

Use DEAR to encourage reading at home



In some classrooms, saying, “Oh, dear!” doesn’t mean something’s broken. It means it’s time to Drop Everything And Read (DEAR)! During DEAR time, everyone sits down for some uninterrupted reading.

You can try this activity at home, too. To have some DEAR time with your family:

- **Get ready.** Make sure everyone has something to read. You may want to plan a trip to the library ahead of time. Keep plenty of interesting magazines and books on hand.
- **Let everyone know.** Establish a reading time that’s convenient for all family members. Write DEAR time on your family calendar. This helps your child see that reading is an important thing in your family.



- **Start small.** Start with a weekly, half-hour session. As family members get into the reading habit, DEAR time can become more frequent.
- **Take part!** DEAR only works if *everyone* in your family participates. So grab a novel or the newspaper, and enjoy some reading yourself. When your child sees you reading, he’ll be more inspired to read himself.

Turn junk mail into an effective learning tool



Instead of throwing away junk mail, use it to help your child improve skills in geography, math, map reading and more.

Appoint your child the family mail detective. Ask her to examine each piece of mail to find where it came from.

Help her search for a postmark, publisher or return address. Once your child pinpoints the places of origin, help her:

- **Locate each place on a map.** Get or print out a large U.S. map and hang it up. Your child can use dots to mark where the mail came from. Have her keep track and see if more mail comes from certain areas.
- **Sort the mail using different criteria.** Sort by state or regions of the country, by climate or by which



ocean or mountain range the mailer's address is closest to.

- **Measure how far away** each place is from your hometown. Which mail pieces traveled the longest distance? The shortest?
- **Use a highway map to plan a pretend trip** between two cities where mail originated. Measure the mileage between them. Go to the library or online to research interesting places to see or do on your imaginary trip.

Share strategies to make report writing easier



Writing a report can be a daunting task. If your child has a writing assignment coming up, help him get his thoughts down on paper. Encourage him to:

- **Start early.** Writing takes time. If the report is due next week, don't let your child put it off. Sit down right away and help him think through what he might write.
- **Jot down ideas.** Ask your child to make a list of everything he knows about the subject of his report. He doesn't need to use complete sentences—a word or two will do. When he's made his list, he may be surprised to see how much he already knows.
- **Discuss ideas.** Ask your child to talk about his ideas. This will help him put his thoughts into words.
- **Start in the middle.** The first few sentences are often the hardest to write. Suggest that he get his main



points down first. He can write the introduction later.

- **Put the draft aside.** The next day, have your child read what he's written. Discuss the parts of his report that work. Then, have your child think about what would make the rest even better.
- **Revise and rewrite.** Your child should check to see if words are spelled correctly and that he has used capitals and punctuation in the right places.

Develop skills by making reading enjoyable



Support your child's growing reading skills by helping her see that reading isn't just useful—it's also fun! Reading is a lifelong skill and hobby for your child to enjoy. To encourage her interest in reading:

- **Establish a routine.** For example, make the half hour before bedtime reading time. Your child can read by herself or you can read together. Your child should choose a book she thinks she'll enjoy. Doing this daily means she'll come to expect the reading time.
- **Provide exciting reading material.** Put interesting books, articles and poems where your child will see them. Find other things to read together, such as signs, recipes and instructions.
- **Encourage your child to write often.** Reading and writing are closely connected. Exchange notes with



your child and give her a diary or journal to write her thoughts in.

- **Research extracurricular activities.** Look for activities that involve reading or critical thinking, such as music.
- **Read in unusual places.** Reading can take place anywhere! Your child can read outside, in the kitchen or even in a blanket fort that she builds.

Older students benefit from reading aloud, too



When was the last time you read to your child? Even though he can read on his own now, he can still benefit from reading aloud with you. When you read aloud to your child, he can:

- **Stop and ask** about a confusing concept or plot element.
- **Notice unusual grammar**, expressions or vocabulary.
- **Listen for the meaning.** Your child may be able to comprehend more if he isn't focused on decoding the words themselves.

To add some variety to your reading time:

- **Go to the library together.** Decide to read one book of your child's choice, then you can read one that you choose. After you finish each book, take time to talk about it. What would your child change if he were the author? What did he think of the ending?



- **Read all kinds of books.** Explore science fiction, historical fiction or a biography. You could also read several books in a series.
- **Look at the newspaper regularly.** Choose one article to read aloud to your child. Then, have him choose one to read to you. You can have a discussion about how current events will have an impact on your lives.

Make sure your home is learning friendly



The right environment can help your child feel comfortable reading, doing her schoolwork and taking on new learning challenges.

It doesn't take much effort to ensure that your home is learning friendly.

You can:

- **Stock up on reading material.** Go to used bookstores and yard sales to get children's magazines and books, word puzzles, comics, dictionaries and even encyclopedias. Take regular trips to the library to refresh your material.
- **Provide a special place** for your child to read, write, draw and work on special projects. Ask her to help decide where this place will be and what it will be like. Her reading area can also be where she does her homework each night.



- **Work with your child on one of her hobbies.** Learn more about something that she is passionate about. Have her teach you about building models, astronomy or animals. You can also take on something you enjoy doing together, such as gardening, cooking or painting.