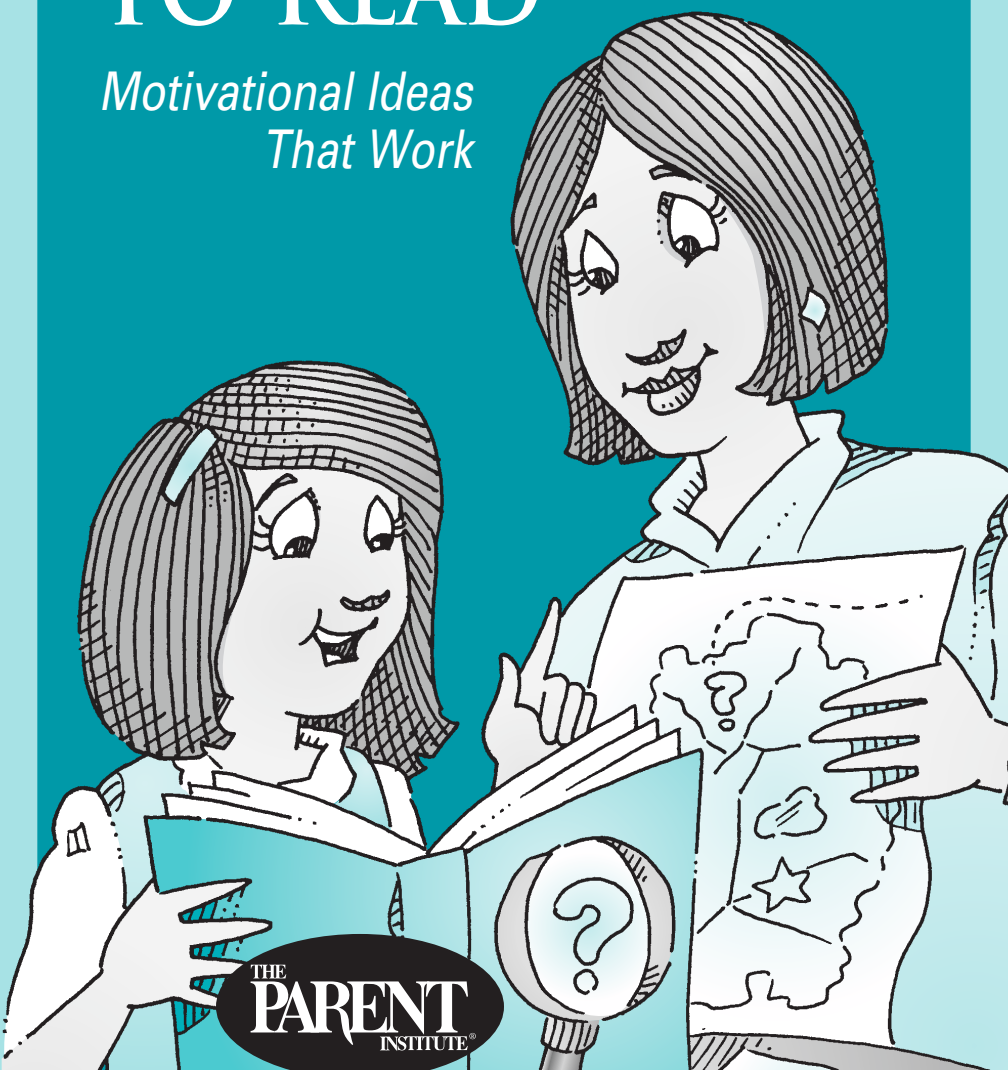


HOW TO GET YOUR CHILD TO READ

*Motivational Ideas
That Work*



THE
PARENT
INSTITUTE®

One of a Series of Booklets for Parents



Good reading skills help in *every* school subject. But experts say that to build reading abilities, children must *want* to read. Unfortunately, many children aren't interested.

Sometimes learning or physical difficulties make it hard to use and understand words. Schools have specialists who can help with these problems.

Most often, children are simply distracted by television, video games, overly busy schedules, socializing or listening to music. They're just not motivated to read, no matter how important educators say reading is.

Parents can make the difference—probably better than anyone else. They can show children that reading is fun and rewarding. This booklet explains how. It also provides ideas for children who already love to read. And don't be surprised if you start reading more than ever, too!



Every child is unique, so we often use the singular pronoun. We'll alternate using "he/him" and "she/her" throughout this booklet.

Get Ready to Read!

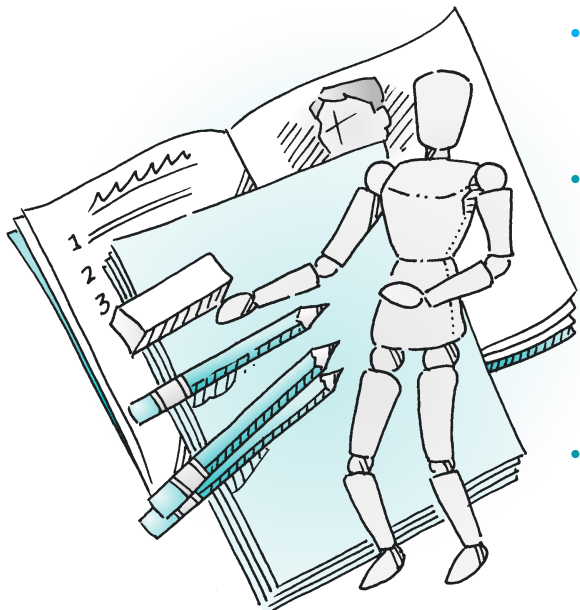
You've heard the phrase "Put on your thinking cap." Even though most people don't need an actual hat to think, they use other routines to help them focus. This works with reading as well. Try setting up a special place that encourages your child to read. Consider:

- **Comfort.** Think about where your child will be able to relax. In a soft chair? Leaning against puffy pillows? Sitting on her bed?
- **Quiet.** Choose a spot that is free of distractions—away from the TV, telephone and the regular hustle and bustle of your household.
- **Convenience.** Make sure there are plenty of books, magazines and newspapers nearby.
- **Storage.** Give your child a shelf or box for reading materials. She'll always know where to find something interesting.
- **Lighting.** Good lighting helps prevent eyestrain.



Find Things Your Child Will Want to Read

Help your child find reading materials that he will enjoy by focusing on his interests. For example:



- **Which books does he ask you to read over and over again?** Look for more like them.
- **Does your child have any hobbies?** There's sure to be a book or magazine on whatever he finds exciting, from drawing to playing video games to taking care of pets.
- **What is your child's favorite food?** Find a recipe for it at the library. Read and follow the directions together.
- **Does your child have a collection?** Many children like to collect stamps, rocks, dolls, sports cards or other items. Look for books that describe collectibles, where to get them and how to organize them.
- **What does your child do in his free time?** If he likes an activity, chances are good that he'll enjoy reading about it. Find a book about camping, for example, or building soccer skills.



- **Does your child like computers?** Sometimes reading from a screen appeals to children more than reading from a page. Check out websites that your child might enjoy.
- **Who are your child's heroes?** Help her find articles—and possibly books—about them.
- **What is your child's favorite TV show?** Perhaps it was based on a book. Or it may have inspired books and articles. The same goes for movies, too.
- **Does your child have a good sense of humor?** Read a joke book together. Let her perform a “stand-up” act.
- **Does your child have unique interests?** Newspapers, newsletters, comics, poems, websites, catalogs, travel brochures and movie reviews all motivate children to read.

Make Time for Reading

Does reading every day feel impossible for your family? You may be over-scheduled. Here's a questionnaire to help you find out. Answer *yes* or *no* to these questions:



- _____ **Does your child spend** too many hours on entertainment screen time? (If you're not sure, keep a diary for one week. You might be surprised by the results!)
- _____ **Does your child watch** TV shows at random—mostly when he's bored?
- _____ **Does your child's schedule** keep you from spending time together?
- _____ **Does your child spend** all of his free time on activities, chores and homework?
- _____ **Does your child complain** about being too tired?

If you answered *yes* to any of these questions, review your family's schedule. A few changes can make a big difference. Reduce TV viewing, for example, by planning to see only certain shows. Eliminate extracurricular activities that aren't enjoyed. Eat one meal a day together. Read something aloud at the table, and then discuss it. Set a regular bedtime—with 15 minutes built in for reading. Chances are excellent that you can fit in reading—and relax while doing it!

Motivate With Mysteries

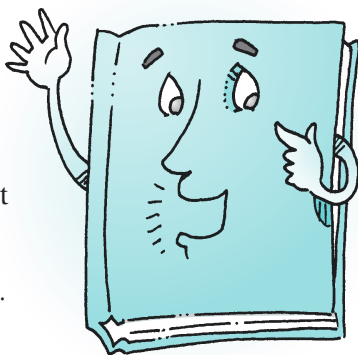
Mysteries are called “page turners” for a reason. They keep your child reading! Many kids love “thrillers”—once they try a good one. Here are some types to consider. Ask your librarian to help you find:

- **Series.** Recurring characters and story lines make these books appealing. Once your child starts a series, she’ll find it hard to stop.
- **History.** Try real-life mysteries about past events and the people involved in them. Ask your librarian for ideas.
- **Suspense.** These books may reveal “who done it” early on. But your child will enjoy seeing the main character figure things out.
- **Solve-it-yourself.** Some books, such as those in the *Encyclopedia Brown* series, give clues to help readers solve the mystery.
- **Choose-the-ending.** Books like the *Choose Your Own Adventure®* series let readers make choices that lead to different endings.
- **Nature.** The world is full of mysteries. Reading can help your child explain them. Here are some topics to research:
 - Why is the sky blue?
 - Where does butter come from?
 - Why can some animals fly?
 - Why do ants travel in a line?
 - Why does popcorn pop?
 - Why does water expand when it freezes?
 - When water goes down the drain, which way does it swirl? Why? Is it the same in all parts of the world?
 - Where does water go when it evaporates?
 - What makes a rainbow?
 - How did butterflies get their names?



Reading Aloud is a Sure-Fire Motivator

Once your child can read, should you stop reading aloud to him? No! This answer surprises many parents. But the fact is that reading aloud is *one of the best ways* to motivate even the most reluctant readers. Here are some guidelines to follow:



- **Read for fun.** Choose books that interest you *and* your child. Do silly things, such as make up accents for characters. The excitement in your voice can be contagious.
- **Allow interruptions.** It's natural—and good—for your child to chime in with questions and comments. This keeps him involved in the story.
- **Take turns.** You don't have to do all the reading. Show how much you like listening to your child. Alternate reading paragraphs or chapters.
- **Vary your selections.** Try different kinds of literature, such as novels and poems. Your child may enjoy listening to things that are above his reading level. With your help, he'll learn new words and think about complex ideas.
- **Read often.** Choose a family reading time, such as right before bed. Sometimes, make this a read-aloud session, no matter how old your child is.
- **Have discussions.** Talk about what you are reading. Do you like the book? Who are your favorite characters? Make up new stories about them.

Ask Questions About Books

Asking questions motivates children to keep reading and finding answers. It's also a skill that improves school performance. You can ask your child these questions or she can use them herself:

- What might happen next?
- Why did a character behave in a certain way?
- What else could a character have done?
- If you were in a character's shoes, what would you do?
- What would be the result if a character did something different?
- What do you like best about the story?
- Does anything bother you about the story?
- How do you think the story will end?
- How would you rewrite the story?
- What can you learn from the story?
- What are the characters learning from their experiences?



Get Published!

There is one author your child will probably be fascinated with—himself! It's exciting for him to see his own work in print. Here are some ways to help your child create his own material:

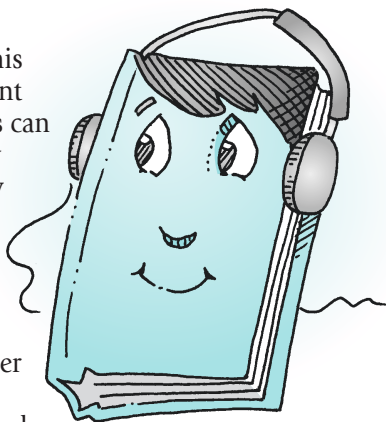


- **Make a book.** Have your child dictate a story to you. He can add illustrations himself. Older kids can write stories and organize them with covers, page numbers and more. Help him use a computer if he is interested in technology.
- **Write a newsletter.** Let your child start a neighborhood or family publication. He can include interviews, news stories, birthdays and more. Have fun editing and distributing it together.
- **Put on a play.** Suggest that your child write a play based on a book. Friends and family can make up the cast and audience.
- **Be a critic.** Keep a loose-leaf notebook around the house for family reviews of books, movies, TV shows and video games. Enjoy reading each other's opinions.
- **Express a concern.** Encourage your child to put his thoughts in writing. Together, read the guidelines for letters to the editor on a newspaper's editorial page. Then encourage your child to send one himself.

Encourage Reading With Fun Activities

Your child should have one time each day when she can count on reading, such as before bed. But this shouldn't be the only time she reads—and it shouldn't be a boring routine. Here are some ways to make reading exciting:

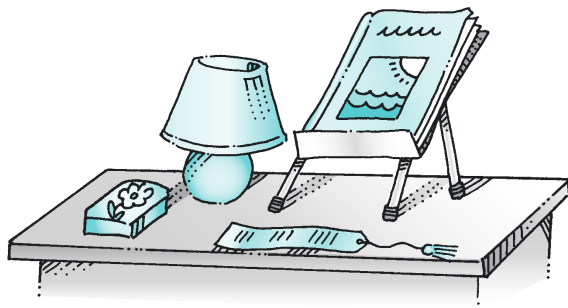
- **Listen to audiobooks.** This is a good way to show reluctant readers how interesting books can be. Young children may enjoy recordings made by you. They can follow along with the book while listening.
- **Sign up for a pen pal.** Children love receiving mail and learning about life in other countries. Ask your librarian how your child can get involved.
- **Rent a video.** Watch a film that is based on a book. Together, compare the versions. How are they alike and different? Which one do you like better?
- **Take a field trip.** Do research with your child on attractions in your area, such as museums or parks. Let reading materials be your "tour guide."
- **Follow current events.** Is there a developing news story that interests your child? Read the latest reports together each night.
- **Make reading coupons.** Show that you think reading is something special by giving your child reading coupons. Some coupons might be for 30 minutes reading with you. Others might be good for a trip to the bookstore or an extra trip to the library to select a book. Reading coupons make great gifts or rewards for finishing chores on time, helping a brother or sister—or anything else you choose.



Be a Reading Role Model

No one has more influence on children than parents. If you show your child that reading is wonderful, he may look forward to it. Here are some things you can do:

- **Read every day.** Read with your child—and to yourself. Let him see you enjoying books, magazines, newspapers and more.
- **Keep reading materials handy.** Make it possible to read anytime, anywhere. Bring books into doctors' offices, for example, and other places where you expect long waits.
- **Give compliments.** Talk about books and writers that you love. Say things like, "This plot is so exciting," "These illustrations are beautiful," and "I can't wait to start this author's new book!"



- **Make attractive displays.** Place a favorite book on your nightstand. Or frame a beloved children's book cover. Treat reading materials carefully to show that you value them.
- **Visit the library often.** Take your child to the library at least once a week. Make a point to check out a book for yourself every time. Let your child sign up for a library card.
- **Meet other readers.** Look for other reading role models to point out to your child—friends, relatives and people your child looks up to, like athletes and superstars.

Share the Excitement

It's important for children to know how much parents love books. But positive peer pressure can make a big difference, too. Here are some reading activities your child can share with others:

- **Trade books with friends.** Organize or attend an event to which each child brings at least one book to trade. Children can take home as many books as they bring.
- **Reading challenges.** Your library probably sponsors contests for children. Kids who meet reading goals earn prizes.
- **Charity drives.** Have friends, relatives and neighbors sponsor children to read books. People might give 50 cents per book, for example. Donate the proceeds to a good cause.
- **Volunteer reading.** Perhaps your child can read aloud to people who cannot do so for themselves.

Or it might be fun for her to record herself reading a book or article for:

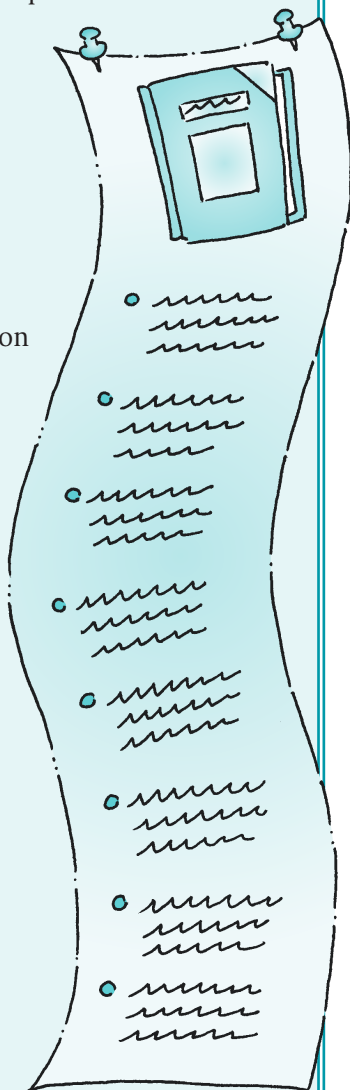
- Residents in a senior center.
 - Children in hospitals.
 - Younger siblings.
 - Other relatives.
- **Reading reviews.** Ask permission to hang a bulletin board where children will see it, such as at the library. Let kids display their reading suggestions.
 - **Reading meetings.** Encourage your child to join a children's book club. Offer to host some meetings at your home, if possible.



Ask your school for recommended reading lists and other reading information. The following organizations also provide some reading suggestions:

- American Library Association
50 East Huron St.
Chicago, IL 60611
1-800-545-2433
www.ala.org
- International Literacy Association
800 Barksdale Rd.
PO Box 8139
Newark, DE 19714-8139
1-800-336-7323
www.literacyworldwide.org
- Reading is Fundamental®
1730 Connecticut Ave. NW
Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20036
1-877-743-7323
www.rif.org

**Try contacting
your own
public library.**



When you motivate your child to read, you also motivate him to learn. That's a gift that improves school success more than almost anything else—and provides an endless supply of fascination and fun!



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