

“Notes From School”

WINTER BREAK READING

During the month of December, many school-aged children count down the days until Winter Break begins. These vacation days allow children a break from early morning bus rides, the challenging work of learning, and the responsibility of daily assignments. Reading, however, should continue to be a daily activity for children throughout the year. Vacation days are a great time to help children of all ages discover and develop a life-long love for books and reading for enjoyment.

Build vocabulary with books for beginners

A book is the perfect place to find new words. That’s one reason children who love reading tend to have rich vocabularies. Here are ways to help your youngster learn words from books.

A well-rounded reader

To expose your child to different words, choose different kinds of books to read. For example, in folktales and historical fiction, they may notice old-fashioned words (alas, blacksmith). In books about plants or animals, they’ll see science terms (sprout, nocturnal). Stories set in other countries can teach them words from around the world (crepe, sari).

Vocabulary-rich retellings

While you read to your youngster, help them jot down unfamiliar words. Talk about their meanings, or look them up in a dictionary together. Then, encourage them to retell the story to you—using the words on their list. (“The tortoise moved at a steady pace. The hare was too boastful.”) Saying the words in sentences of their own will help them understand and remember them.

Favorite words

Ask your child to pick out their favorite new word in a book, and have them be on the lookout for the same word in other books or in conversation. For instance, they might read about a “precious little kitten” and notice “precious gems” in a nonfiction book on minerals. Seeing and hearing a word in various settings can help them “get” all its meanings.

Read-alouds with books for intermediates

Reading aloud to your child is entertaining and helps them grow as a reader, no matter how old they are. Expose them to more complex plots and new vocabulary—and enjoy discussing books together— with these ideas.

Choose challenging books

Sometimes, pick books that are a little above your youngster’s reading ability (you can ask a librarian or the classroom teacher for advice). For example, understanding a plot that goes back and forth in time may be easier for them if you

read it aloud. As their comprehension and vocabulary grow, they'll start to read more complex books by themselves.

Learn together

If you come to a word you don't know or a sentence or paragraph you don't understand, say so. Then, try to figure it out along with your child. You might look up the word in a dictionary or reread the passage, for instance. They'll see that there are strategies they can try when they get stumped while reading alone.

Talk it over

After you finish a book, discuss it. Which character would you like to trade places with? What do you imagine the story's setting looks like? Talking allows your youngster to think more deeply about the plot.

Enjoy your Winter Break!