

A vocabulary journal builds reading skills

Your child has to learn the vocabulary words his teacher chooses for him. But what if your child could create a list of the words he wants to know?

A personal vocabulary journal is a great way for your child to learn new words.

To get the most out of this type of free-choice journal, have your child:

Get a three-ring binder and some lined paper. Create a page for every letter of the alphabet.

Write down interesting words he finds when he is reading. Enter each word on the appropriate page.

Look the words up in the dictionary and add their meanings.

Review the journal weekly. Challenge your child to use these words when he is speaking or writing. As he practices them, they will become a regular part of his vocabulary.

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Show your child that reading for information can actually be fun

Children ask a lot of questions. Helping them find answers to those questions is a great way to encourage their curiosity. So be sure to add some nonfiction books to your child's reading list. Reading these books can help your child learn more about subjects that interest her.

Here are some fun activities to get your child reading more nonfiction:

- Look for books about how things work. How does the wheat in a field end up in the pasta on her plate? How does the football game get onto your TV screen? Books can help your child learn the answers to these questions.
- Turn your reader into a writer. Have her write her own "how-to" book. She can explain how to kick a soccer ball past a goalie. Or, she can show a creative way to braid hair. Help her choose something she does well and then write step-by-step instructions. You can "publish" her book by adding photos or drawings she makes herself.
- Read nonfiction books yourself. Help your child see that learning takes place everywhere and at any time--not just in school.

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