Read Well,

Write Well
What’s black and white and READ all over?

It’s the newspaper, of course.

Unfortunately, some people can’t read the newspaper or even the word “STOP” on the big red sign at the end of the road. The inability to read is a problem for millions of people throughout this country.

But even if you think you’ve mastered the skill, think again. Learning to read — and to read well — is a lifelong process that can only be accomplished by, well, reading. Reading books, newspapers, the back of cereal boxes, instructions for a computer game, directions to your friend’s house, and more. Every day!

Besides, it’s fun. Can you imagine what life would be like without being able to read? B-O-R-I-N-G!

Not only that, if we don’t read well, we don’t write well.
And almost everyone knows how important it is to be able to write well, whether we’re sending e-mail to friends or doing a book report.

In this special supplement, you will find newspaper activities designed to help you improve your reading and writing skills.
There are also activities you can do with others to help them with their reading and writing.

At the same time, you’ll learn that reading the newspaper is like opening a brand new book every day. What better way is there to improve your basic skills and keep up with the world around you — all at the same time?

Note to teachers/parents:

Few people would deny the importance of reading. Yet, in this country, one out of every five adults reads at or below a fifth-grade level.

Iliteracy in the United States is, indeed, a problem. And it’s one that’s not easy to solve. But you can make headway, especially when it comes to the children in your charge. By simply reading to them and making reading materials accessible at all times, you can go a long way in helping them become better readers — and better students.

One of the most valuable reading materials you can make available is the newspaper. From the front page to the sports section to the comics, the news and information contained within the pages of the newspaper will not only strengthen a child’s basic skills, it will broaden his knowledge of the world around him.

The activities in this special supplement were written to introduce the newspaper to students, as well as enhance their reading and writing skills. The first half of the supplement is recommended for use at school, while the second half is for home. We encourage you to get the full benefit by using the supplement in both ways.
Skimming the surface

The average daily newspaper contains enough information to fill a book! But most newspapers are written and designed to help you read through them quickly and efficiently.

One way editors do this is by giving each story a headline. Headlines summarize a story to give you an idea of what it is about. If the headline tells about something you’re interested in, you know you want to read the whole story.

Scan your newspaper’s front-page headlines. Make a list below of the subjects covered on the front page today. Put a check mark by the subjects you are interested in reading about.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Pick one of the stories you are interested in and read it through. Underline the main points of the story, as referred to in the headline.

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite each of the front-page headlines as a complete sentence. Talk about why you think headlines are written the way they are.

Activity

In the beginning

Newspaper reporters help their readers by putting the most important information in the lead, or first paragraph(s), of a story. Details are usually added in descending order of importance. This is called the inverted pyramid style of writing.

Find a front-page news story that interests you. Read it through, then, in the inverted pyramid below, fill in the blanks with the most important facts as they appear in the story. Was the writer following the inverted pyramid style?

Activity

A type of newspaper story that doesn’t always follow the inverted pyramid style is the feature story. The feature story is based on facts, like a news story, but it often includes details that add emotional appeal. Feature stories might make you laugh or cry. They might be humorous and entertaining or serious and thought-provoking.

Read a feature story in your newspaper. Does it have emotional appeal? Make a list of the emotions you felt when you read the story.

Activity

Fun Facts

Did you know that the first form of writing didn’t have words? It was made up of picture symbols. This type of writing is called hieroglyphics and is most often associated with the ancient Egyptians.

The Egyptians also developed papyrus, a form of paper, to make writing easier. Before papyrus, they carved their symbols onto stone.

Some hieroglyphics were read from right to left, but others were read from left to right or top to bottom. Inscriptions were written by highly trained men called scribes.

Activity

Look through your newspaper for examples of symbols. (Start with the weather page.) Write a secret message using the symbols and see if a partner can “decode” it.

Activity

Lend a Hand

Help beginning readers learn their letters by sending them on an alphabet scavenger hunt. Using the newspaper, have them find three A’s on the front page, pictures of two things that start with the letter B, and so on. Make it as difficult or as easy as needed.
A picture’s worth a thousand words

Your newspaper is filled with photos — pictures that tell “stories” themselves and pictures that illustrate other stories.

Cut out a photo from the newspaper. (Do not cut out the caption — the information next to the photo that describes what’s happening.) Exchange photos with a partner. Then write down what you think is happening in the picture you’re given. Compare your thoughts with the information supplied in the caption. What conclusions can you draw? Talk it over with your partner.

What’s the point?

Have you ever heard someone talk without really saying anything? If so, you know what it’s like to wonder, “What in the world are you talking about?”

Whether you’re talking or writing, you need a main idea to get your point across. Otherwise, there is no real communication — just words that make no sense.

Reporters, like all good writers, have a knack for making the main idea of a story easy to spot. Everything in the story either leads up to the main idea or explains it. See for yourself.

Find a news story in today’s paper and read it in its entirety. Put the story away and, in the space below, write down the main idea. Does it mimic the headline? What conclusions can you draw?

Writers use details to help explain the main idea of a story. Reread the story used in the previous activity, then underline the details. Talk about what the story would be like without those details.

Practice identifying the main idea. Use comic strips, letters to the editor, advice columns, and other newspaper features.

Lend a hand

Talk about adjectives, words used to describe things, with a new reader. Provide examples, such as “the baby has blue eyes” and “he lives in the big house.” Then help him look through the newspaper advertisements for adjectives. Ask him to cut out the describing words and glue or paste them onto a sheet of paper.
Getting the most out of what you read

Whether you’re reading a newspaper article, a chapter from your favorite book, or the daily science lesson, here are a few things to keep in mind:

• Set the mood. Find a quiet, comfortable place with good lighting. Get rid of as many distractions as possible.

• Ask and answer questions. Make a mental list of the questions you would like to have answered when you read, then be on the lookout for the answers.

• Be flexible. If the subject is more difficult, adjust your reading rate. If you’re reading for pleasure, allow yourself to increase your speed.

• Take breaks. When you start losing concentration, take a breather.

Wordplay

From the time you were a baby, you’ve been storing up words that you understand and use. These words make up your vocabulary. Most people add new words to their vocabulary as they grow and learn. The more words they know, the better they’re able to communicate.

Newspapers, of course, are filled with words. Some of them are familiar; some of them are not. Scan your newspaper for words that are unfamiliar to you. Pick five and, based on how they’re used in the newspaper, write down what you think they mean. Compare your definitions with those in the dictionary.

Find one new word in the newspaper each day. Look up each new word in the dictionary, then write sentences with them. Think of synonyms (words with similar meaning) and antonyms (opposites) for each.

The word *said* is often used by reporters to attribute quotes and information, but there are many other words that can be used. Look through the newspaper for examples of such words. Make a list below of words reporters use instead of *said*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read a newspaper comic strip to a beginning reader. Ask her to tell you the main idea of the strip. Together, find a comic strip that tells the main idea in pictures instead of words.</td>
<td><strong>It’s Alive!</strong></td>
<td><strong>Oh No!</strong></td>
</tr>
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![Image of a child reading a newspaper]

![Image of a baby and a newspaper comic strip]
Maggie and Tim turned the corner onto Bridwell Street. When they did, something stopped Tim dead in his tracks.

"Who would be brave enough to move in the old Gibson mansion?" Tim gasped and pointed at a big van parked on the street. Two men in blue coveralls were unloading the last boxes in front of a giant house that stood on top of a hill. A row of trash cans and recycling bins were lined up on the street, and they were filled with old things from inside the Gibson place. He picked up an old buckle and then tossed it back into the box.

"Whoever it is," Maggie said, "I hope they have kids our age!"

The Gibson Mansion was three stories tall and the empty black windows reminded Tim of giant eyes staring down at him. Tim got goose bumps just looking at it, but he would never admit that to his best friend. He had to hurry to catch up with Maggie.

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Maggie stood on the sidewalk, looking at all the things that had been unloaded by the movers. "No kids," Maggie said.

"How can you tell?" Tim asked.

Maggie pointed to the front yard. It was filled with furniture and boxes for the house. "Do you see any bicycles or toys?" she asked. "There’s not a wagon or a basketball or a single thing that belongs to a kid anywhere."

Tim shook his head. "I guess you’re right. Besides, no kid would ever agree to live in that old place."

"Of course, I’m right," Maggie said. "After all, I am planning to be a great detective when I grow up."

"Then maybe someday you can use your great detective skills to rid this place of the ghost of Christopher Columbus," Tim suggested.

"You don’t really believe that old ghost story, do you?" Maggie asked. "After all, have you seen a ghost floating around the chimney of the Gibson Mansion?"

Tim shook his head.

"Have you ever seen ghostly images of the Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria sailing down Bridwell Street?" Maggie asked him.

"No," Tim admitted.

"Then what makes you believe the Gibson Mansion could be haunted by the ghost of a great explorer?" Maggie asked her friend.

"Because my brother told me," Tim said.

"And my parents said they believed it."

"I think it’s just a story they made up to scare us," Maggie said. "And I can prove it!"

Tim grabbed his friend’s arm. "You can’t go in there," he warned her.

"I don’t have to go in there to prove it," she said. "I have another plan and you’re going to help me."

"What are you planning to do?" Tim asked.

Maggie grinned. "We’re going to do what every good detective does," she said. "We’re going to search for evidence!"

Tim gulped. He didn’t want to have anything to do with hunting for a ghost, but he agreed to meet Maggie the next day in front of the library. "Why the library?" he asked.

Maggie winked. "Trust me," she said. "The library is the perfect place to start our ghost hunt!"

The next day the kids were surrounded by stacks of old newspapers in the library basement. "Mrs. Johnson was nice to show us all these papers about Mr. Gibson," Maggie said. "I’m sure they hold the key to the Columbus mystery."
Tim sighed and picked up a dusty newspaper. “I wish they had these on the computer. It’d sure be a lot easier.”

Maggie sneezed and nodded. “And a lot less dusty.” The kids started reading about the man who used to live in the big old house on Bridwell Street.

“I wish I had known him,” Tim said after a few minutes. “He traveled to China and Egypt. I bet he had cool stories to tell.”

“He did!” Maggie jumped up from the basement floor and flashed a picture of Mr. Gibson. “In this story he tells how he was the last in a long line of descendants of Christopher Columbus. He spent years collecting stuff about Columbus.”

“That’s probably how the Christopher Columbus ghost story got started,” Tim said.

“I know it is,” Maggie said. “I bet he had pictures and mini ships all over that big house. It was probably a museum to Christopher Columbus.”

“It’s a shame that no one will ever see it,” Tim said.

“Oh my gosh,” Maggie yelled. “We have to hurry!”

Tim raced after Maggie as she ran from the library. He didn’t stop running until she reached the front of the old Gibson house. A big trash truck had just pulled up in front of the mansion.

“Stop!” Maggie screamed to the garbage collectors.

“Have you gone nuts?” Tim asked as Maggie blocked the trash cans.

Maggie shook her head and spoke to the garbage collectors. “You can’t take these cans,” she explained. “They hold valuable things.”

One of the big burly men lifted a metal lid off one of the cans. He poked at an old banana peel. “Looks really valuable to me,” he said with a laugh.

Maggie’s face turned bright red. “Couldn’t you just wait until next week to pick this up?”

The garbage collectors shrugged and took off in their big truck. Maggie patted her head inside one of the big cans. Tim patted Maggie on the shoulder. “I think you’ve finally flipped. Why are you protecting trash?”

Maggie smiled. “A good detective never gives her secrets away.”

One week later, Maggie and Tim were back at the library again. This time they weren’t in the basement. They were in the main hall, looking at the new exhibit on display. It was all about Christopher Columbus. There was a painting, old books, ships in bottles, old money, and even an old buckle. “I can’t believe all this almost got thrown away,” Mrs. Johnson said.

“It would have if Maggie hadn’t been such a good detective,” Tim said.

Now you’re both famous,” Mrs. Johnson said, adding the last newspaper clipping to the exhibit. It said: FAST THINKING FRIENDS SAVE COLLECTION; RID TOWN OF GHOSTS.

— The End —

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Read together, succeed together

There are many ways to make reading a part of everyday life. The newspaper is an easy place to start. Each day, it’s filled with information that not only keeps you up to date but entertains and enlightens. Try these activities with your family:

**Activity**

Sit down and look through your newspaper. Make note of the various sections and the types of news and information included in each. (Don’t forget to check the index.) Talk about how a newspaper reader should know what interests him or her and how to find those subjects in the newspaper. Then ask each family member to talk about the things they would like to read about. Compare your thoughts.

**Activity**

Have each family member read a story in his favorite section of the newspaper. Then talk about the stories. Take turns sharing your thoughts and listening to each other’s ideas.

**Activity**

Make a game out of newspaper reading. Take turns picking an object in a newspaper picture or advertisement. Provide clues about that object, then have the others search through the newspaper until someone solves the mystery. Or send your family on a scavenger hunt. Make up a list of things found in the newspaper, then see who can locate them first. (Example: Find a television show scheduled for 8 p.m.; locate a comic strip about an animal; identify an advertised item under $10; and so on.)

**Fun Facts**

The 26-letter alphabet used in writing the English language is called the Roman alphabet. But the Romans didn’t develop it. They just put the final touches on it. Our writing system had actually been developing for thousands of years. In fact, the English alphabet can be traced to the symbols used by the ancient Egyptians. The Semites of Syria and Palestine, the Phoenicians, the people of Cyprus, and the Greeks all had a hand in the development of our modern alphabet, too. The Romans perfected it about A.D. 114.

To get an idea of how our alphabet came about, consider the evolution of the letter A below.

**Activity**

Can the front page of today’s newspaper. Read the headlines and lead paragraphs, take a look at charts and graphs, and skim through the photo captions. What did you find out about the stories? Discuss.

**Activity**

Pick one of the stories on the front page and, in the space below, write a summary based on your preview.

Now, read the story in its entirety. How much did you already know about the story? Discuss your thoughts with a parent or sibling. Talk about how previewing is helpful in reading other materials.

**Lend a Hand**

Show beginning readers the weather symbols in your newspaper. Have them cut out the symbols and paste them onto a piece of construction paper. Ask them to write the appropriate word for each symbol. For fun, have them draw their own symbols for different types of weather.

**Coming attractions**

When you go to the movies, you often see previews — announcements about coming attractions. Previews help you decide which movies you would like to see next.

The technique of previewing comes in handy with reading, too. With the newspaper, for instance, you can preview the headlines, lead paragraphs, and photo captions to decide which stories you want to read.
Picking favorites

Almost everyone remembers a favorite book from childhood. With your family, talk about your favorites. Then complete the following activity:

**Activity**

Select a favorite book to read together as a family. Set aside a regular time for reading and discussion. Once you’ve completed the book, write a newspaper-style review. Would you recommend it to others?

*See tips for writing a book review below.

Tips for writing a book review

• As you’re reading, keep a journal of your thoughts. When it comes time to write your review, you’ll have notes to refer to.

• Don’t be afraid to share your thoughts and feelings. If you truly enjoyed the book, your goal should be to persuade others to want to read it. If not, you’ll want to tell your readers why.

• Remember to answer these questions:
  — What is the book about? Provide a few details that will give readers an idea of the book’s contents.
  — What do I like — or dislike — about the book? You can write about the action or suspense, the main characters, the ending — whatever it is you like or dislike.
  — What is the book’s theme? Is there a message the author is trying to convey? Why did the author write this book?

These tips can also be applied to writing regular book reports for school projects.

Adapted from Writer’s Express by Dave Kemper, Ruth Nathan, and Patrick Sebranek

Lend a Hand

Help beginning readers increase their vocabulary. Have them search the newspaper headlines for groups of words, such as color words, food words, weather words, etc. You could also do this activity with parts of speech — nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs. Have them make a collage for each group of words they find.

Volunteer for egg hunt

By Karen McCann-West

Herald-Leader Staff Writer

The Palomar Neighbors will have their annual Easter Egg Hunt at 11 a.m. today. The hunt is open to children 12 and younger. Adult helpers are needed for the hunt.

Forecasting the future

People rely on the weather forecast to help them make daily decisions, such as how to plan their schedule and what type of clothes to wear. That’s why the weather report is a popular feature in most newspapers.

Your newspaper’s weather report not only tells you what to expect, it provides a glimpse of the previous day’s weather. If you want to know how cold it was yesterday or how much rain was recorded, the newspaper has the answer.

**Activity**

Pretend you are a television weather person. Find your newspaper’s weather information and turn it into a report for today’s newscast. Act out your report for an audience of family members. If you have a video camera, tape the performance.

Today’s weather report:

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________________________________________________________________________
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________________________________________________________________________

Now, find a weather-related story in the newspaper. Read the story through, then talk about the causes and effects of the weather being reported. Were you or someone you know affected?
History in the making

It has been said that today’s news is tomorrow’s history. Each day, stories published about the government, health and medicine, the economy, and more tell about history-making events.

With your family, look through the main news section of your newspaper. Pick one story about an event you think will make history. Then, below, summarize the story as it might one day appear in a history book.

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In context

When you read, you sometimes come across words you haven’t seen before. Take the following sentence as an example:

The sequins on her dress scintillated under the ballroom’s glittering lights.

You might be able to guess the meaning of “scintillated” from the context, the words that surround it. In this sentence, the dress has sequins, which are shiny things. The setting is a ballroom with bright lights. What does a shiny thing do when exposed to lights? It gives off flashes of light. So “scintillated” means “sparkled.”

Find the front page of your newspaper, looking for unfamiliar words. Work with a parent or sibling to make a list of those words below. Then go back and see if you can guess what each word means by clues in the context.

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A little advice goes a long way

Newspaper advice columns are among the most-read newspaper features. They can be informative — and entertaining!

Find an advice column in your newspaper. With a parent’s help, find and cut out a letter seeking advice. DO NOT read the columnist’s reply. Read the letter, then write your own words of advice in the space below. Compare your reply to the columnist’s. Was your advice similar?

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________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Now, grab a partner — a parent, sibling, or friend. One of you will write a letter seeking help for a make-believe problem. The other will write a letter offering advice. When you’re finished, switch roles.

________________________________________________________________________

Read a short story from the sports section to a new reader. When you’re finished, ask her to draw a picture about the story. Display the picture for others to see.
Broadening your horizons

A great way to increase your vocabulary is to use a thesaurus, that handy book of words and their synonyms. Synonyms, you will recall, are words that have similar meanings. For example, if you looked up the word pretty in a thesaurus, here are some of the synonyms you might find:

lovely, beautiful, comely, fair, good-looking

Try your hand at using a thesaurus. In the space below, list five words found in newspaper headlines. Look up the words in a thesaurus and write synonyms for each.

________________ ___________________________________
__________________________________ ___________________________________
___________________________________

Find a comic strip in the newspaper. Change as many words as possible without changing the original tone or meaning of the strip. (Use that thesaurus!) Share your revised comic strip with a parent or other adult.

Parts, parts, and more parts

Learning about the parts of speech might not be your favorite thing to do, but it doesn’t have to be drudgery. Here’s an easy and fun way to become more familiar with those pesky nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs:

Cut out several advertisements in today’s newspaper. In each ad, identify the nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs. Remember: Nouns are words that name a person, place, or thing. Adjectives are words that describe the nouns. Verbs show what happens. And adverbs tell the way something happens.

Advertisements often contain many adjectives. Pick out your favorite adjective and design an ad for it.

Fact or opinion? You be the judge!

A fact is a statement that can be proven true. An opinion is something believed to be true.

Newspapers contain both facts and opinions. News and feature stories must be factual and void of the writer’s opinion. Editorials, letters to the editor, and columns can contain opinion. They might also include facts to support those opinions.

Can you tell the difference?

Turn to the editorial pages in your newspaper. Find an editorial, an opinion piece written by the newspaper’s management. (You’ll find editorials on the opinion pages; check the index for help in locating them.) Underline the facts contained in the editorial in red and the opinions in blue. Were the opinions supported by facts? Discuss your thoughts with a parent or another adult.

Hey, parents!

Studies have shown that when parents are involved in their children’s education, the children do better in school. That’s especially true when it comes to reading. According to the organization Reading Is Fundamental,* your children’s reading skills and enthusiasm for reading will improve by simply taking the time to talk to them, listen to them, and read to them.

Here are a few tips from RIF for reading aloud to your children:

• Read slowly but with feeling. Add sound effects if appropriate.
• Pause to give the child time to look at pictures or ask questions.
• Listen to yourself as you read. Are you speaking clearly and loudly? Try to pick a quiet place to read so you can hear yourself.
• Enjoy yourself and the story. The listener will enjoy the story more if they can hear the enjoyment in your voice.