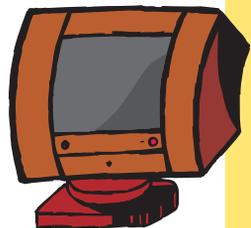


GO DIGITAL:

Literacy, News and the Internet



Newspapers and technology often complement one another. Many newspapers are available online, but perhaps more important, newspapers can point you and your child in new directions that can give purpose to your Internet surfing. And reading with purpose is an important literacy strategy.



Using technology to gather information provides kids with the chance to interact with text, language and reading in a different way, one that often intrigues them. Downloading podcasts and sitting in on webcasts (both of which are becoming more prevalent on newspaper Web sites) give kids new opportunities to receive information while using technological skills that are crucial in the 21st century.

Here are some ways to connect the newspaper, your child and technology to build stronger reading and literacy skills.



Compare and contrast. Find an article of interest to your child in your local newspaper. Then, go online to look for articles on the same topic. Do the online resources you find report the same information? How are they the same or different from the information your newspaper supplied? Which resources does your child consider to be the most reliable? Why?



Expand your knowledge. What are some topics that really interest your child? Can you find an article in the newspaper that addresses those interests? When you come across an interesting topic – the weather, world politics, fashion, dining – encourage your child to investigate further using the Internet. Talk about the new information he discovers.



Build your digital vocabulary. What's a modem? What does "high speed" mean? What's the difference between a podcast and a webcast? New technological terms appear every day. Your newspaper is often a great resource for keeping up with the technology your kids are experiencing at school and with their friends. Start a list of technology terms and post it on your refrigerator. Ask your child to help you define them, and then talk about how these terms apply to your everyday routine.



Newspaper
Association
of America



Give Health and Literacy a Boost With the Newspaper



Children of all ages (and adults, too) learn better when they're healthy. The newspaper is filled with great information about the latest scientific discoveries that help us live our lives in a healthier way. But the newspaper also offers many opportunities for parents to interact with their children around the subject of health while building literacy skills.

Here are a few activities you can try with your children.

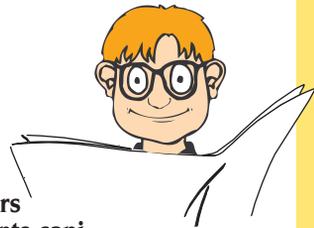
Eat to live and learn. Today's food pyramid includes grains, vegetables, fruits, oils, dairy, and meat and beans. Ask your child to help you clip coupons from the newspaper and sort them into the different food pyramid categories. With your child, write out your grocery list (letting your child see you write for a purpose is a great way to model an important literacy skill). Talk about the meals you plan to prepare for the week, pointing out how each food fits one or more food groups. Do some Internet research with your child to learn about the number of daily servings you should try to eat in each food group.

Keep your mind and body active. Look in your newspaper for opportunities to talk about physical fitness with your child. Maybe there's going to be a charity walk-a-thon in your community. These events often are intended to raise awareness for a health-related issue, such as cancer or diabetes. Talk about the cause, and also talk about what it would mean to participate in the event. How long is the walk-a-thon? How would you train for it? What clothing would be important to wear? (And think about participating in the event with your child!) Other events listed in the newspaper can inspire family fitness, from the opening of a new park to an art gallery hop to a recent birth at the zoo. Walking and talking about what you're doing and seeing builds health and literacy at the same time.

Be a good consumer of health vocabulary. Every day, you and your child probably hear or read about health-related information. It can be very confusing. Good cholesterol, bad cholesterol, trans fats, low-carb diets, high-protein diets, body mass index – what do these terms mean? As you and your child read about the latest trends in fitness and health, take some time to talk about how this information relates to your daily lives. When you don't know a term, look it up in the dictionary or on the Internet. Building your child's health vocabulary not only expands the words he knows, but also helps him recognize the news that's most important to him in leading a healthy life.



Three Easy Ways to Build Literacy With the Newspaper



Children spend a good part of their early development years being taught important things. The newspaper can help parents capitalize on those learning and teaching moments that happen spontaneously, which are equally important. There are many ways parents can use the newspaper to build children's literacy and reading skills without it seeming like homework.

Talk, talk, talk. Whether your child is a preschooler or a teenager, talking – having conversations – is the best way to build oral language skills. With very young children, describing what they see in the newspaper exposes them to new words and increases print awareness. Do a picture walk through the newspaper, pointing out shapes and colors, and ask your child to describe what he sees. Try to expand on your child's descriptions by adding more details: "Yes, that fire truck is red. Do you also see that it has a ladder attached to one side? What do you think that's for?" With elementary school students, try reading some articles aloud. When you come to a word that's new to you or your child, take some time to talk about what the word means and look it up in a dictionary. Ask your child to use the new word in another context that's meaningful to her. With your adolescent, look for an article that might be of interest and ask him to read it. Then encourage him to tell you what he thinks about the information. How does it relate to his own experiences? For children of any age, encouraging them to talk about what they see and read will keep the conversation flowing.

Words, words, words. Hearing, reading and talking about words builds vocabulary, a very important component to overall literacy development. Being exposed to new words is a great start for young children. Understanding words in context – knowing how they relate to the actions of a story or a character's motivations – takes children into a whole new realm of reading and comprehension. Using words to express ideas and feelings is critical to communication. As you read the newspaper with your children, be sure to point out new words and talk about what they mean. Try to use those new words in other contexts, especially ones that relate to your child's everyday life.

Write, write, write. The newspaper is a perfect example of writing for a purpose – primarily, to convey information. Point out reasons for writing with your child, using the newspaper as a guide. Use coupons and ads to create your grocery list. Read the editorials out loud, and ask your child to help you compose a response. When you watch a movie or TV show, ask your child to write a review, then compare it with the review in the newspaper. Help your child recognize that writing is a powerful way to communicate.



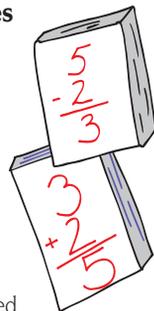
Newspapers Build Numeracy

Literacy and numeracy – the ability to understand and work with numbers – go hand in hand. Applying math to our everyday lives often involves reading and related skills, such as comparing and contrasting, sequencing, vocabulary and comprehension. The newspaper is a great way to show children that math has a purpose and that our world is filled with numbers.

Read it, make it, eat it. Many newspapers publish recipes in the dining, food or health sections. Recipes are a great way to have fun together and practice math concepts. With younger children, read the list of ingredients out loud and let your preschooler help you measure. Use terms such as “bigger,” “smaller,” “more” and “less” as you work. With older children, determine how much of each ingredient you would need if you doubled the recipe or cut it in half. Once you make the recipe, enjoy it with the whole family.

Chart it, graph it, master it. Charts and graphs are visual ways of organizing information, and your newspaper is full of them. From stocks to sports, there are many examples that can help your child think about ways to present information. Encourage your child to make a chart or graph of his own about a topic he’s interested in: plotting the falling outdoor temperatures as autumn turns to winter; tracking the way council members vote on a bill to improve local parks; or recording his favorite team’s wins, losses and ties. After he creates a graph, ask him to explain to you what it shows.

But it’s on sale. Advertisements make every sale sound like a great deal. They’re also an opportunity for you to help your child understand percentages and concepts about money. If that new DVD is on sale for 10 percent off, how much will your child actually save? (In the case of a \$20 DVD, 10 percent off = $20 \times .10 = \$2$ savings – not a bad deal at all!) If your teenager wants to save for a used car, how much money will she have to put aside each month for one year to have enough for the \$1,000 down payment? ($\$1,000 \div 12 = \83.33 per month) If she makes \$40 per month baby-sitting, how much will she need to earn on top of that to meet her monthly savings plan?



The Science of Reading With the Newspaper

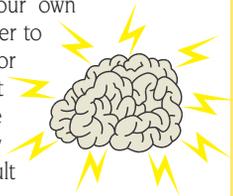
Being curious about the natural world leads to two things: scientific discovery and reading. After all, how can you make a new discovery without first learning a little about the topic by reading about it?

The newspaper is filled with opportunities for families to learn and discover together. Here are some suggestions for taking advantage of your child's natural curiosity in a "scientific" way.

A culinary experiment. With your child, look through the food or dining section of the newspaper to find a recipe you'd like to try. Involve your child in the planning, shopping, preparation and evaluation of the meal. Together, make a shopping list for the ingredients you'll need, and ask your child to scan the coupons and grocery store ads for savings. Once you have all the ingredients, walk through the recipe with your child, making sure you have everything you need, including the proper measurement tools (cups, spoons, etc.). After you prepare the dish, share it with the whole family. Then ask everyone to rate or review the dish. This activity helps children make choices, plan, practice reading and writing skills, and evaluate their work.

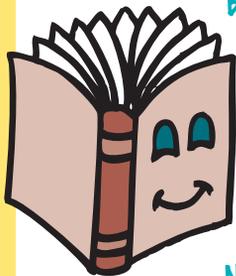
Compare and contrast. Look for an article about a health fad, such as a new diet, exercise regimen or vitamin supplement. Ask your child to help you compare the benefits and disadvantages of this new fad. What is the intent, and what are the risks? On paper or on the computer, put the benefits in one column and the disadvantages or risks in another, side by side. You may want to do a little extra research on the Internet or at the library. Does your child think the fad is a smart choice based on the data you have collected?

Critical thinking. Does your child believe everything she reads? Reading to gain information is important, but thinking about what you read and analyzing it based on your own experiences is important, too. Just turn to the weather forecast in your newspaper to get your child thinking critically. Have her cut out the extended forecast each day for one week. Ask her to record her own experiences with the weather as well. Did it rain? If so, when? What was the high temperature for each day? At the end of the week, ask her to look at how the extended forecast changed each day, and how these compare with her own experiences. Talk about why the weather is so difficult to predict.



Arts, Humanities and Reading

Lights! Camera! Action! Who doesn't love a good movie, book, play or CD? We all have our personal preferences, and the entertainment section of the newspaper can guide us right to them while building literacy skills at the same time.



Book reviews. The New York Times Best-Seller lists are every author's dream. But what's a hot seller locally? Who's buying what at your local bookstores? Bricks-and-mortar bookstores often offer lists of what's selling in your town, from children's fiction to adult literature. Ask your children to search the best-seller lists and make some comparisons. Then, take a trip to your local bookstore or library to locate some of the recommended or reviewed books. Whether your child is preschool or high school age, he can learn to read the book blurbs and the author's notes, then make a determination if this is a book he wants to borrow or buy – and read!

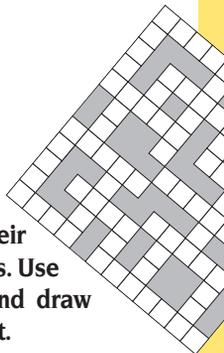
New flicks. It's Saturday afternoon, the kids are restless and you want to get everyone out of the house. What to do? Send the kids to the movie listings in the newspaper with a task, and tell them they can go to the movie only if the task is completed. Here is their assignment: a movie report. They should identify a movie they would like to see, locate a theater, check showtimes and prices, search for a description of the movie (including the rating) on the Internet, and find at least two reviews. Then, using their research, they should write down three reasons why this movie is a good choice for the family.



What's happening? "I'm bored." We've all heard that one many times. But is it always up to Mom and Dad to undo the boredom? Well, perhaps. But you can send your children on their way to undoing some of that boredom themselves. Tell them to go to today's entertainment section in the newspaper and find new things they can do this weekend. Make a list. Older kids can help younger children with the process by reading aloud their ideas. Review the list together, with children defending their choices, and come to consensus as a family. Then next weekend, go have fun!



EXPANDING the Words You Know With the Newspaper



Vocabulary is important to children's reading fluency and comprehension. Parents can use the newspaper to introduce their children to new words and build on the meanings of familiar words. Use the words you discuss with your children at every opportunity and draw attention to them when you hear others use them or see them in print.



Fun with words. Young children learn new words when they are having fun. When your young child wants to "read" the paper with you, turn it into a word game. Pick a word in a newspaper headline and ask your child to come up with a word that rhymes. Keep the game going by taking turns with rhyming words. Understanding rhyme is a first step in learning the sounds of speech that children will need to understand words in print.



How is it used? Find a picture in the newspaper (advertisements provide good ones) and ask your child to name items and people shown. Deepen and extend your child's knowledge by asking her to tell how the item is used or what the person does. When your child responds that "a fireman puts out fires and saves people from burning houses," she demonstrates a deeper understanding of the word fireman than by just recognizing that person's occupation.



Choosing words. Read an article of interest with your child. Circle a few words in the article and ask your child to substitute words with the same meanings. Do the synonyms make any difference in the meaning of the article or its impact? Talk about whether the new words have the same exact meaning as the original words and why the writer chose the ones he used. Carry the activity further by asking your child to think of words with opposite meanings (antonyms) for the circled word.



Specialized words. Specific sections of the newspaper provide specialized vocabulary that can increase your child's learning in content areas at school. Share an article about the president vetoing a bill with your child. Talk about what veto means – use a dictionary or look it up online if necessary. Extend the conversation by helping your child describe how a bill becomes a law. An article about electing a candidate can lead to a discussion of voting and the election process.



Learning About Social Studies From the News

Newspapers cover a lot of topics: history, geography, politics, economics, civics, government and more. Children learn about these same topics in school during social studies. Parents can use parts of the newspaper to increase their children's knowledge in these important (and often fascinating) school content areas.



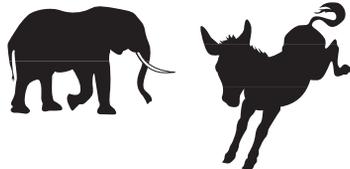
Tell me more. Invite your child to look at the weather forecast with you. Ask him to find other areas of the country where the weather will be the same as yours. See if he can name the states in those areas. Look at article datelines with your child and decide in which hemisphere the countries mentioned are located. Does that mean they are warm or cold countries, or do they have a variety of seasons? Are the countries bordered by oceans? If so, which ones?

A look back. The newspaper often features an article that takes a look back at an important event in history. Read the article with your child and talk about that time.

What was the impact of the event on our country? Why is it an event we recognize and remember? Suggest doing some research on the Internet or at the library to learn more about the time period.

How does that work? The newspaper includes information about Congress and the president that can provide stepping stones for discussion and learning. Perhaps there is a bill Congress would like the president to pass. Ask your child if he knows the route a bill takes before it becomes a law. Research the process together. Find a bill that is being considered by your state legislature or Congress, and track its progress. The Internet provides Web sites where you can do this. Ask a librarian or teacher for help if necessary.

What's your opinion? Ask your teen to read articles on the editorial page that present opposing views on a political issue. Ask her to compare and contrast the views. How much of the articles are fact and how much are opinion? Ask her what her stand on the issue would be after weighing both sides.



What Did I Learn? Using Newspapers for Understanding



Understanding what you read is the point of reading. Many children read well, and fluently, but still have difficulty describing what a passage was about. There are some strategies and skills that assist with understanding what you read. The newspaper provides parents with an opportunity to help their children develop reading comprehension skills and strategies.

What do the pictures say?

Look at a cartoon with your young child. Ask her what she thinks is going on in each panel. What does she think the characters are saying to each other? Why does she think that? Young children can “read” pictures before they can make sense of the words on a page.

What happened when? The cartoons in the comics section of the newspaper also can provide young elementary students with the opportunity to practice putting things in order. Clip out a cartoon and cut the panels apart. Ask your child to put them in order. Older children can practice sequencing using articles from the newspaper that have been cut into sections.

And the purpose is? Having a purpose for reading focuses attention on what is being read. Ask your child to read a recipe that you are trying from the food section of the newspaper. Tell her where you are in the recipe and that you need to know what comes next. Point out an article about a recent sports event and ask your child to tell you how she thinks the writer feels about it. Then ask what in the article makes her think that.

What did that say? Pick an article you think your child will enjoy and read it with him. Stop after every two or three paragraphs and ask your child to summarize what you have read. If he has difficulty, reread the paragraphs together. Talk about any words he might not know. Look them up in a dictionary if you can't figure out the meaning from the surrounding words and the sentence. Then ask him to summarize again. Continue reading and summarizing until you have completed the article.

