

# HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD IN SECOND GRADE?

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## ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

### **Continue Reading with Your Child**

Your child's reading skills are improving steadily and he can now read on his own, but continue to read aloud with him regularly. As you read, stop to discuss what you've read and ask him questions about the content. Don't ask him obvious questions that are spelled out explicitly in the text, such as what color shirt a character was wearing. Instead, prompt him to think about the reasons behind the action. Ask him why a character did something specific? Ask him what he thinks the lesson of the story is so far? These aren't necessarily questions with wrong or right answers. The most important thing is to prompt him to think analytically about what he is reading.

### **Take Turns Reading Through a Book**

Your child can practice shared reading with a parent, sibling, or friend. The child reads one page and the partner reads the next page. The goal here is to take turns and help each other with words the reader may not know. Each reader must follow along while the other one is reading. This activity helps build fluency, which is very important to becoming a strong reader.

### **Play Audiobooks in the Car**

If you're planning a car ride of more than a few minutes, consider playing a CD of an audiobook. Children model their tones while reading aloud based on the ways in which they hear adults read, and oral fluency is an important skill that begins to develop very early in a child's literacy development.

### **Encourage Questions!**

Encourage your child to ask for help when he doesn't understand a word and help him to try to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words. If a character in a story is described with words that your child does not recognize, work with him to figure out their meaning from other clues in the text, rather than simply providing him with a definition. Children are praised and rewarded so much for showing off what they know, so make sure to praise him for asking about things he doesn't know. Show him that you also don't understand all the words you come across and demonstrate how you figure out the meaning of an unfamiliar word.

### **Explore Different Writing Styles**

Encourage your child to develop his writing abilities and to tailor his writing to different purposes and audiences. Demonstrate how you do this in everyday life. Explain what you're doing as you write a work-related email, reading aloud as you write it and explaining how you're going to use capital letters and be a bit formal in your style. Or, if you're just jotting a quick reminder note to your spouse to leave on the kitchen counter, explain why you're taking a much more familiar tone.

### **Incorporate Non-Fiction Books**

Make sure to incorporate non-fiction books into your child's reading list, such as books about how plants grow or how machines operate, depending on his interests. If he's interested in dinosaurs and other animals, appoint him the family "animal detective" and have him present a new animal to the family every week.

## Use Writing Skills for Birthday Invitations

Birthday parties can be a wonderful occasion to make writing fun. Your second grader can join in the festivities by creating his own invitations to send to friends and family. With your help, he can draw a picture and write the important information about the party: Whose party it is, where and when it will be held, and how to RSVP. Pick out some paper together and either print out the invitations on a computer or make handwritten versions. And don't forget to add stickers and glitter! Your child will love being part of the action.

## Play Word Games on the Go

Word games are a great way to help your child appreciate the magic of language, and playing with language can start him on the right path toward good writing. Here's one idea to try with your second grader: When you're driving in the car, taking the bus, or walking in your neighborhood, ask your child what he sees. Beginning with one of his words, try adding another word that starts with the same letter, like "ferocious fire hydrant" or "tiny tree." See if you can expand by adding more and more words, like "twenty-two tiny tulip trees."

## Make a Game of Using New Words

Make a game out of broadening your child's vocabulary. Choose five unfamiliar new words for your child to learn each week and see how often everyone in the family can use those words in everyday conversation. This will help improve your second grader's vocabulary, reading comprehension, and speaking skills.

# MATH

## Make Math "Hands On"

Helping your second grader with math means helping him understand the meaning of mathematics concepts, not just the procedures of doing a written problem. Making math as "hands on" as possible is the best way to ensure that he will develop an understanding of concepts and number sense. To help your child really grasp the math that he needs to master, keep the learning simple, use real tools and everyday objects, and make it fun. Just call your learning activity a "game" and you can guarantee you will have your second grader's attention!

## Speak Positively About Math

Speak positively about math and reward effort rather than grades or ability. Think about how important reading is and how we are told to model this behavior for our children. We need to place math in the same category. Don't discount the importance of math by saying, "I'm not a math person, I was never good at math." Help your child read books that incorporate math, such as *Millions of Cats* by Wanda Gag, or *On Beyond a Million: An Amazing Math Journey* by David Schwartz.

## Cement Addition and Subtraction Relationships

To help your child build number sense, have him take several small objects (beans, pennies, etc.) and count out a specific number, starting with a smaller number. Then take your hand (or a cup or small bowl) and quickly cover some of the objects. Ask: "How many are under my hand?" He should be able to figure it out by counting those remaining. So if there are five objects and you cover three, your child should see the two remaining objects and determine that three are covered. Do a variety of different combinations of objects covered using the same number of items. Then try it with more items, up to twenty. Your child will get practice seeing the addition and subtraction relationships between numbers.

### **Use Food to Demonstrate Fractions**

Your child is beginning to use unit fractions, like  $\frac{1}{8}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$  in second grade. Cutting up sandwiches, fruit, or pastries into equal pieces and counting the fractional parts is one way to reinforce fraction identification.

### **Read Math Problems Out Loud**

If your child is struggling with math problems, have him read each problem out loud slowly and carefully so he can hear the problem and think about what is being asked. This helps him break down the problem and come up with problem-solving strategies.

### **Use Real Money**

Children become so accustomed to seeing adults pay with credit and debit cards that counting actual money can be an unfamiliar practice. Engage your child in the transaction of buying things at the store, allowing him to pay with cash and to count the change. This will help not only with his math skills, but will foster an understanding of the concepts of saving and spending.