

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD IN THIRD GRADE?

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Make the Most of Your Library

By now your child should have a library card and be familiar with your local library. Encourage him to develop his own taste in reading and to borrow books that interest him. Make sure that he has time at home, away from computers and television, to focus on reading independently.

Use Technology as a Reading Tool

Learn how to use technology to help develop your third grader's growing interest in reading. There is a large selection of online books for children, many with interactive features such as animations or voice recording. You can also encourage him interest in reading by helping him find online sites about topics that interest him.

Include 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 Incentives to Encourage Reading

Model good reading habits for your child by making sure that he sees you and other adults enjoying reading. This will help him view reading in a positive light. Never leave home without reading materials for both of you. Always having a book or a magazine on hand for moments like a wait at a doctor's office, a long car ride, or just waiting in the car to pick up a sibling helps your child understand that reading is an enjoyable activity that he can do at any time.

Keep a Dictionary and Thesaurus Accessible

Keep a dictionary and a thesaurus accessible in the house, and bookmark some dictionary sites online, so that when an unfamiliar word comes up your child can easily consult these handy references. Encourage him to always look up words he doesn't know.

Encourage Storytelling

Kids love to tell stories with each other – the more outlandish, the better. Encourage your child to start a progressive story with a group of friends. Begin it with a catchy opening, like "The robot stepped off of the bright purple spaceship into a vivid green golf course." Then, have the kids pass the paper around. Each writer adds a sentence or two until the writers collectively decide the story is finished. Watch the kids explode with laughter when they read the collaborative story out loud.

Play Word Games

Word games are a great way to get your child to see the magic of language. And playing with language can be a start toward good writing. Here's one idea to try with your third grader: When you're driving in the car, taking a bus or walking in your neighborhood, spot the license plates on the cars that pass. Using the letters from the plate, try to create a sentence in which each letter becomes the beginning of a word. The license plate NJC124 could become "Nancy joins clubs" or "Nick juggles carrots." Be creative and have fun!

Write and Stage a Play

Drama and performance can hook both lovers and non-lovers of reading and writing into enjoying language. Here's one idea to try with your third grader: Write and stage a play! Gather a group of your child's friends and have them choose a favorite book. Help them pick a scene they love from the book and write a simple script – just by writing down what the characters said (or might have said). Help them pick a character to act out, find some props and dress-up clothes for costumes, and you're set to go!

Encourage Writing About Holidays

Writing can be an important addition to your holiday observances. Invite your child to write and illustrate stories about his favorite holiday traditions. Encourage him to add lots of details by using all his senses in descriptions: how the potato pancakes smell at Hannukah, how the candles glisten at Kwanzaa, what the Christmas carols sound like, how the wrapping paper feels as he rips open his presents. Make the story into a book – either on the computer or handwritten and stapled together – and save as a new family tradition to read and reread each year.

Play Vocabulary Games

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

Play "Another Way to Say..."

Another great game to play in the car is "Another way to say..." The goal is to find words that have a similar meaning to the selected word. So if you choose the word "big," your child can take turns with his siblings or friends finding similar words, such as "huge," "enormous," or "large." Give each child ten seconds to come up with a suggestion. This helps build vocabulary and memory skills, and discussing exactly how the chosen words differ from each other adds another dimension to the game.

Discuss Math Class at Home

Encourage your child to talk about the math concepts that he is learning at school. Don't just ask, "How was math today?" Instead, ask him to tell you about something he learned in math class today.

Model Good Math Behavior

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.

Talk Through Math Problems

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.

Highlight Real-Life Math Problems

Continue to find as many opportunities as possible to highlight math problems in real life. If you're

doubling a recipe and need to figure out measurements, enlist your third grader's help. Measuring cups provide an especially good opportunity for your child to familiarize himself with the concept of fractions that he is learning about in school. If a recipe calls for a cup and a half of something, ask him how many $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{1}{4}$ cups he would need until he had enough.

Highlight Real-Life Examples of Fractions

Encourage your child to spot real-life uses of fractions, such as menus that describe burgers as quarter pounders or sports games that are divided into halves. Have him practice fractions by drawing a shape, such as a circle or a square, and asking him to color in $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ of it.

Play Math Games

Time spent commuting or waiting in a car is a great opportunity to play math games with your child. Multiplication is one of the key math concepts he is working on in school and you can help him practice by asking him simple multiplication problems that relate to real life. Ask him to figure out the number of days until his event three weeks from today. Or have him calculate how many weeks he would have to save his allowance to buy a toy or game he wants.

Use Money to Practice Math

Make combinations of bills and coins using money from your wallet or your child's piggy bank. Have him write the amount for different groupings, using a dollar sign and decimal point.

Explore Math with Sports

Sports provide a fun and engaging way of exploring a host of mathematical concepts, starting with basic addition. The halves of a soccer game or the quarters of a football game offer an illustration of how fractions work in the real world. If your child enjoys a sport, encourage him to explore it through math.

Practice Telling Time

Have your child practice his time-telling skills as often as possible. Ask him to check the clock when you want to know what time it is, and to compare the time on a face clock to see if it's displaying the same time as a digital clock. If you have an appointment and need to leave by a certain time, have him help count down the minutes until then.