



Reading Summary

Why Reading?

As a parent, you play an essential role in your child's success. There are intentional ways to grow a healthy parent-child relationship, and engaging in family reading time provides a perfect opportunity.

Step 1. Get Your Child Thinking by Getting Their **Input**

- “How do you want to spend your time after school?”
 - “Would you like a snack first?”
 - “Do you want to change into play clothes first?”
 - “Do you want time to rest or run outside and play?”
- “Considering all of the activities that typically take place after school, when is the best time for us to read together?”

Discuss challenges. In Step 2, plan to teach what they can do instead.

Tip Treat reading time as a treat, not a chore. If you save reading for after things like doing homework or getting ready for bed, then reading together can be viewed as a desirable time to be together.

Tip Allow your child to select their own books that look interesting and desirable. Offer your child a key role in the reading process. Whether that means turning the pages or keeping your place with their finger running under the words being read aloud, engage your child as an active reader (even before they can read on their own).

Step 2. **Teach** New Skills by Interactive Modeling

- When your child invites you to learn more about what they are reading or asks a question, listen with interest or ask: “*What interests you about this story or these characters?*” or “*What are the characters feeling or thinking?*”
- Model reading. Remember, your child is watching you and will notice if you do or do not read around your home.
- Research information together in books. Although it's tempting to do all of your research about a topic online, be sure to include books or articles in your research.
- Teach the essential “brain break.” Breaks do not represent weakness or a lack of persistence. In fact, our brains work better if we take frequent breaks. Children need processing time if they are studying, learning to read, or reading a longer book.

Tip Show what a brain break might look like. You could, sit with your book and say aloud, “*I am really starting to feel frustrated.*” Then, move away from your seat and breathe deeply and loudly. Get a drink of water. Walk outside. Take your child with you.

Trap As a parent, you do not need to be a subject matter expert EVER! Your child may have questions about what they are reading. Ask yourself, “*How can I provide the support for them to answer the question themselves (even if they get it wrong)?*”

Step 3. **Practice** to Grow Skills, Confidence, and Develop Habits

- Use “Show me...” statements like “*Show me you know what’s next when our timer goes off.*”
- Do a “brain break” dry run. At a natural breaking point, you might say, “*Let’s try out a ‘brain break.’*”
- Recognize effort: “*I notice how you sat down to read without my prompting. Looks like you’re enjoying it. Great!*”
- Proactively remind: “*Remember what time it is? What shall we read today?*”

Tip Depending upon your child’s school, the task of reading can become highly stressful. Remove that burden at home. Focus on joy and connection. Make reading fun. The best way your child will learn to read is through practice and exposure and that will happen if your child wants to read! Focus on enjoyment, and the rest will fall in place!

Trap Resist the temptation to nag. Children often need more time to perform tasks that challenge them even if we believe they are simple. Be sure to wait long enough for your child to show you they are competent. Your waiting could make all the difference in whether they are able to do what you need them to do.

Step 4. **Support** Your Child’s Development and Success

- Ask key questions: “*It looks like you feel stuck. Could I help you sound it out? Should we look up the meaning of a word together?*”
- Promote a learning attitude. Show confidence that your child can learn anything with time and practice (because they truly can!).
- Coach to ask for help when needed: “*Seems like you are having trouble figuring out what this section means. This would be a good time to ask your teacher about this problem. You might ask Mrs. Johnson, ‘Can you help me?’*”
- Stay engaged. In addition to reading together, it can be motivating for your child when they see you read your own favorite book alongside them for company.

Step 5. **Recognize** Effort and Quality to Foster Motivation

- Notice even small successes: “*I notice you’re almost at the end of your book. You must be enjoying it! Yes! Excellent.*”
- Recognize small steps along the way.
- Build celebrations into your routine. Consider a hug when the routine is accomplished.

Tip Be specific. “Good job” seems not to carry much meaning. However, a specific compliment about a pointed behavior - *“You put your game away when you were finished. Love seeing that!”* - can promote more of the same.

Trap If you focus only on outcomes - *“You got your reading done”* - you miss the chance to influence the process. Better to say - *“You took a brain break and came back and worked through that challenging section.”*

Celebrate yourself for making it your parenting priority to work on cultivating the social and emotional skills that are most critical for your child’s success today and in their future!

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