

Reading: Getting Kids Excited about Books

“Read all you can lay your hands on. The rewards of reading never diminish.”—Helen Ganz, literacy advocate

Reading is powerful. When kids know how to read and enjoy reading, they’re more likely to succeed in school—and in life. Unfortunately, only 22 percent of kids report having asset 25: reading for pleasure. The reading asset is the second least-common asset (behind asset 17: creative activities), yet reading is an asset that parents have a great deal of influence over helping their kids attain. To learn more about the power of reading, visit the National Institute for Literacy at www.nifl.gov/nivl/facts/facts_overview.html

Try it...

For all parents

- Make sure each of your children has a library card (you can get cards at your local library branch). If your kids already have library cards, use them on a regular basis. Visit the library once a week, or at least once a month.
- Show kids how much you enjoy reading. Instead of watching TV, read periodically. Have books and magazines strategically located around your house.
- Talk about what you read. Ask your kids about what they’re reading.

For parents with children ages birth to 5

- Surround your children with picture books. Give them to your kids as gifts. If you can’t afford to buy them, check them out of the library.
- Read aloud to your children every day. If possible, read aloud more than once a day.
- Buy board books for your children (check out used bookstores for bargains). Keep the books with your children’s toys so that your kids are used to seeing books as part of their everyday lives.

For parents with children ages 6 - 9

- Keep reading aloud to your children, even as they begin to learn how to read for themselves. Once they start learning how to read, have them read aloud every day to you.
- Help kids find books that get them excited. Visit the library. Browse used bookstores.
- Read a book to your children before they go to bed. Use a book as part of your bedtime routine to help your children relax and connect with you.

For parents with children ages 10 - 15

- Encourage your kids to find books that excite them. Don't overlook graphic novels, comic books, magazines, or other types of reading that may not interest you, but interests them. The point is to keep your kids reading.
- Teenagers are assigned books to read for language arts and English classes. Find out what they're reading—and what they're learning. Ask them which assigned book they liked best and why.
- Take turns reading an exciting book aloud. If your child loves Harry Potter or Stephenie Meyer's vampire books, read a page or two out loud and then switch. Emphasize the fun of reading instead of stressing out how to pronounce certain words.
- Give books as gifts. Young teenagers often enjoy advice-about-life books such as *It's Our World, Too: Stories of Young People Who Are Making a Difference* by Phillip Hoose or *Growing Up Feeling Good* by Ellen Rosenberg.
- Discuss what you're reading on the Internet. Many teenagers do a lot of reading online. Their reading may not be in book format, but they're learning all kinds of things from Wikipedia and other online services. Ask which topics interest them and why.

For parents with children ages 16 - 18

- Ask your teenager which book has had the most impact on his or her life. Talk about a life-changing book that you've read.
- Be patient if it seems your teenagers don't read for fun. Many feel overloaded with homework reading and prefer to spend their free time with friends or listening to music.
- Follow books that become *New York Times* bestsellers at www.nytimes.com/pages/books/bestseller/index.html. Ask your teenager which books other teenagers are reading. See if there are any that interest your teenager. Choose a book yourself and talk about what you've read.
- Bring up current events or topics you've read about to start discussions with your teenagers. Reference what you're reading, such as "I read in *Newsweek* today..." or "Did you see that article in the newspaper today?"

More Reading Ideas!

- For those of you with younger children, check out [*Playful Reading*](#) (© 2005 Search Institute) by Carolyn Munson-Benson. This book includes many positive, fun ways to build the bond between preschoolers, books, and you, and has lists of suggested titles that you and your children will enjoy.
- [*Great Preschools: Building Developmental Assets in Early Childhood*](#) (© 2007 Search Institute) by Tamara J. Will also suggests books for your preschooler. Ranging from well-known classics to the newest releases, these book lists are designed to fit your child's interests and developmental level.