

Back to School Family Guide

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Parents and caregivers have always wanted to know more about what their child is learning in school. After all, families are their child's first – and most important – teacher.

Parents, family members, grandparents, and other caregivers play a critical role in learning at home. So, we include all these people when we talk about how families can support kids.

This guide is meant to support families and students academically in literacy and math. Of course, students will be learning other subjects too, but literacy and math are the building blocks for everything else.

GRADE 4

THIS GUIDE INCLUDES

- **What Your Child Should Know & Be Able to Do** – What experts say is the most important content (knowledge and skills) for students to learn by the end of fourth grade.
- **Everyday Activities to Support Learning** – We've included some ways you can support your child in learning important content and skills in literacy and math.
- **Education Words** – Sometimes, you'll hear educators use a word that has a specific meaning in schools. Those words are **bolded**. Understanding those terms will help you speak the same language.
- **Tips for Talking with Teachers** – How you and your child's teacher can work together to help your child grow.
- **Tools and Resources to Help** – We've chosen a few internet resources that best match each grade's content.



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LITERACY

WHAT YOUR CHILD SHOULD KNOW AND BE ABLE TO DO



Throughout the school year, 4th grade students will spend the most time working on the following topics. They should understand them well by the end of the year.

Reading and writing skills:

- Writing to complete sentences and paragraphs about what they are learning, with mostly correct spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation.
- Reading 4th grade level texts smoothly and with expression, at a **fluency** rate of around 90-140 words per minute.

Learning about the world through text:

- Asking and answering questions about stories and texts read independently. Using specific evidence to describe, to explain how ideas are connected, and to support inferences about the text.
- Figuring out the meaning of unknown words in text by using context or tools like dictionaries and glossaries. Determining or clarifying the meaning of unknown words, words with multiple meanings, **synonyms**, **antonyms**, or **figurative language** in context.
- Linking opinions and reasons or ideas within categories using words and phrases to connect ideas (for example, “for instance,” “in order to,” “in addition,” “for example,” “also”).
- Showing something new they have learned from a text or about a topic. This can be in any form: speaking and conversation, illustrations, letters, journals, stories, posters, or essays.
- Writing about what happened or information learned from the text. Children should include a title, an introductory sentence or section, well-developed examples, and a conclusion sentence or section. Spelling, capitalization, and punctuation should be mostly accurate.



EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT LEARNING

- Turn on the closed captioning while watching TV to allow your child to read along with the dialogue.
- Encourage your child each day to choose a book they want to read on their own. Reading lots of books over time is more important than the type of text. Let your child pick based on their interests and what makes them excited to read.
- Have “book talk” conversations. Ask your child to share the important ideas in their own words and show you what part of the text provided this information.
- Pick a topic to learn about together. Read books, look online, do things together. You can help your child build knowledge and develop a love of learning.
- Encourage your child to use writing in the real world. This can include authentic writing (grocery lists, notes, chore lists, etc.) as well as writing in a journal, book response notebook, or other creative writing opportunities.



MATHEMATICS

WHAT YOUR CHILD SHOULD KNOW AND BE ABLE TO DO



Throughout the school year, 4th grade students will spend the most time working on the following topics. They should understand them well by the end of the year.

- Using the four operations, solve multi-step word problems that use whole numbers and have whole number answers, including problems where students make sense of remainders. (For example, “Four classes are going on a field trip. The classes each have 28 students. Buses hold 48 passengers. If all of the students, 4 teachers and 4 chaperones are going on the field trip, how many buses will they need?”)
- Adding and subtracting multi-digit numbers with ease ($23,647 - 5,265$).
- Multiplying and dividing multi-digit numbers in problems with a limited number of digits ($1,638 \times 7$ or 24×17 ; $6,966 \div 6$).
- Understanding and applying equivalent fractions (recognizing that $\frac{1}{4}$ is less than $\frac{3}{8}$ because $\frac{1}{4}$ equals $\frac{2}{8}$, and two eighths are less than three eighths).
- Adding, subtracting, and multiplying fractions in simple problems ($2\frac{3}{4} - 1\frac{1}{4}$ or $3 \times \frac{5}{8}$), and solving related word problems that include fractions in context. (For example, you are going to make cookies for a party. You need $\frac{2}{3}$ cup sugar for one batch and decide to make 8 batches, so all your neighbors can have a cookie. How many cups of sugar do you need?)
- Understanding and explaining simple decimals in terms of fractions (rewriting 0.62 as $\frac{62}{100}$).



EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT LEARNING

- Practice adding and subtracting (multi-digit numbers) and multiplying and dividing, two digits by two digits (32×68 ; $89 \div 47$) and up to four digits by one digit ($1,200 \times 8$; $1,800 \div 9$).
- Practice adding and subtracting fractions with the same **denominator** ($\frac{4}{10} + \frac{3}{10}$; $\frac{56}{100} - \frac{22}{100}$).
- Encourage a positive mindset about mathematics in the real world. This can be done by cooking with your child and asking them to help you measure the ingredients for a recipe.
- Read books about division and talk about situations where students use division in real life (<https://www.the-best-childrens-books.org/teaching-division.html>).





EDUCATION WORDS



Sometimes, you'll hear educators use a word that has a specific meaning in schools. Understanding those terms will help you speak the same language!

Antonyms

Antonyms are words that mean the opposite. "Big" and "little" are antonyms.

Figurative language

Figurative language uses figures of speech to be more interesting, effective, and impactful. ("My dog's coat is as black as coal." "He was a lion when he fought for what was right.")

Fluency

The ability to read with speed, accuracy, and proper expression that shows comprehension of what is being read.

Numerator and denominator

The numerator is the top number in a fraction. It shows how many parts we have. The denominator is the bottom number in a fraction. It shows how many parts the item is divided into.



Reading level

Teachers often determine the grade level at which a student is reading. But sometimes, children are then limited to reading texts at that level (typically a letter or number). This practice is one to be wary of, particularly if children are limited to reading only texts that are below the grade level goals.

Synonyms

Synonyms are words that mean the same thing. "Big" and "enormous" are synonyms.

Text sets

Text sets are carefully grouped sets of texts and media resources focused on a specific topic designed to help all learners build background knowledge and vocabulary through a lot of reading on science, social studies, and other high-interest topics.





TIPS FOR TALKING WITH TEACHERS

Literacy



- What are my child’s strengths, and how do you use them in instruction?
- How do you select texts? Will my child see characters and topics that represent them, their background, and their identity? Will they learn new perspectives and about new and diverse characters through the texts you use in the classroom?
- What topics are children learning about through reading? What should my child be able to understand, write, and talk about as a result of what they have read? Topics in history? Topics in science?
- Is my child reading Grade 4 text fluently? If not, do they have trouble with decoding? Vocabulary? What supports are being provided to address their needs?
- Is my child able to speak and listen during class discussions and conversations in ways that demonstrate they understand what they are reading and learning about? Are they able to use evidence from the text, present their responses in detail, and speak clearly about the topic or text? If not, what challenges are they facing? How can I help?
- How frequently does my child read grade level text independently? If they are not reading grade level text independently, why not? How are you supporting any reading needs they have while still allowing for time with grade level text? How can I help?
- What kinds of book(s) is my child reading during independent reading? Are they limited to a specific reading level?

Math



- What kinds of number problems are children learning to solve this year?
- Ask for specific updates on how your child is progressing in their understanding of the key content of the grade.
- How does my child approach complex math tasks? What are some suggestions for me to encourage them in learning challenging content?
- What should my child be able to understand and talk about as a result of what they have learned?
- Is my child able to demonstrate to you that they understand what they are learning about? If not, what challenges are they facing?
- How can I support a positive approach to learning math?





TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO HELP



Literacy

- What fourth grade writing samples look like from the start of the year to the end
<https://www.greatschools.org/gk/category/milestones-topics/writing-samples/>
- Forty passages to help students build **fluency** over the course of the school year
<https://achievethecore.org/page/886/fluency-packet-for-the-4-5-grade-band>
- Easy-to-use materials that help your fourth grader research and write to inform or explain
<https://www.vermontwritingcollaborative.org/WPDEV/research-packs/>
- Can your fourth grader complete these literacy tasks?
<https://belearninghero.org/readiness-check/ela-quiz/?level=grade-04>
- Use this tool to find out how fluently your fourth grader is reading
http://www.timrasinski.com/presentations/multidimensional_fluency_rubric_4_factors.pdf
- How to use **text sets** to find resources and ideas about learning about any subject through reading
<https://achievethecore.org/content/upload/Text%20Set%20Guidance.pdf>



Math

- Parent roadmaps: What should children be learning in Grade 4? How can families support that learning?
<https://www.cgcs.org/Page/244>
- How “Big” is a Million?
<https://earlymath.erikson.edu/how-big-is-a-million-online-math-books/>
- Rainbow Fraction Game: Color butterflies to represent fractions
<http://toytheater.com/rain-drops/>
- Comparing fractions using a benchmarks game
<https://achievethecore.org/index.php/page/2775/comparing-fractions-using-benchmarks-game>
- Three math problems that ask students, “Who raised the most money?” but require different math skills to find the answer
<https://achievethecore.org/page/615/comparing-money-raised>
- Math can make sure every student gets to play on a team
<https://achievethecore.org/page/1053/how-many-teams>
- Three fun ways to think about how math can solve real-world problems
<https://achievethecore.org/category/416/mathematics-tasks?&g%5B%5D=4&sort=name>
- A readiness check to find out how your child is doing
<https://belearninghero.org/readiness-check/>
- Tasks for a variety of math topics at the 4th grade level
<https://tasks.illustrativemathematics.org/4>