

# abekamazing

We make it easy so you can make it amazing. | *At Home*

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learning at  
home

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Abekamazing is a service of Abeka in Pensacola, Florida. Our mission is to support and equip parents, students, and teachers by providing amazing Pre-K through Grade 12 academic resources based upon biblical values. We're here to help homeschooling families and Christian schools give their students the knowledge and skills they need.

**Senior Editor:** Tabby Hershberger  
**Contributing Writers:** Leah Meyer, Dr. Phyllis Rand,  
Bethany Russell, Melissa Troutman

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# Loving life in the Homeschool ZONE



For the last four years, I've written about homeschooling from outside the Homeschool Zone. My youngest son and I recently got passes to reenter along with many of you.

Although my heart is overflowing, God's open door has also opened a few concerns. The biggest one: can I still do this? I'm comforted by the reminder that *I never did it before*. It's God's direction and His enablement that does the real work in a child's mind and heart. We just have to implement His plan.

***Well, if that's all it is . . .***

One perfect God-size plan, a loving-but-flawed mama, her handsome-yet-imperfect son: no wonder I'm concerned. This isn't a recipe gone wrong or a Pinterest fail; this is my child! Consider these two points:

***Abekamazing is here to help!***

This issue is divided into three zones. If you're overwhelmed, read everything in the Motivational Zone. If you'd like a



# Something New at *Abekamazing*

system, check out the zone on strategies. If you need an academic resource, the Learning Zone is packed with ten pages. Pair this with my second point.

## God is faithful.

Though I sometimes need to be reminded, He's proven Himself faithful in my life. Think about His faithfulness in yours. God's compelling faithfulness has the power to realign our minds and reignite our hearts.

It also provides ideal motivation and confidence for life in the Homeschool Zone! ■



Tabby and her son Tucker enjoy life in the Homeschool Zone.

*Tabby*

Tabby Hershberger  
Senior Editor

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It's been said that a picture is worth a *thousand* words. But sometimes even a picture is not enough to express a story's full meaning, especially in the realm of schooling at home.

That's why this issue of *Abekamazing* includes something brand new.

It's designed to provide encouragement beyond our printed stories and even their associated pictures. It's meant to capture the emotion behind what's happening with the real families portrayed. And in doing so, we hope to encourage you a *thousand* times more!

## Ann C. from California

We first saw Ann C.'s picture on an Abeka social media post. We knew we wanted to use it, but after talking with Ann's mom, it became clear that Ann's cherub face was only the beginning. This mother-daughter duo had just experienced a wonderful victory. With her mother's help, Ann had learned how to read! We asked for a phone recording; we wanted to enjoy the moment, too! Their mother-daughter moment was captured perfectly using the QR code on p. 14.

To hear Ann C. read, look for this new QR code on p. 14.





# New School Year Motivators

Two of the trickiest parts of learning at home are getting your kids on board initially and keeping them on track when interruptions occur. Pair these expert ideas with a prize-filled reading adventure game, and you'll have the motivation you need for a successful start!



## Linked Inspiration

At the beginning of the school year we make a paper chain with 170 links corresponding with 170 lessons. My son tears off one link of his paper chain each day he finishes a lesson. At first it's overwhelming to see, but fun to take apart one completed lesson at a time. By mid-year my son can see how much progress he has made, and how much more he needs to do to complete the school year.

—Carrie H., TX

## Mental Motivation

I plan a day off every few weeks because I get behind on housework during the school year. I just can't get everything done, but it's amazing what can be accomplished in a planned, full day off every two weeks! Call it a mental health day if you need an excuse. Education is important and requires focus, but so does housework. This way I do what I need to every school day, and during my mental health day, I catch up.

—Tabitha H., NE



## New Book Celebration

When introducing my children to their new school books, I try to build excitement about the new year by:

- **Pointing to certain chapters and linking them to future field trips.** For instance, "You'll be learning about the parts of a flower this year, so we're going to our botanical gardens in April."
- **Connecting our family menu to help them taste what they'll learn.** For instance, "You'll be learning about the Civil War; we're going to make hardtack for one of our snacks."
- **Planning our vacation around places in their books.** For instance, "I researched the Underground Railroad that you'll learn about this year and found that it's not that far from Grandma's house. We're adding that stop to our vacation."

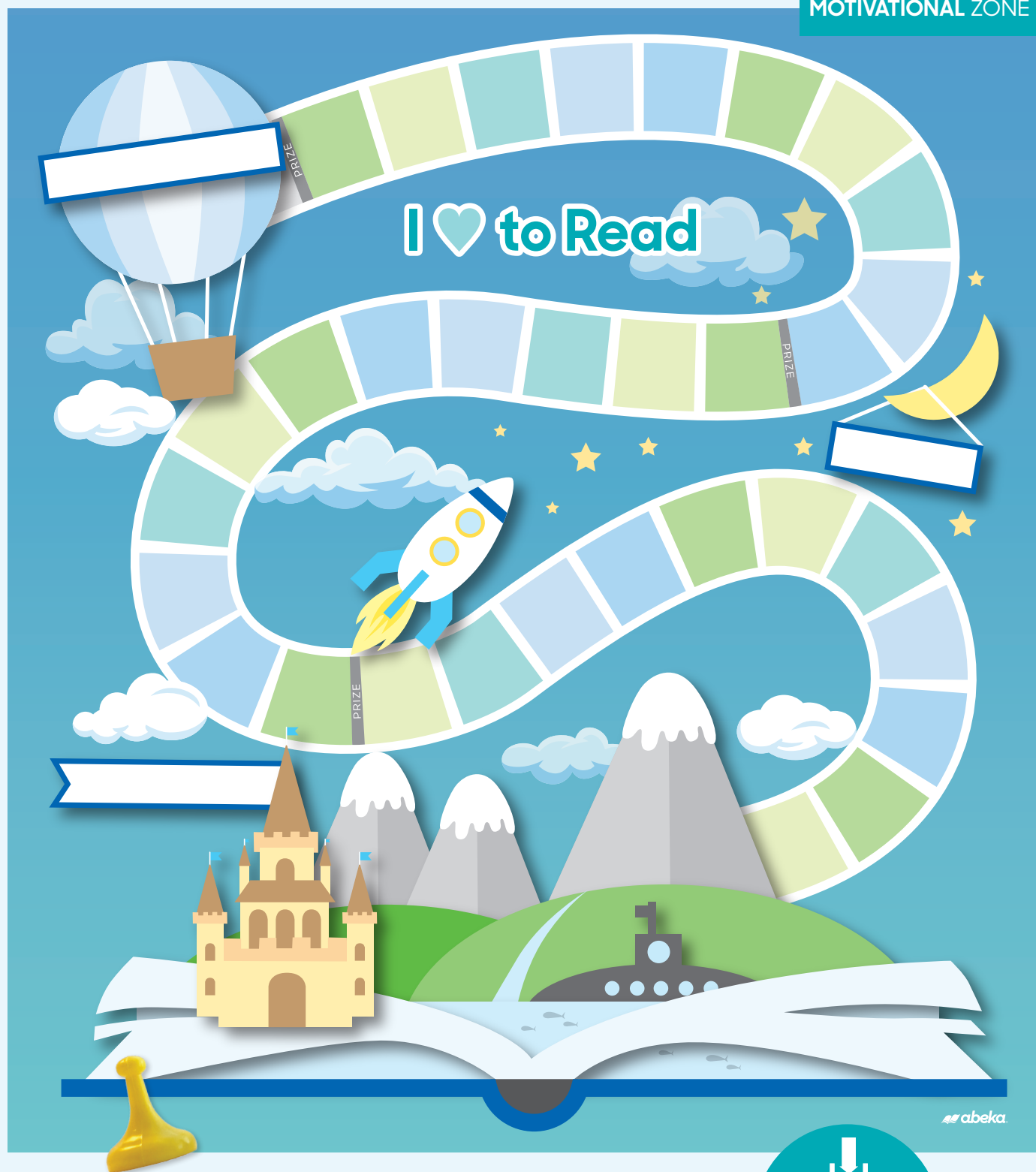
—Paula H., VA

## Interruption Observation

Accommodating interruptions is part of the beauty of learning at home, but having a "get back on track" plan has helped my family more than anything else. I try to notice my family's speed of interaction after the interruption. Is everyone excited after watching the ambulance race down the road or jumping up and down after visiting with unexpected company? If so, I try to dial back the pace to learning speed with 15 minutes of slower music or exercise that ends with breathing. If a meal or snack is not far off, we break early and resume our schedule after that. We've also learned that music and exercise helps to speed things up. I keep selections from slow and fast music and exercise routines on hand.

—Mona P., IN





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free reading game.  
[abeka.com/  
ReadingGame](http://abeka.com/ReadingGame)



# Learning while in the HOSPITAL

by Leah Meyer



Jess Winkler remembers praying over her oldest son David when he was just a baby. "With tears in my eyes, I thanked the Lord for entrusting him to me. I recommitted him to God and reminded myself that David never truly belonged to me. God placed this precious child in my care to love, nurture, train, and lead to Christ," she recalls.

Jess and husband Jon decided early on that they would homeschool their future children—

David (7), Caleb (4), and Mackenzie (2). "I fell in love with the idea of being home with my children every day! It isn't always easy, but it has been well worth it," she says. "We knew that Abeka would give our children exactly what they needed both educationally and for their spiritual growth."

The couple did not expect their oldest son to start second grade in a hospital bed! In August 2019, David contracted Staph aureus, and it grew in his left femur bone. Normally, doctors would have done surgery to scrape out the infection, but David developed a large blood clot in his leg and hip. "The infection latched onto the blood clot and entered his bloodstream. There were pieces of the blood clot that broke off and traveled to his lungs causing acute respiratory failure," Jess explains. "He was intubated and sedated. He was also in septic shock."

Jessica remembers feeling helpless, yet still knowing that God was in control. "When the doctors were perplexed, when more difficult developments kept coming, when my child had two IV poles and a full rack of meds pumping into him, I still felt such a peace. It truly was the 'peace that passeth all understanding.' It's something that no human mind can comprehend—something that can only come from a loving Father."



Cousin  
Lindsey was  
a huge help!





With Jess at the hospital with David around the clock and Jon still working at the local sheriff's department and visiting when possible, the couple needed help. Their 14-year-old niece, Lindsey (also an Abeka homeschool student), volunteered to spend the evenings with David's siblings: Caleb and Mackenzie. Church family and friends showed up with meals, handled household chores, and sent encouraging cards and gifts!

Once David was stabilized, Jon and Jess discovered that his road to recovery would be a long one. "We had to schedule our days around his doctor appointments and therapy sessions," Jess said. "We watched our Abeka videos in the car, and we sat in many waiting rooms going over special sounds and practicing combinations," she remembers.

All told, David had a 30-day stay in the hospital, a couple months of physical therapy and antibiotics, as well as months of doctor visits and checkups after that. Today, David is almost back to full health, playing with his siblings and enjoying homeschooling.

"That very first night in the hospital," remembers Jess, "we claimed Psalm 61:2. The verse is about going to the Rock when your heart is overwhelmed. We were definitely overwhelmed, but we learned that God is greater than any infection, illness, or hospital stay."

It's clear that even though God placed David in his parents' care, he was actually safe in God's care all along! ■



JESS'S SIMPLE LIFE TIPS



## When the **UNEXPECTED** HAPPENS

### ► **Keep things simple**

Use the slow cooker/grill; feed everyone protein and lots of vegetables to keep them healthy and strong!

### ► **Focus on the big picture**

Family and health are more important than a clean house and fancy meals.

### ► **Multitask**

Fold the laundry while listening to an older child read, or clean the kitchen while the little ones play.

### ► **Stay on track**

Keep life as normal as possible, but don't stretch yourself too thin.

### ► **Claim a specific Bible promise**

Claiming Psalm 61:2 helped our overwhelmed hearts.



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HOMESCHOOL  
FAMILY?**

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[amazinghomeschool@abeka.com](mailto:amazinghomeschool@abeka.com).

# Sewing the Best HOMESCHOOL Pattern

by Melissa Troutman

People often comment about the face side (sewing term for the finished side of a garment) of Jill Coppock's homeschool family: "Six kids and a successful online sewing business—how do you do it?" Jill and husband Patrick's response exposes the stitches holding their family together: "We don't do it," she says. After years of alterations, the Coppock family now follows a pattern.

## Recognize Your Top Stitch

Jill recognizes God as the One holding everything together; He's their family's top stitch. "We're not alone; the Lord is with us," says Jill. She prays over every pattern design and credits God with any sewing or homeschool success. She knows that if she doesn't begin with a biblical perspective and the top stitch of reliance on God, her own stitches will come undone.

## Appreciate Your Tacking

Large stitches of tacking hold pieces of cloth together the way a godly, supportive spouse helps keep life in place. "My husband is a born teacher," says Jill. "He takes over the homeschooling during the high school years." Patrick also tacks Jill's business. It was his idea to transition from selling garments to selling patterns. Using his background in math and computer programming, he began grading her patterns and putting them into PDFs, freeing Jill to design and sew.

## Unify the Nap

Nap refers to a fabric's texture requiring that all pieces be cut in the same direction. Family unity is an easy parallel. "We do my online business, JillyAtlanta, together," she says. "Each child plays a certain part: Packy (20) and Pledger (14) help make and grade patterns; David (18) and William (13) package items and run business errands. Naomi (11) and Olive (8) model garments. There's no way I could do this without them," Jill says. Everyone also helps with household responsibilities. "We fold clothes and fix dinner together," Jill shares. "It's a mindset of 'doing everything as one' and not having different lives."







## Make Use of God's Lining

Though unseen from the outside, a garment's lining often makes or breaks a pattern's fit. God's lining of miraculous friendship has made everything fit together. Jill debuted her first items online in 2013. None of them sold. "It was horrible," she remembers. She knew she needed higher-quality photos. God sent a photographer friend to Jill's church. In exchange for sewing, her new friend not only took pictures, but also taught Jill how to take her own. With new photos, Jill's business took off.

## Hem in Your Priorities

Life can fray or unravel completely without a good hem of established

priorities. Patrick and Jill agree that the children's personal and academic needs come first. "If those things are satisfied," Jill says, "then pattern-making comes. The Lord called me first to be a mom," she says. That means that sometimes the Coppock family has to say no to good things like friendly get-togethers or a Los Angeles fashion show. Jill has learned, "Balance only comes when the Lord is in your life and is prompting you about what to do. If every day we do what the Lord has for us, He'll give the increase."

## Jill's Pattern for Life

Any mom can use Jill's pattern: recognize the top stitch, appreciate your tacking, unify the nap, make use of God's lining, and hem in your priorities. She adds, "Normal people can do extraordinary things when the Lord is the One really doing it." Perhaps Jill's strategy is so successful because she's sewing God's pattern for her life. ■

## 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS

### Abeka Academy Video Manual

[abeka.com/SchedulePattern](http://abeka.com/SchedulePattern)

#### Class Schedule

The following is a typical class schedule for English 8 with suggested times for participation.

1. **Pre-video Activities**—Check homework and give any quizzes before turning on the video for the day's lesson, unless the Daily Guides instruct otherwise.

a. **Homework Check**—Begin each day with a five-minute homework check. The written homework usually consists of grammar exercises for reinforcement along with written practice of spelling and vocabulary words for

memorization. You may wish to have homework completed in a spiral notebook so that it can be used as a study tool. While your student completes the homework check activity you assign from the Daily Guides, spot-check completed homework for accuracy. (Although he may not completely understand a question, he should attempt to answer every question.) The homework assignment should require no more than 25–35 minutes to complete. If your student consistently takes longer than the recommended time, suggest efficient study methods for him.

English 8 TS

#### Subject Description





# Smart Cookie

## Teaching Your Child Critical Thinking

by Tabby Hershberger

**M**y ninth winter it snowed several feet making it imperative that my sister and I join the neighborhood kids outside! Unfortunately, we could only find one pair of mittens. And no matter how we pleaded, Mama would not let us go outside without them.

Then it hit me. Wool mittens do for hands what stockings do for feet. Would Mama let us cut the feet off a pair of wool stockings and rubber band them to my wrists? Not only did she agree, but she also applauded the idea! That was the birth of Mama's *Smart Cookie Award*. Though intangible, it went back-and-forth between my sister and me any time one of us had a clever solution.

### Know What the Scholars Say

Intuitive parents have always taught their children how to problem-solve. Though this skill is alive in our homes, it's not a bad idea to add its terms and background.

- Thinking is divided into 6 levels.
- Benjamin Bloom suggested these 6 categories in the mid-1950s.
- The levels are called Bloom's Taxonomy.

- The terms describing these degrees of learning were recently updated and are used in this article.<sup>1</sup>

### Use What You Know

There's no getting around the facts. Critical thinking begins with a foundation of knowledge. Why must our children memorize the multiplication facts? *Because facts fuel our thinking!* Once facts are **remembered** and **understood**, they can be **applied** to **analyze**, **evaluate**, and **create**. These bold terms are Bloom's six levels of learning beginning with the most basic level of remembering and ending with creation.

Want to test your curriculum to see if it fosters critical thinking? Look for words expressing the **remembering category** (such as *list, describe, locate*) in your young child's test and quiz instructions. See if his evaluations reflect the **understanding level** (with words like *summarize, classify, explain*). A good curriculum will encourage your older child to **apply** what he's learned (by asking him to *organize, practice, implement*); **analyze** information (by *comparing, outlining, calculating*); and **evaluate**

ideas (by *hypothesizing, critiquing, and judging*). Finally, your mature child should be required to use what he knows to **create** something new (*design, construct, plan*). Abeka's managing editor Amy Yohe put it this way: "Begin with knowledge [putting facts into the mind]; move toward understanding [using the facts in practical ways], and constantly infuse with wisdom [filtering understanding through a biblical worldview]."

### Integrate What You Learn

Don't allow your child's thinking to peak in the **remember/understand levels**. Help him advance to the **application** of what he's learned. This is where the real work begins not only for children but also for parents. **Applying and analyzing** information takes time. It's filled with mistakes, trials, and tests. It's difficult because it requires supportive guidance rather than parental directive. Parents must step back and wait. Children need time to test and think. For parents who enjoy doing everything for their kids, this can be a challenge.

Compare critical thinking to physical exercise. You cannot do physical exercise for your child if he is to get



the maximum benefit. His muscles will only become *stronger as he lifts the weights himself*. Exercising the mind is no different. But how is this accomplished practically? A good place to start is by setting the right atmosphere as my mom did with her Smart Cookie award.

- Applaud your children's attempts at critical thinking even when they don't work.
- Model what it looks like to *fail well*. Children need enough confidence to believe that failure is just one idea closer to success.
- Encourage brainstorming, educated guesses, and inference.

- Model objective evaluation. Own your own biases.
- Ask perceptive questions. (p. 18)

## Create Something New

Creating is the highest level of thinking. It's not surprising that our Creator's thoughts are higher than our thoughts. How can we help our children use what they've learned to create? It's simple, really. Teach a rich foundation of facts and truth, and whisper support from the sidelines!

- Provide strategies, not answers, for overcoming setbacks. Ask your child if expressing it differently might help: drawing it, acting it,

writing it? Perhaps starting at the end (reverse engineering) will make a helpful difference?

- Help your child hone ancillary skills necessary for critical thinking like the art of summary. After each church message, challenge him to summarize the speaker's points.

From mittens made out of stockings, I learned two things: that my mom is the *real* Smart Cookie and that **critical thinking provides solutions.** ■

<sup>1</sup> [tophat.com/Blog/Blooms-taxonomy-words](http://tophat.com/Blog/Blooms-taxonomy-words).

remember  
understand  
apply  
analyze  
evaluate  
create



# The LOVE of Reading

by Leah Meyer

A survey by the National Reading Report Card revealed that while 54% of fourth graders read something for pleasure every day, that percentage drops to 30% in eighth grade, and even further to 19% in twelfth grade.<sup>1</sup>

For the busy mom doing her best to keep multiple children fed, focused, and academically on track, cultivating a love of reading might fade into the background. But even students who have received an excellent foundation in phonics need to *continue reading to fall in love with it*. Here is what reading a book does for any reader:

## Improves spelling, vocabulary, writing, and grammar skills

Reading is an informal way to reinforce grammar and spelling rules. It also helps solidify proper grammar and syntax. Plus, reading a variety of books exposes your child to many writing styles. Over time, a reader will begin to develop his own writing voice as he mimics author styles.

## Develops advanced analytical thinking skills

Reading helps develop strong analytical skills needed for high school and beyond. As your child reads, he learns to follow more complicated plots and understand more evolved characters. Without realizing it, your child automatically starts critiquing storylines and analyzing characters as he tries to figure out what happens next.

## Stimulates the brain

The same way playing a sport stimulates and strengthens your child's muscles, reading develops the neurological pathways of the brain. *Reading is like P.E. for*

*the brain*. In fact, a study conducted by neuroscientist George Berns found that reading regularly has lingering effects on the brain. "Even though the participants were not actually reading the novel while they were in the scanner, they retained this heightened connectivity," he said. "We call that a 'shadow activity,' almost like a muscle memory."<sup>2</sup>

Hear Ann C. use the phonics she learned to read.





## Instills valuable, life-long character traits

C. S. Lewis once said, "Since it is so likely that [children] will meet cruel enemies, let them at least have heard of brave knights and heroic courage. Otherwise you are making their destiny not brighter but darker."<sup>3</sup>

Through stories, readers get an up-close view of heroes and villains, antiheroes and altruistic individuals, static and dynamic characters, and good versus evil. They will learn what makes a character endearing or disliked. More importantly, they learn to develop empathy for the struggles the characters face and discernment in analyzing the character's motives.

## Develops the imagination

Reading unleashes the imagination and makes anything possible. It transports the reader to other cultures and other time period. It also provides the tools and skills needed to fuel the imagination. ■

<sup>1</sup> Jim Trelease, *The Read-Aloud Handbook* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Carol Clark, "A Novel Look at How Stories May Change the Brain," Emory University (accessed November 9, 2019), <http://esciencecommons.blogspot.com/2013/12/a-novel-look-at-how-stories-may-change.html>.

<sup>3</sup> C. S. Lewis, *On Stories and Other Essays on Literature* (New York: HarperCollins, 1982), 59.

# Parents Can Foster a LOVE of READING

Beyond the *skill of reading*, it takes a parent to encourage the *love of reading*. But how? Begin by reading aloud to your child.

## EVEN LISTENING HELPS THE BRAIN

"Reading aloud to kids has clear cognitive benefits. For example, brain scans show that hearing stories strengthens the part of the brain associated with visual imagery, story comprehension, and word meaning. One study found that kindergarten children who were read to at least three times a week had a 'significantly greater phonemic awareness than did children who were read to less often.'"

Deborah Farmer Kris, *Why Reading Aloud to Kids Helps Them Thrive*, (accessed April 23, 2020) [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org).

## BOOKS FORM TASTES

"Good taste matters so much when it comes to books for children and young adults. Books tell children what to expect, what life is, what culture is, how we are expected to behave—what the spectrum is. Books don't just cater to tastes. They form tastes."

Meghan Gurden, *Imprimis*. July/August (Volume 42, Number 7).

## WE MUST INTRODUCE THE RIGHT BOOKS

"Children don't stumble onto good books by themselves; they must be introduced to the wonder of words put together in such a way they spin out pure joy and magic . . . Every child ought to know the pleasure of words so well chosen that they awaken sensibility, great emotions, and understanding of truth. This is the magic of words—a touch of the supernatural, communication which ministers to the spirit, a gift of God." ■

Gladys Hunt, *Honey for a Child's Heart*, Zondervan, 1969.

## PHONICS TEACHING TOOLS

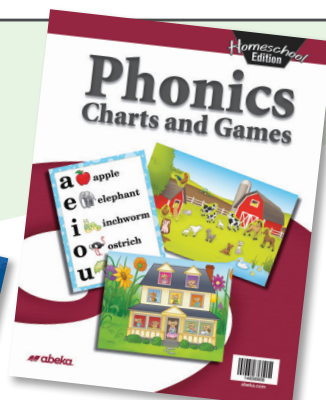
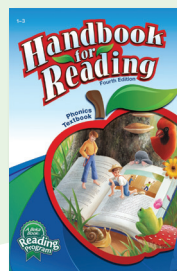
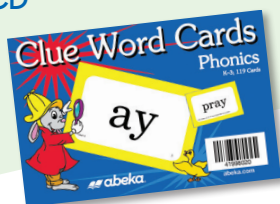
Handbook for Reading

Clue Word Cards

Basic Phonics Sounds CD

Phonics Charts and Games

[abeka.com/PhonicsTeachingTools](http://abeka.com/PhonicsTeachingTools)



# The ENGAGED Reader

by Dr. Phyllis Rand

Perhaps you have heard the phrase “engaging or interacting with the text” to describe what skillful readers do. Instead of passively reading on a surface level, engaged readers use what they’ve been taught about language and the world to actively think and evaluate as they read. Their thinking is almost like a conversation with the text.

## Conversing with the Text

- What does that word mean?
- I thought he said . . .
- I have never heard of this before.
- Where is the proof?
- Why did he say this?  
It seems to contradict.
- This doesn’t sound right;  
I’ll read it again.

This kind of *engaged reading to learn* builds comprehension and critical thinking skills. It also helps the reader get the most from what a piece has to offer! I have read several reading-to-learn strategies, but keep going back to Mortimer Adler. His *How to Read a Book* is still the most practical explanation of how to actively read. Adler suggests three simple steps for the reader: classify the kind of book, identify and interpret the book’s theme(s), and analyze the book for truthfulness and accuracy. But how do these steps break down practically in teaching children how

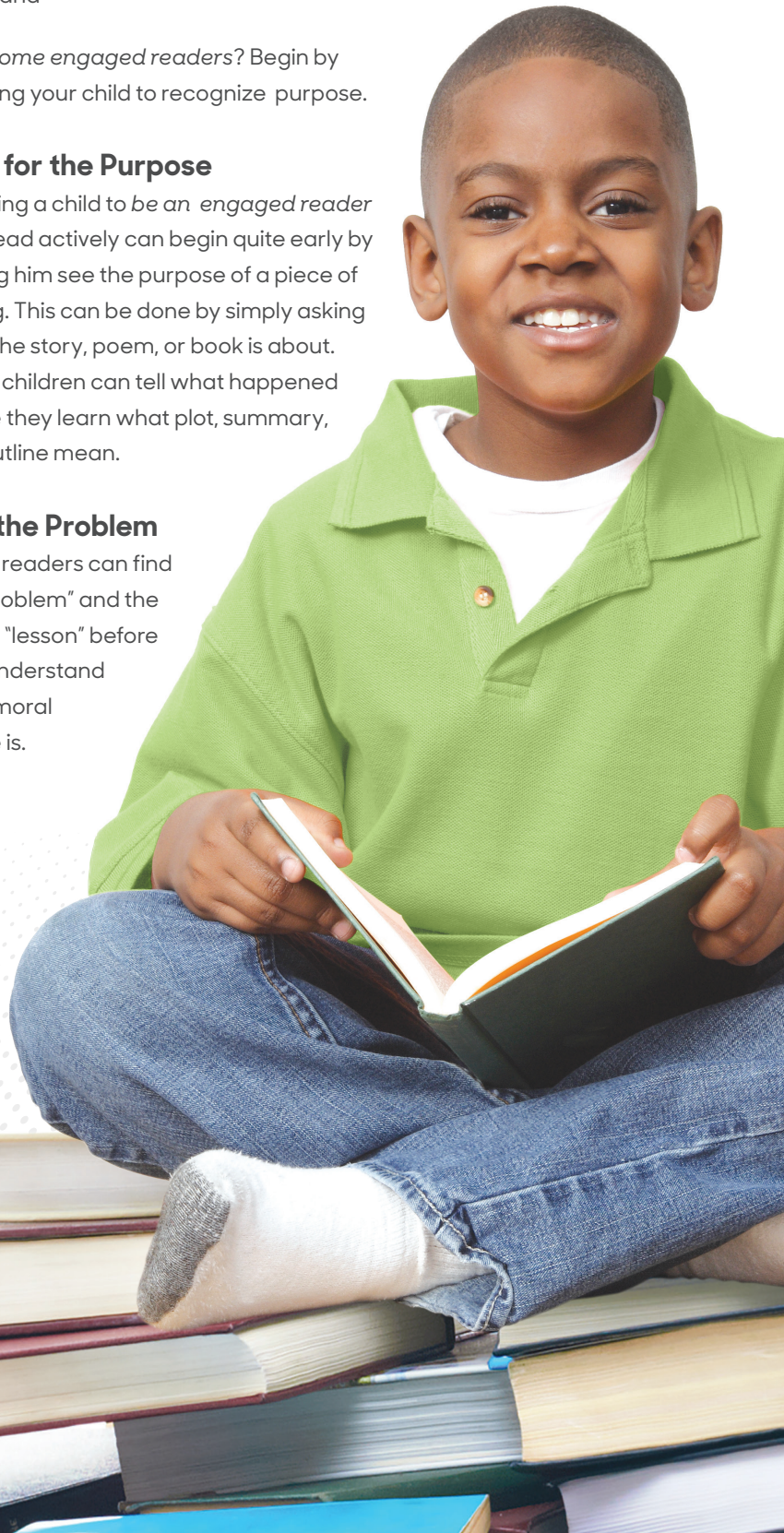
to *become engaged readers*? Begin by teaching your child to recognize purpose.

## Look for the Purpose

Teaching a child to be an *engaged reader* or to read actively can begin quite early by helping him see the purpose of a piece of writing. This can be done by simply asking what the story, poem, or book is about. Young children can tell what happened before they learn what plot, summary, and outline mean.

## Find the Problem

Young readers can find the “problem” and the story’s “lesson” before they understand what moral theme is.





As their understanding and critical thinking matures, match these skills with the appropriate terms such as summary, biography, or theme.

### Think about Word Choice

Even an elementary child can note the author's choice of words in certain pieces. Are there particular words, terms, or sentences that give hints about what the author is telling us about life, people, God?

### Ask about Specific Details

Ask your child which details made him sympathize with the main character. Which descriptions let him know that the character was fearful or excited? Did any details forecast twists in the plot?

### Require More from Older Children

Require that your older children write or orally present an evaluation of what they've read. This should include the work's theme and how the author developed that theme.

Teaching your children how to actively engage their minds in what they are reading changes everything because this kind of critical thinking enables *content to effect thinking*. That's something that could literally change a reader's life! ■■



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Engaged Reader Topic:		
K	W	L
What I KNOW...	What I WONDER...	What I LEARNED...

Download this free KWL chart.  
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Critical Thinking's **BEST TOOL:****P · E · R · C · E ·**

by Tabby Hershberger

**P**attern It

Critical thinking is often abstract. Bring concrete thinking into the mix by teaching your child to ask pattern questions.

- What do we already know about this?
- Can you give an example of something similar to this?
- Will patterns from past solutions help?
- Are there any key words that might suggest a pattern?

**E**xplain It

Ask your child these explanation questions to help frame his understanding and encourage his critical thought.

- Can you give me two reasons why you answered that way?
- How can you explain that?
- What makes you think that's true or false?
- Could you talk me through this from beginning to end?

**R**ate It

Critical thinking requires sifting through mounds of information and deciding what is important.

- What is the most valuable information here; how do you know?
- What is the least important?
- How might the most important information be used?
- What do you guess you should do first, second, etc.?

**C**onnect It

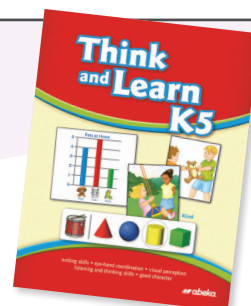
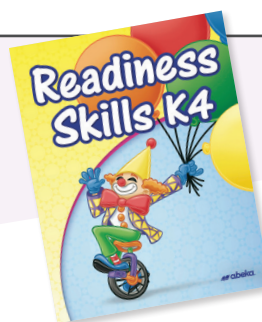
Superb critical thinkers are able to connect information.

- How does this connect with that?
- How does it connect with what we're learning in other places?
- How does this element contrast with that element?
- Is there something which does not have a connection?

**E**xplore It

Critical thinking requires exploring. Helping your child become a good researcher aids critical thinking.

- Where is the best place to find more information?
- What caused this; how did it happen?
- Is there anyone you could ask who knows more?
- Is there anything significant about when or how this occurred?

**CRITICAL THINKING AND FINE MOTOR SKILLS FOR KINDERGARTEN****K4 Readiness Skills****K5 Think and Learn**[abeka.com/ready&learn](http://abeka.com/ready&learn)



# P · T · I · V · E

## QUESTIONS

### Prove It

Just because more than one answer may be accurate doesn't mean all answers are accurate.

- What's the evidence for that?
- How credible is that source?
- Why is that source credible?
- Can you demonstrate why you believe that?
- What does the evidence suggest?

### Test It

Test your child's critical thinking skills by changing one variable.

- Can you answer the same question from multiple perspectives?
- Why wouldn't that work?
- Why does that work?
- What if this were done earlier, later, or as the opposite?
- What is the best alternative for that?

### Interpret It

Interpreting facts and other information is a vital part of critical thinking. Children who analyze well are able to utilize information for future problem-solving.

- How did they achieve that result?
- Was that the only way possible?
- Was that the best solution?
- How can that be used later?
- Can you describe that in simpler terms or in greater detail?

### Visualize It

To encourage critical thinking with even your youngest child, pair these questions with stories read aloud.

- What pictures come to mind?
- What do you think will/won't happen?
- What do you think is true or false about this?
- Can you think up an alternate ending for this?
- Can you imagine this taking place in a different time?

### Extend It

Stretch your child's thinking to higher levels. Don't let an opportunity pass without asking these extended thought questions.

- Can you think of more or different steps?
- What would you have done differently?
- Can you think of ways everything would change by changing one thing?
- What can we learn from this?

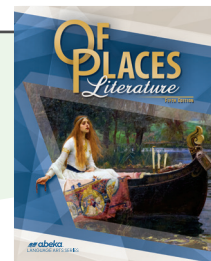
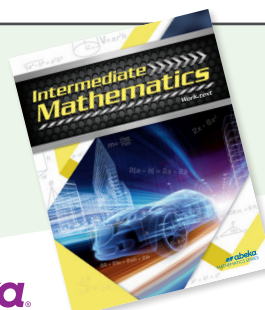
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# Back-to-School Teaching Ideas

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## Writing Practice

When my children are first learning to write a new letter, I place that formation card inside a plastic sleeve or page protector. My child can use an easy-to-wipe-off erasable marker to practice as many times as he wants!

—Sue M., WI

## Teaching Tenacity

I buy lots of large, colored paper clips at the beginning of the year. Certain colors are designated for time-consuming math problems and lengthy grammar diagrams. Before the day's work, we decide which problems are "paper-clip worthy." My daughter is given that number of paper clips in the appropriate color. As she does each problem correctly, she attaches a paper clip to the growing chain. This has become a great encouragement to her as it's a constant reminder of how many difficult problems she's already done!

—Jackie R., WI



## Reading Strategy

It helps my children when they are new readers to isolate one line of text at a time. We do this by buying name tags at the dollar store and cutting out the section where the name goes. It fits perfectly over one line of text in Abeka's early readers.

—Sonya P., OH



## Egg-cellent Process Game

Write numbers 1 through 12 inside each slot of an egg carton. Then put 2 candies in the carton and close the lid. Have your child shake the carton. When he opens the lid, have him say the two numbers. Based on his age level, choose an arithmetic process: add, subtract, multiply, divide. For older children, candies that land on 3 and 6 might mean a sum, product, dividend, or quotient of 36. Ask your child which numbers are missing to equal that. For younger children, the missing number for 3 and 6 might be 9 if asked to add, 3 if subtracting, 2 if dividing, and so on.

—Kim S., FL

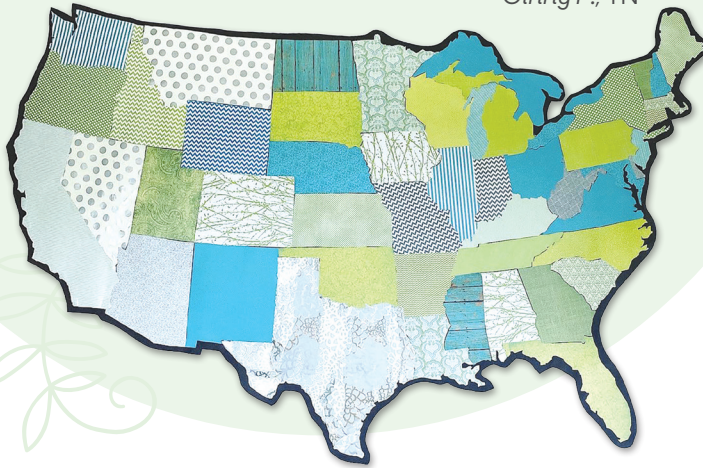




## Decorative History

This six-foot-long U.S. map was made from a coloring sheet purchased online. (See the complete school room on p. 22.) It required 70 enlarged printed pages (tiled) which were pieced together on the living room floor like a puzzle. These pieces were used as a template along with scrapbook paper (for the smaller states) and wrapping paper (for the larger ones). Once everything was cut out, the states were taped together and the entire map was backed with black craft paper. The map is adhered to the wall with sticky squares. The entire project cost about \$20. The states are easy to teach since they are large and in different patterns.

—Ginny P., TN



## Combination Card Game

I practice combinations with my son by using numbered game cards. Any numbered cards will work; we use number cards from other games.

1. Since we are working on combinations that equal 10, 11, or 12, I pull out those denominations (along with any wild cards) and place one 10, 11, and 12 card in front of each of us.
2. I deal 10 random number cards from the deck for each player. Shuffle the draw pile with the remaining number and wild cards.
3. Take turns adding numbers from your hand to equal sums of 10, 11, or 12. Lay these combination cards down in front of their sum card. For example, a player having a 7 and a 5 could get rid of two cards by laying them both down in front of the original 12 card. Play as many cards at a time as you can: example  $1+8+2=11$  would eliminate three cards.
4. When remaining card(s) won't add up to 10, 11, or 12, draw from the pile. Wild cards represent any addend needed. The player who gets rid of his cards first, wins!

—Hope T., AL



## Pasta Pacing and Fractions

I give each of my children roughly one handful of uncooked pasta to represent each of the subjects they will do in a day. For instance, six subjects equals six handfuls (their hand size) of pasta. Each time they finish a subject, they put a fist full of pasta in our big family jar. When that is full, everyone is done for the day! If you use a black marker to divide the jar into quarters, it's also a great way to teach fractions. At the end of the day, my kids take turns dividing the pasta back into everyone's individual containers for the next day.

—Stephanie M., SC

## Spelling Sparkle

Since I enjoy spelling, I always learn the words along with my kids. They love to challenge me in a weekly game of Spelling Sparkle. I usually start by spelling the first letter of the word. My child spells the next letter. We alternate that way until someone misses a letter or the word is spelled correctly. My children love it when they beat me!

—Pam D., VA

Motivational  
wallMap  
from  
p. 21

Storage

Ginny's  
family

Easy-access supplies

1

## Arranging Your AT-HOME SPACE: Two Clever Strategies

Every school at home has a philosophy, a game plan, a strategy. This philosophy often produces systems visible in the arrangement of school space.

For Matt and Ginny P., homeschooling in Nashville begins with a philosophy promoting their children's independence. Matt is a pharmacist, and Ginny runs a travel business and semi-annual consignment sale. Both parents are on the move but wanted their children to be educated at home. Abeka Academy paired perfectly with their family's overall self-reliance. "Our daughter London (5th grade) is very independent. She is capable of doing the majority of her work on her own," says Ginny. "She's always had Abeka and does very well." She continues, "Our son Jude is in second grade and needs more of my time. Three-year-old Campbell is not schooled yet, but I'm saving things and already planning for her."



## Family-Centered Investments

Two strategies direct Ginny's decorating: the children's independence and Ginny's choice of family-centered investments above child-centered ones. "This space coordinates with the rest of our home," Ginny explains. "Since it has French doors, I needed the space to flow with the rest of the downstairs. It contains adult colors of grey, black, and white but with child-friendly pops of bright greens and teals. Even the chairs in the schoolroom are the same as the ones in our dining room!" Ginny bought the furniture and organizing elements online from IKEA. She estimates that the room cost around \$1,000. Read [p. 21](#) to find out how she made her clever wall map.

## A Different Strategy

Tomie R. and her husband Mike, who live in Ohio, have a different approach. They just finished their first year of homeschooling Rylan (9), Jace (6), Gage (4), and Jovi (2), who was along for the ride. Even though theirs is a brand new school at home, Tomie has already decided, "We're keeping things simple. We don't need it all, and we don't want it all. There are so many choices when educating at home; it is easy to become overwhelmed."

## Simple Functionality

Tomie's philosophy of simple functionality can be easily seen in the way she decorated their schoolroom. She says, "Two thoughts generated our school room design: I didn't want to overwhelm the kids with unnecessary items, and I wanted our room to be functional." Tomie also had to incorporate the needs of her toddler. "Since we have a toddler, most things had to be out of reach but still accessible for our big kids. For this reason, the storage I used is all see-through, such as glass jars or wire baskets. I want my kids to make choices on their own." Tomie thought about the different areas she needed. "I knew we'd need individual work spaces for working one-on-one as well as a place to come together to do Bible time and crafts. Tomie estimates their room cost around \$600. See [p. 26](#) for Tomie's clever desk idea.

Two different school at home moms with two different strategies, but both have produced a wonderful educational space!

2




Tomie's family



# Keeping Your Homeschool House CLEAN

*During these unprecedented times*

by Bethany Russell



**J**ust one of the following jobs done professionally can provide a woman with a satisfying career, and yet homeschool moms do these jobs and more every day: housekeeper, nurse, chef, laundry attendant, accountant, party planner, personal coach, and school teacher! Being a homeschool mom is a juggling act. It requires a sensitive balance of keeping tasks in their proper place and giving people the attention that they deserve.

When life gets in the way, something suffers. Often that's the housework. How can we keep a clean homeschool house and provide a peaceful place to live and learn?

## Have Reasonable Expectations

Start with a list of tasks that are done yearly.

Assign a specific month to do them.

Make a list of monthly

chores and assign which weeks on your calendar to do them. Then make your list of daily tasks, and assign them to family members.

Make each child responsible for a specific room or task. If your children are too young to work unattended, match rooms with days of the week and work with your little helpers, teaching them as you go. It's helpful knowing that even if a room is not clean today, it will be clean on its appointed day. Take pictures of clean rooms as a reminder of past accomplishments and also as a template for children to use while cleaning without Mom!

When I had toddlers, I operated on a two-room a day cleaning plan. I cleaned our bedroom and did toy pick-ups, but I only thoroughly cleaned two rooms per day, that's it. I didn't berate myself about the other untidy rooms. Now that I have elementary and middle school-age children, each child has a daily task. We agree upon a reasonable time in advance, then I set a timer. When the timer beeps, I check everyone's work. We rotate the tasks so each child gets to try something new and has an idea of how to properly clean all parts of a household.



## Consider paying out

If your budget allows, consider paying for certain housekeeping chores on a weekly or monthly basis. Check with your children first to see if they'd like to earn extra cash! We made a list of tasks that sometimes get overlooked. I attached a specific amount of pay to each job. This could be things like cleaning the car or washing down appliances. Our older children choose which jobs they want. They get paid for their work every week. This has helped tremendously.

## Offer Incentives

Recently I made a list of quarterly tasks such as wiping down walls, washing windows, cleaning metal strips between floors, etc. Left unclean, these items can leave a home looking worn down. Each child does one quarterly job on a specific day. We work as a family and then enjoy a special treat that we've never had before. Our house sparkles and everyone enjoys the teamwork!

## Consistency Is the Key

The key to any success is consistency. If someone gets sick or you have a bad day, don't quit. Get up the next morning and begin again. The point isn't that everything is always perfect; the point is that you have a plan in action for keeping your homeschool house clean! ■

# Housecleaning Checklist

Here's a basic checklist for daily, monthly, and quarterly household jobs. It's a good foundational tool for cleaning any house. Just add chores particular to your family. Monthly and quarterly tasks are designated by the colors below and are typically done on the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> week of each month. This is a family cleaning plan. It is meant to be divided among several people. Once the plan is in motion and the dirt is managed, it requires much less time to complete.

Housecleaning Checklist

## WEDNESDAY

Shopping / Bedroom Day

- ☐ Start a load of sheets.
- ☐ Load/unload dishwasher or wash dishes.
- ☐ Dust bedroom furniture and ceiling fan.
- ☐ Sweep and mop or vacuum bedroom floor.
- ☐ Declutter/organize bedroom for 10 minutes.
- ☐ Put sheets in dryer.
- ☐ Grab prepared grocery/supply lists and shop.
- ☐ Put away groceries (organize/leave items for cooking day).
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

Things to Remember

Housecleaning Checklist

## THURSDAY

Cooking Day

- ☐ Start one load of clothes.
- ☐ Do the prep work (cutting, assembling) for 3-5 entrees from your menu. (Typical families eat leftovers, eat out, or eat a meal on-the-go like sandwiches 2-4 times needed.)
- ☐ Put clothes in dryer.
- ☐ Assemble side dishes/desserts if needed.
- ☐ Label each entree for its cook day/cook time and temp./needed garnishes etc.
- ☐ Have a special plan for supper today such as leftovers, eating out, or a delivery.
- ☐ Load/unload dishwasher.
- ☐ Wash dishes.

Meal Prep

(Collect recipes; decide the fastest food prep process—chop everything at once, etc.)

Housecleaning Checklist

## FRIDAY

Bathroom / Monthly & Quarterly Task Day

- ☐ Start one load of clothes.
- ☐ Load/unload dishwasher or wash dishes.
- ☐ Clean bathroom mirror and counters.
- ☐ Clean sink, toilet, tub.
- ☐ Change/replenish towels and toilet paper.
- ☐ Empty trash.
- ☐ Shake rugs; sweep and mop bathroom floor.
- ☐ Disinfect all doorknobs and light switches.
- ☐ Put clothes in dryer.
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

Things to Remember

Monthly / Quarterly Tasks

Week 1:

- ☐ Clean oven, exhaust hood.
- ☐ Change air filter.
- ☐
- ☐

Week 2:

- ☐ Wash trash cans.
- ☐ Clean closets.
- ☐ Sort and donate old clothes.
- ☐
- ☐

Week 3:

- ☐ Wipe down baseboards, railings, and walls.
- ☐
- ☐

Week 4:

- ☐ Clean out freezer.
- ☐ Wipe down tops of cabinets and appliances.
- ☐
- ☐

Week 5:

- ☐ Clean blinds and curtains.
- ☐ Change bathroom shower curtain liner.
- ☐
- ☐



Download this  
free checklist.  
[abeka.com/  
FreeChecklist](http://abeka.com/FreeChecklist)

# Back-to-School Strategy Ideas



## Durable Organization

When the organizational tool you want is either not sold or is too expensive, make your own! I bought a 92" kitchen counter online to make my children's durable work stations. I used file cabinets at various intervals to separate the space, provide valuable storage, and make the perfect legs. (See the rest of Tomie's school room on p. 23.)

—Tomie R., OH

## Planning System

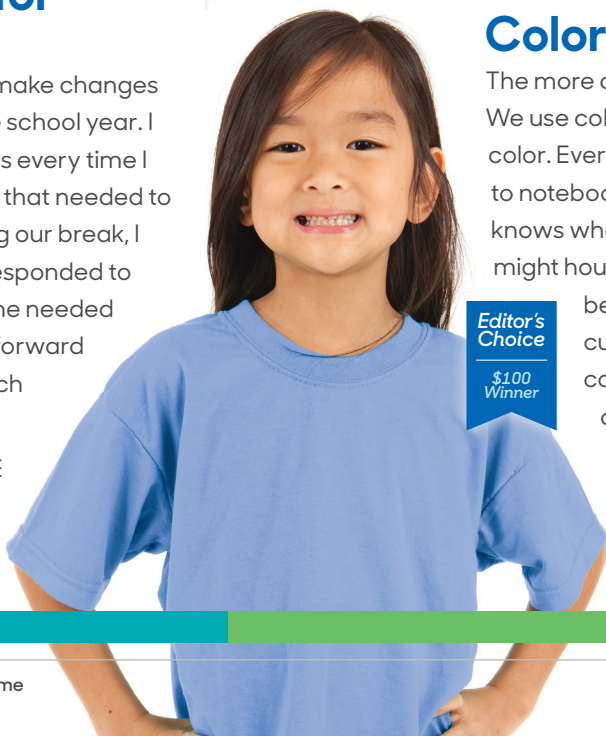
Here's my planning system: Write on paper (in columns) what each child needs to accomplish daily. Identify which subjects can be worked independently and which need Mom. Transfer this information to a new set of columns describing when each child will work with Mom and when he'll work independently. Do this for each child. Independent workers who finish before Mom are allowed to read or do free time activities. Our plan is written on a poster that everyone can see detailing when to start and what to do next. Our routine doesn't change; we do the same order every day. My children like knowing what's coming next and when they'll finish!

—Brooke W., TX

## Strategy for Change

I find it stressful to make changes in the middle of the school year. I started taking notes every time I noticed something that needed to be changed. During our break, I reorganized and responded to my notes. I made the needed changes and look forward to things being much better this year.

—Tabitha H., NE



## Color-Coded Family

The more children I have, the more organization we need. We use color as one of our systems. Each child chooses a color. Everything belonging to that child from storage bins to notebooks reflects their color choice. Now everyone knows whose purple notebook is on the floor! Mom's color might house extra school supplies or things that need to

be graded. Expand this idea to include plastic cups, toothbrushes, towels/wash cloths, or a color-coded chore rotation. Designate colored containers to mean "needs to be put away" or "for donation." Consider having a family color with corresponding T-shirt for everyone. This color system helps spot your own kids even in large crowds.

—Bethany R., OH

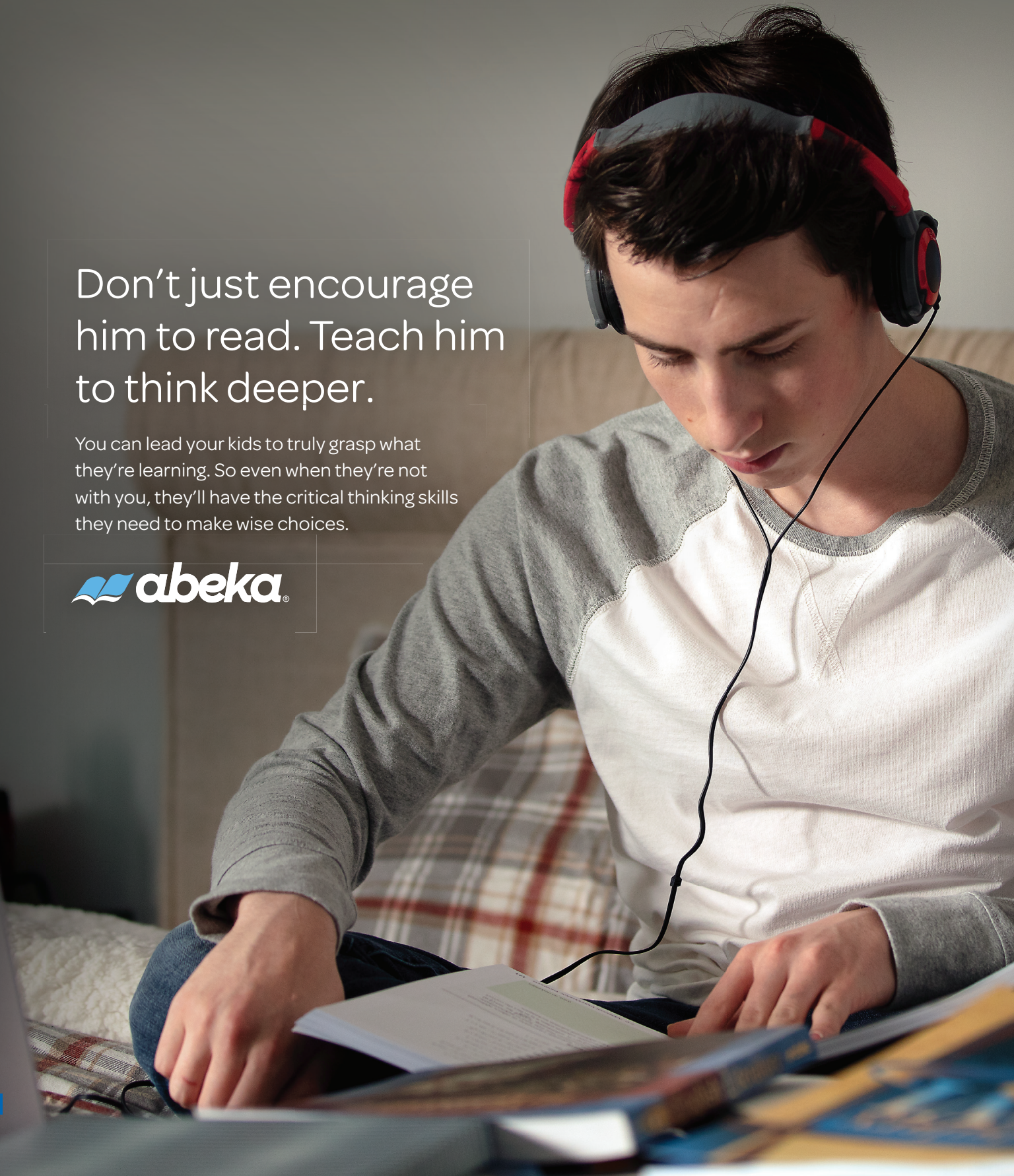
Editor's  
Choice

\$100  
Winner



Don't just encourage  
him to read. Teach him  
to think deeper.

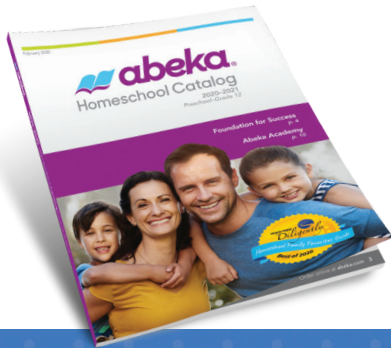
You can lead your kids to truly grasp what  
they're learning. So even when they're not  
with you, they'll have the critical thinking skills  
they need to make wise choices.





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