



Reading Summary

Why Reading?

As a parent or someone in a parenting role, you play an essential role in your child's/teen's success. There are intentional ways to grow a healthy parent-child/teen relationship, and growing skills in reading is a great way to do it.

Tip These steps are done best when you and your child/teen are not tired or in a rush.

Tip Intentional communication and a healthy parenting relationship support these steps.

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

- Get curious about the books your child/teen is reading at school.
- Discuss with your child/teen the differences between reading a book and watching a movie.
- Ask, *“How do you know a book will be interesting?”* or *“How do you know whether a book is appropriate for you?”*
- Allow your child/teen some choices in establishing a reading routine.
 - *“How much reading homework do you usually get from school everyday?”*
 - *“Considering all of the activities that typically take place after school, when is the best time to read?”*
- Create a space that can consistently be used for reading time.
- Create a family reading rule. Invite discussion at dinner about books that the family is reading.
- Approach reading time as a treat not a chore.
- Allow your child/teen to select their own books that look interesting and desirable.

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

Tip Make it fun! Designing a reading spot together can be an enjoyable experience. Allow your child/teen to pick out their own pillows, bean bag chair, or bookmarks.

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

- When your child/teen invites you to learn more about what they are reading or asks a question, listen with interest or ask, *“What captures your interest when you start reading a book? Which character do you identify with the most? What are some themes in the book that are similar or different than how you are living?”*
- Share your curiosity and interest in the subject but do not provide an answer.

- Model reading. Remember, your child/teen 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.
- Encourage your child/teen to take "brain breaks" while they are reading to allow themselves to process what they have read. They can take a break to walk around, play with the dog, or do a chore. You could also share how you take brain breaks at work and strategies that have worked for you.
- Follow your child's/teen's lead on books. Give them the choice of which books to read.
- Parents do not need to be subject matter experts EVER! Indeed, your child/teen may be reading about topics that you may not know anything about. That is exciting! Encourage them to share this knowledge with you. Model active learning.

Tip Research shows that many boys tend to stop reading for pleasure by their own choice around nine or ten.¹ Experts suspect this is because boys tend toward nonfiction topics like the natural world or how-to topics like how to build a treehouse. They might also gravitate toward graphic novels or comics. Experts suspect that parents can voice their disapproval of these reading choices and inadvertently discourage reading. Be sure you leave judgment of book choices behind and only encourage their reading. Nonfiction and graphic novels are excellent choices if they interest your young reader. As long as it's safe content, offer your support and interest.

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

- Use "I'd love to hear..." as a way to get your child/teen talking about what they are reading. This might sound like, "*I remember reading this book. I'd love to hear what it's about?*"
- Recognize any effort your child/teen makes either reading or sharing with you what they are reading. Say, "*I so appreciate hearing about the book through your lens, because you have such an interesting way of looking at things.*"
- Proactively remind your child/teen to help them be successful. This might sound like, "*I am looking forward to hearing about the latest in the book that you are reading.*"

Trap Resist the temptation to nag. Children/Teens often need more time to perform tasks that challenge them even if you believe they are simple and don't require much time. If you nag them about reading, they will resist. 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/Teen's Development and Success

- Promote a learning attitude. Be curious about your child/teen and what they are learning.
- Talk positively about reading and share your interest in reading.
- Coach your child/teen to get more support if needed. Encourage them to talk with their teachers to get book recommendations or alternatives.
- Stay engaged. Read with your child/teen and discuss books regularly. Make a plan to read a particular book that also has a movie and watch and compare the movie after reading the book.

Tip Become aware of your own reactions to reading. Be sure that the tone and attitude you bring is one of enjoyment, curiosity, and learning.

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

- Recognize and call out when it is going well. *“I notice you’re almost at the end of your book. You must be enjoying it! Excellent.”*
- Recognize small steps along the way. Appreciate your child/teen when they share about a book that they are reading. *“I really enjoy hearing about what you are reading. It’s like I am reading it through an entirely different lens.”*

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/teen's success today and in their future!

References

1. Telford, L. (1999). A Study of Boys' Reading, *Early Child Development and Care*, 149:1, 87-124.

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