

## 10 Ways Families Can Encourage Reading

There is no way around the most basic truth about how to encourage children to read: **the best encouragement is by example**. If adults and older siblings in the household read, always have a variety reading materials in the household, and talk about what they are learning from their reading, younger children will follow suit and will benefit immensely.

For various reasons, any pupil may have specific difficulties in learning to read. However, if the home environment does not consistently and richly support reading, it can be difficult to tease out the specifics of a learning problem. Conversely, if the home environment does offer rich support, specific problems can be more readily identified and corrected.

**1.** Make your home a place that **loves books** and **makes readers comfortable**. You may already have an extensive **library**. You may be starting from scratch with **bricks, boards, and a standard answer of 'books'** when asked what you need for the baby. Add adequate lighting, a comfy chair or bench – for that matter, in tight quarters, a chest can provide young kids both sitting and sprawling space as well as book storage – and you've made a **reading nook**.

**2.** Research shows a range of home reading materials – [books, encyclopedias, magazines, and newspapers](#) – improves children's reading. Subscriptions needn't be cast in stone, and can vary over time as they reflect the family's current interests.

**3.** With a wealth of reading material available, parents and older siblings can make reading, and talking about their reading, a regular part of the rhythm of household life. **Discussing reading** involves comparing, contrasting, talking about main themes and details, explaining new words encountered, and making judgements about reasoning. Readers are Leaders help our pupils develop these analytical tools as part of our comprehension strategies.

**4.** Adults and older siblings should read to their juniors, and when the younger ones are ready, alternate the roles of reader and listener. Distant relatives can read to young ones via services such as Skype, or participate at a distance in a Book Club (see below). **Reading aloud** is a core technique employed by Leaders are Readers.

**5.** Older children or parents can also **record themselves reading**, for playback by younger children when the elders are absent (or when they like). Such recordings can also be donated to children's hospitals or charitable institutions.

**6.** You may want to organise **Book Club** activities within the home or among local children – or Internet-connected cousins – with comparable reading skills. Participants

can **read excerpts and discuss** what they like about their reading and why. (Grandparents always welcome.)

Leaders are Readers now offer free half-hour morning Book Club meetings. Interactive storytelling encourages listening and reading aloud. Active participation receives positive reinforcement, replacing anxiety over speaking with anticipation.

**7. Language-oriented board and dice games** like Scrabble, Boggle, MadGab and WordUp have a specific value in word construction, spelling, and vocabulary. Even Monopoly involves reading and the manipulation of symbols. Games like Balderdash (or its do-it-yourself version, known as the OED game) and Scrabble, that have a challenge element, offer the additional virtue of practicing and valuing...

**8. ...looking things up.** Certainly much meaning can and should be derived from **context**. Through accidents of history, English has **a larger vocabulary than any other human language** – exactly how large is the subject of debate – and is full of **shades of meaning**, ranges of **connotation**, and **words that appear to mean something other than what they do mean**. The idea that no one person knows all there is to know about English, and that literate people who disagree commonly and civilly refer to a trusted authority, cannot be instilled too early.

Leaders are Readers – apart from supporting the use of dictionaries, reference materials *and* inference from context - teach pupils specific skills for understanding and building their vocabulary.

**9. Support interests and enthusiasms** with reading material. Libraries are of course invaluable for this. For children who read independently and are developing their own interests, browsing the shelves in pursuit of their latest enthusiasm becomes its own pleasant, rewarding activity. Despite the apparent decline of print media, niche magazines still survive, thrive, and even spring up anew. You may absolutely loathe the latest music craze among the young. Chances are, though, a **specialised magazine** is devoted to it, and may even be a critical and intelligent one that you wouldn't mind admitting to your house as a **gift subscription** for your misguided teen.

**10. On holiday**, language activities while traveling might include **spotting letters of the alphabet** in sequence on billboards or licence plates. **Singing**, besides being fun, promotes general language-building and expressive activity for the youngest. Reading aloud or listening together to **recorded books** is another option as long as it's pleasurable and not considered a Grim Duty. (Hint: Any family member should have the right to call a halt to ask questions or raise a point for discussion, or simply because of tiredness or lack of interest.) And of course, motion sickness permitting, children may read to themselves during a **quiet reading time**.