations and colorful photos make it easy for readers to understand what makes rainbows appear. Includes hands-on activities. (Also available in Spanish.)



## Winter literacy traditions

Keep your youngster's language arts skills strong during winter break. Fit reading, writing, speaking, and listening into family traditions with these activities.

### Celebrate reading

Give books a starring role on special days by holding read-a-thons while you sip hot chocolate. For instance, you might read winter-themed books on the first day of winter (December 21). Or on December 31, read about different ways people celebrate New Year's Eve around the world.

### Share news

Help your child launch an annual family newsletter. He could ask relatives to submit short articles about important events during 2019 and then write an article or two of his own. Have him add headlines, draw illustrations, and write captions to complete the first edition!



### Tell stories

Swapping family stories during gatherings builds your youngster's speaking and listening skills. Pull out photos to spark ideas, perhaps ones taken at a wedding or reunion, and invite your youngster to contribute details as everyone reminisces. What songs were played at the reception? What games did he play with his cousins?♥

## Inspired to write

Fill a basket with items that will give your child writing practice. Here are ideas for creating an "inspiration station."

● **Greeting cards.** Let your youngster cut cards in half and turn the fronts into postcards. She can write messages on the blank sides and mail the cards to relatives.

● **File folders.** Ask your child to glue a magazine picture on one inside panel of each folder. Help her write a story about the picture and glue it on the other inside panel. She could add a title on the front.

● **Homemade writing paper.** Have your youngster decorate the borders of plain white paper with stickers or stamps. Use a ruler to draw lines she can write on.♥

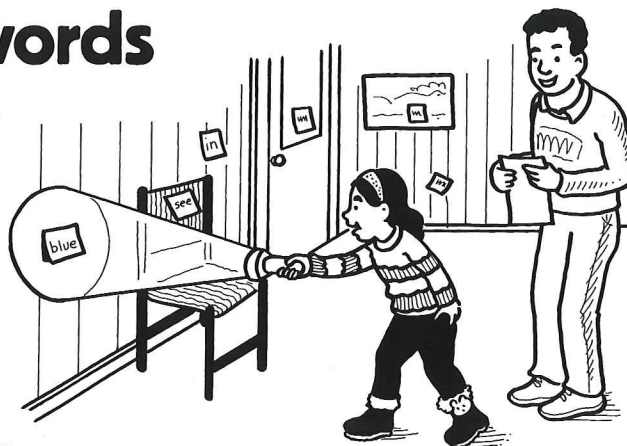




# 100 “magic” words

Did you know that just 100 words in the English language account for about half of the words beginning readers encounter? Ask your youngster’s teacher or search online for a list of these *high-frequency words*, and use them to play the following games.

**Word search.** Arrange Scrabble tiles in an 8 x 8 grid, spelling several of the words vertically, horizontally, or diagonally. Give your youngster a list of the words you hid. Can she find them all?



**Flashlight tag.** Pick 10 of the words and have your child copy them onto separate sticky notes. Place them randomly around a room. Hand her a flashlight, turn off the lights, and call out the words one by one. It’s her job to shine her “spotlight” around the room looking for the word. Ask her to read each correct word out loud when she finds it.

*Note:* Encourage your youngster to look for high-frequency words when she reads. She may be surprised how common they are—and by how many she can read all by herself.♥

## Fun with Words Spot the comma

When you’re out and about with your child, try to spot as many commas as possible! You’ll help him learn where commas belong and what jobs they do.



See a comma? Read the words it goes with, and tell why it’s there. For example, your youngster might read “lettuce, tomato, and cheese” on a restaurant menu and say that those commas separate words in a series. Or maybe you’ll spot “December 12, 2019” on a newspaper (a comma goes between the date and year). Can he find a place where a comma should be or a comma that’s used incorrectly?♥

## Parent to Parent

### Five-finger retelling

At school, my son Noah retells stories that he reads so the teacher can see how well he understands them. He recently learned a new retelling strategy that we’re enjoying at home: the five-finger retelling.

We read a story together, and Noah holds up each finger as he retells a different part. For his thumb, he introduces the main character. Then, he holds up a second finger and describes the setting. When he holds up his third, fourth, and fifth fingers, he explains what happened in the beginning, middle, and end of the story.

This has really helped Noah retell stories in sequence, and it works for more than books. We’ve used five-finger retelling to talk about everything from Noah’s day at school to sporting events we’ve attended.♥



## Q&A Reading at the “right” level?

**Q** My daughter often wants to read books that are too hard or too easy for her. Shouldn’t she stick to books at her reading level?

**A** Reading levels help teachers select books that challenge kids just enough to make them better readers. But your child can also enjoy and learn from books that are above or below her level.

When she reads easier books, she gains confidence, becomes a more

fluent reader, and develops a love of reading. More difficult books challenge her vocabulary and comprehension skills and give her a sense of accomplishment—even if she doesn’t “get” everything.

Encourage her to explore any book she’s excited about. If she struggles with a book, offer to read it aloud. She’ll be more motivated to read, and the more she reads, the stronger her skills will grow.♥



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# Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

December 2019

Frazier Elementary Schools - Kelly Lombard, Principal  
Title 1

## Book Picks

### ■ *Moo* (Sharon Creech)

City kids Reena and Luke experience culture shock when their family moves and they have to help out on a farm. Told in a blend of poetry and prose, this novel follows the siblings as they make new friends and bond with the animals—even a stubborn cow named Zora.



### ■ *Money Sense for Kids!*

(Hollis Page Harman)

This book introduces youngsters to basic economics, offers advice for earning and managing money, and explains how banks and stock exchanges work. Readers will also learn the history of U.S. currency. Each chapter includes a practical activity, such as budgeting allowance money.



### ■ *The Girl Who Drew Butterflies: How Maria Merian's Art Changed Science* (Joyce Sidman)

Maria Merian's unique approach to studying insects led her to create beautiful art and become one of the first scientists to draw the life cycle of butterflies. This biography describes how Maria dedicated her life to entomology, or the science of insects.



### ■ *The Year of Billy Miller*

(Kevin Henkes)

Billy is a sometimes misunderstood second-grader who spends the year navigating school challenges, friendships, and sibling squabbles. The story of his life is told in four chapters: "Teacher," "Father," "Sister," and "Mother."

## A family book nook

A cozy place to curl up with a book or magazine can inspire your child to read more. Use these steps to carve out a special book nook for your family.

**1. Create.** Even the smallest space can become a reading zone. Together, choose a quiet spot away from distractions. For example, your youngster might suggest a corner of the family room or basement, or a space between two bookcases in the living room. Let her add a comfortable seat (favorite chair, beanbag, big pillows) and a lamp.

**2. Organize.** Help your child collect containers to hold reading materials. Maybe she'll put magazines in cereal boxes, small paperbacks in shoeboxes, and bigger books in baskets. She can cover the boxes with construction paper and label them ("Science magazines,"

"Mysteries," "Biographies"). *Tip:* Include a special box for library books, and have her add sticky notes with due dates.

**3. Enjoy.** Make using the book nook part of your family's daily routine. You might read the newspaper there in the morning. Your youngster can use the spot for reading assignments after school. And family members might take turns relaxing there on evenings and weekends to read novels or listen to audiobooks. ■

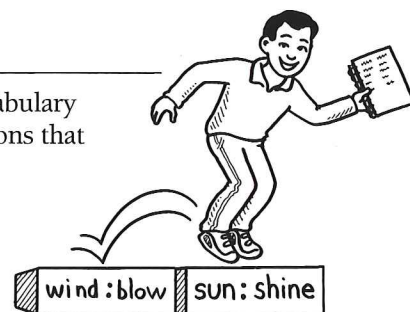


## Analogy challenge

Build your youngster's reasoning and vocabulary skills by playing with *analogies*, or comparisons that show how two things are similar.

Analogies encourage your child to think about relationships. Here's an example: "Top is to bottom as in is to \_\_\_\_." Ask your youngster to think about the relationship between *top* and *bottom* (opposites) to determine the missing word (*out*, the opposite of *in*).

Take turns making up analogies and discussing how to solve them. Say you write, "Wind is to blow as sun is to \_\_\_\_." Your child can think about how *wind* and *blow* are related (the wind blows) and then consider what the sun does (shines, rises). For more practice, have him try analogies at [factmonster.com/analogies](http://factmonster.com/analogies). ■



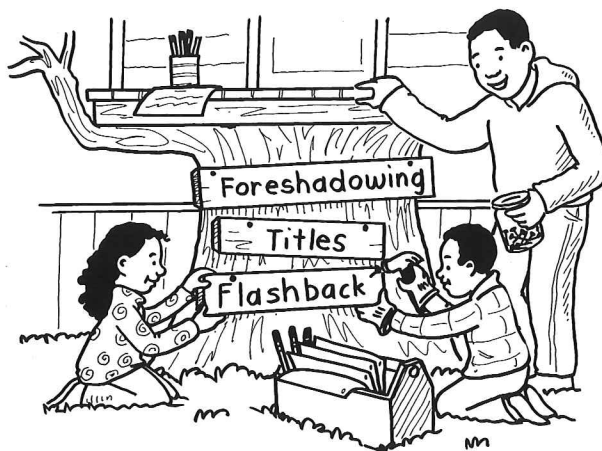


## Spice up your writing

Encourage your youngster to view creative writing assignments as opportunities to try new ideas. The following tips can improve his stories and make writing even more fun.

### Foreshadowing

Authors sometimes drop hints about what's going to happen later in a book. If a big thunderstorm will be important in your child's story, he might mention his character's fear of storms early in his tale.



### Titles

Have your youngster consider different titles for his story. One way to create an eye-catching title is to refer to an exciting aspect of an event. Instead of "My Summer Vacation," his title could be "Trapped in the Treehouse."

### Flashback

Rather than starting his tale at the beginning, your youngster might begin at the end. Perhaps the main character is finishing his first year at a new school. Your child could write about the character spending time with friends he has made, and then go back and describe his struggle to fit in at first. ■

## Parent 2 Parent

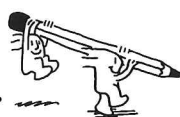
### Math stories

When my son Kieran was struggling with math homework, I remembered a strategy my fifth-grade math teacher taught me. She had me turn equations into stories, and this really helped me visualize and solve the problems.



I mentioned this idea to Kieran and helped him make up a story to go with the first problem,  $6 \times 24$ . He wrote, "Six buses traveled to the museum. Each bus held 24 students. In all, 144 students went on the trip." Then he decided to connect all the problems into one big story. For  $8 \times 45$ , he continued: "The museum had 8 exhibits. Each had 45 artifacts. There were 360 artifacts altogether."

When Kieran finished, he read his story to me. He agreed that the activity helped him picture the math and come up with the right answers. I think it also strengthened his storytelling skills! ■



## Fun with Words

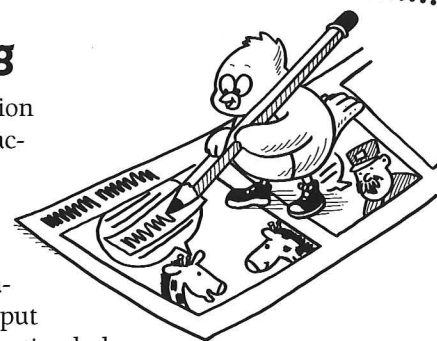
### Comically speaking

Stretch your child's imagination with this activity that lets her practice writing dialogue—the conversations characters have with each other.

**Choose comics.** Let your youngster cut some of her favorite comics from the newspaper or print some from the internet. She can put small pieces of masking tape over the conversation bubbles to block out the existing words.

**Write new dialogue.** Each of you can pick one of the comics, think about what's going on in the pictures, and write lines for the characters on the pieces of tape.

**Share your versions.** Take turns reading your dialogue aloud. Then, choose new comics and make up conversations for those characters. ■



## Q&A

### Reading and writing gifts—on a budget

**Q** I'd like to give my daughter gifts that will keep her reading and writing during winter break—and when it's over. My budget is tight. Any suggestions?

**A** You'll both keep reading when you create coupons good for library visits together. These make great gifts for your child, and they're free! Another idea is a magazine subscription related to her interests (perhaps *National*

*Geographic Kids*, *Fun for Kidz*, or *Ask*). Many magazines offer deep discounts this time of year.

For a writing-related gift, you could visit a craft shop or dollar store and fill a gift bag with fun writing treats. You can find notepads in different shapes and sizes, colorful pens, and pencils with interesting erasers. Also consider a diary, as well as books of crossword puzzles, word searches, or *Mad Libs*. ■



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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