



Reading Summary

Why Reading?

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

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

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

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?"*
- Experiment with different times to figure out your plan for reading together.
- Once you agree upon a time that makes sense, your attempts to keep that time sacred and consistent for reading will be important to ensure it becomes a habit and routine.
- Create a space that can be used consistently for reading time.
- Create a family reading rule. Discuss how the family can respect reading time.
- Treat reading time as a treat, not a chore.
- Offer your child a key role in the reading process.
- Allow your child 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 to pick out their own pillows, bean bag chair, or bookmarks. Perhaps they could make a sign with their name on it to designate the space.

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 the research about a topic online, be sure to include books or articles in the research.
- Teach the essential "brain break." Breaks do not represent weakness or a lack of persistence. In fact, human brains work better if they get frequent breaks. Children need processing time if they are studying, learning to read, or reading a longer book.
- Depending upon your child's school, the task of reading can become highly stressful. Focus on joy and connection. Make reading fun.
- Follow your child's lead on books. Give them the choice of which books to read together.
- Don't attempt to champion a particular book. If you show preference in a title, your child might show interest, but if you hold on too tightly to the idea, it might turn them in the other direction.
- Ask yourself, "How can I provide the guidance and support for them to answer the question or solve the problem themselves (even if they get it wrong)?"

Trap 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 books about the natural world or how-to topics. 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.

Tip Picture books with no words can be an enjoyable break from learning the words for children. Have your child tell the story just by looking at the illustrations.

Tip Playing story games with your child, like making up a story cooperatively, can stir imagination, creativity, and a love of stories.

Step 3. **Practice** to Grow Skills 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 noticed 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?*"
- Provide opportunities for your child to use language and words in a way that is just a bit more challenging than what they have done before.

Trap Resist the temptation to nag. Children often need more time to perform tasks that challenge them even if you 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 them 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.

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

- 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. *"We'll get our business taken care of first with your reading homework, and then we'll run around outside or take a bike ride. Then, we can read a story for fun before bedtime."*

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!

References

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

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