

For children Grade 3 (and younger)

The Word Walk: A Fun Family Literacy Activity to Help Your Child Become a Better Reader

Dear parents and other adult family members:

Words are all around! They are not just in books. In fact, your neighborhood is filled with words! Words to read, to say, and to sing. Take a special Word Walk with your child around your neighborhood. The Word Walk is one way you can help your child become a better reader.

In addition to reading books with your child, there are many other ways to help your child become a stronger reader. For example, children also learn to read by singing songs and by listening to and telling stories.

You can do the Word Walk around your neighborhood any time it is safe. Bring along as many family members as you like! Summer is an especially important time to explore words with your child. By exploring words together in the summer, you can help your child remember the important reading skills he or she learned in school.

During your family Word Walk, you can use all the languages that you speak at home. Also, if you have younger children who are not reading words yet, you can point out specific letters when you look at words together. You can ask your younger children to tell you the “sounds” of the letters.

Remember to bring a pencil and this paper on your Word Walk. And have fun!

OUT ON THE WALK

Checklist: Remember, you may not find all these places, but you may even find new ones!

Library – Your family can borrow books for free at the public library. All you need is a library card. Ask the librarian how to get one. Many libraries have special free reading activities just for children over the summer, like story hours or summer reading clubs. Ask the librarian about these, too. Find the special section of the library that is the children’s area. Find a book to read or look at with your child right now. On the line below, write down the name of the book:

Stores – Ask your child: *What is the name of the store? Look at the signs and labels. Can you name some of the items for sale?*

Restaurant/coffee shop – Ask your child: *What flavors of ice cream do they have? See if they have takeout menus to read at home.*

Community center – Many community centers have special reading activities and events for children over the summer. See if you can pick up a schedule to read at home. Maybe you can sign up your child right now for a summer time reading activity.

Playground – Ask your child: *Can you name the different things you see on the playground? What do you use to climb?*

A garden – Ask your child: *What are the names of some of the plants and trees?*

Bookstore – Some bookstores that sell children’s books also let families read books with their children when they are in the store. Ask your child: *Is there a special book you like a lot?* Maybe your family can also find this book at the library. Write down the name of the book on the line below:

Street signs and traffic signs – Ask your child: *What do they say? What shapes are they?*

Did you find other places with words? List the words here.

ON THE WAY HOME

Storytelling – You can make up a true story about what you saw and learned on your walk, and ask your child to repeat it; you can ask your child to make up a pretend or silly story about your walk; or you can share a special family story on the way home. You may have other ideas for storytelling, too.

Singing – You and your child can make up a song about all the places you saw on your walk or a song that uses some of the words you found on your walk. You may also have a song your family likes to sing, in English or Spanish or your special household language, and you can sing this song on your way home.

AFTER THE WALK

With your child, you can draw a map of all the places you went to in your neighborhood. Or you and your child can make a list of your child’s favorite words from the walk. If you collected things to read, like books, menus, or schedules, you or other family members can read them with your child now or later.

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Harvard Family Research Project (www.hfrp.org)

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