

50+ Ways to Promote a Lifelong Love of Reading in Your Child

Karen Robertson

www.treasureboundbooks.com

Whether your child is a reluctant reader, rarely even picking up a book, or easily gets lost between the pages overcome with a love of reading-there are many things you can do to help encourage children to read.

Learning to read for fun at an early age is the start of a lifelong adventure that can take children to worlds they might never imagine.

Motivating kids to read is not always a simple task, so here are some fun ways to help encourage your kids to find fun in reading and to actually someday even enjoy it.

1. **Leave books scattered around your home and car.** I know we like our homes tidy but you'd be amazed how often books get picked up and looked at when they are within reach!
2. **Visit a bookstore** or discount book sale together with your child. Let them look through the books and pick out books that catch their eye. Don't worry if they choose a book easier or more difficult than their level. The goal is for them to find a subject that they are interested in and won't mind reading about. If it is a more challenging book, reading it together can spark a desire for them to read more and you can then find books on the topic on their appropriate level.
3. **Cook together.** Reading comes in many forms: including recipes! Many kids enjoy being in the kitchen and reading recipes and cookbooks can be a fun way to encourage them to read. And, you'll get some math lessons in as a bonus with all that measuring!
4. **Have a "DEAR" time as a family.** Find a time that the whole family can "Drop Everything And Read." If everyone in the family is doing it together it can be a lot more fun!
5. **Read aloud to your children.** No matter the age, most children enjoy hearing someone read to them. Even older children can benefit from hearing an adult read the pages of a chapter book to them as they follow along and visualize what they are hearing. No such thing as too much reading aloud!
6. **Let's go to the movies!** Use books that have been turned into movies as a reward for finishing a book. Today, many quality novels are being turned into movies that are appropriate for children. Have your child read the book and then enjoy a movie night together to see the film based on the book. Be sure to have a great discussion after the movie to compare the book and film. The same can be done with TV shows that are made from books.
7. **Learn a new skill.** Find a skill that your child is interested in learning such as a sport, or a craft like knitting. Find books about that topic and let your child learn the skill by reading about it.
8. **Bedtime extension!** If bedtime in your home is 8:30, allow your child to keep the "lights on" until 9:00 if they would like to read instead of going to sleep at 8:30. Most kids will do *anything* to extend bedtime!

9. **Create a “print rich” environment in your home.** This is easily accomplished by having lots of things to read available for everyone. Books, magazines, newspapers etc. all provide opportunity for kids to be exposed to a variety of print. The more there is to choose from, the better!
10. **Have a fabulous “reading spot” in your home.** Find a comfy place that your child loves to be and make that their official reading spot. Maybe a big beanbag by a window, or a stack of pillows in a playroom would be just the spot to draw in your child.
11. **Make a reading rewards chart.** Create a chart where kids can put up a sticker each time they finish a book. Set milestones for them to achieve and rewards for when they reach that milestone. Don’t forget, rewards don’t always have to cost money, like treats from a store or restaurant. You can provide fantastic rewards that cost absolutely nothing, like extra play time or the right to have a friend over. Just be sure that the reward is something that fits your child-what is it they would like to have/do?
12. **Take field trips.** Visiting new places with your kids can spark a love for unexpected topics. Take them to a history museum and you may find their curiosity peaked by something. Nonfiction books exist on every topic under the sun, so you will certainly be able to feed their new curiosity with new books. This works in reverse as well. For example, read a book on planes and then visit an air museum to check out the real thing as a reward for reading the book.
13. **Read and discuss books together.** Both fiction and nonfiction books can be great conversation starters. When reading together, ask your child about the pictures in the book or predict what will happen in the story.
14. **Variety...variety...variety!** Be sure that kids are exposed to a wide range of literature types. Fairy tales, poems, informative books, comic books, song books...the more variety you provide, the more likely children are to find something they like.
15. **Allow repetition.** If your child wants to read the same book over and over until you think you just can’t hear it again-let them. Try to be patient. If the child is a non-reader, they will begin to memorize the book and will then be able to “read” it back to you. What a feeling of accomplishment when they see that they can read!
16. **Read by flashlight.** Nothing like some adventure in the dark to get a child excited! Have them choose some books and a dark spot in the house. You can even help them create a dark space by building a tent. Allow them to shut out the lights, and read only by the light of a flashlight. It’s also a good idea to put a book lamp in children’s rooms for regular night time reading.
17. **Shop at Home.** Catalogs are filled with words describing in detail all of the things for sale. Find a catalog full of items your child is interested in such as sports, toys, etc. While they are reading about the items, they can even start their Christmas or birthday list!
18. **Head to the grocery store.** The grocery store is filled with words! Have children help you find specific items or brands by reading labels on the shelf for you.

19. **Choose a magazine.** Let children select a magazine that interests them to get a subscription to. This will provide reading material that they are interested in as well as let them experience the fun of getting their own mail!
20. **Play games.** Many board games out there require reading to play the game. It's great practice for reluctant readers.
21. **Gift time? Give a book!** By giving children books as gifts on special occasions, it can add special meaning to a book. Children may be more likely to read a special book, especially on that occasion each year. You can also encourage family members that are special to the child to give them books as gifts. A special book from a favorite relative can be a real treasure.
22. **Theme/Holiday books.** Find books that fit with each holiday or special time of year. There is a wide assortment of books centered on holidays out there. Kids love special times like Christmas, so why not read Christmas books all through December!
23. **Create a special bookmark.** Kids need to understand that they don't have to finish an entire book in one sitting. That task can seem too overwhelming and they may shut down before they even start. By choosing or creating special bookmarks, children learn that they can read for a while and then use their bookmark to finish at another time.
24. **Play the ABC game on the road.** As you drive from place to place throughout your day, see who can be the first to read words on signs going through the entire alphabet. Print is everywhere and so are fun reading opportunities!
25. **See the writing on the wall.** Put up a large piece of paper on a wall where your child can write on it. You or your child can even draw bricks on it so it looks like a real wall. Allow them to write titles of books they have read as well as book review for the rest of the family to see. They could even draw pictures from the books.
26. **Record a book.** Use a cassette recorder to record family members reading the text of the book. This is especially fun with out of town relatives, and can easily be accomplished by sending them the book and a tape. How special to hear grandma's voice reading a book to a child who only sees her a few times a year?
27. **Read across the map.** Find a map of the country or world and read books that are set in a wide variety of areas. Each time a book is read that is from a new state or country-make a mark on the map or place a sticker on the location to show that you have "visited" that place in a book!
28. **"I Caught You" coupons.** Each time you "catch" your child reading, hand them an "I Caught You" coupon. Let them save up their coupons and when they have a certain amount, they earn a treat or privilege. Or, for multiple family members-have them put their coupons in a jar and draw for special privileges.
29. **Create a personal library.** Ownership is an important skill for kids of all ages. What better to own than a shelf full of books? Create a space in the child's room for their own book collection. Fill it with books of their choice and they just might enjoy reading THEIR books!
30. **Provide a book allowance.** Let children earn money for doing chores that goes into a book allowance jar. Once they have collected enough, visit the bookstore and let them choose a magazine or book that they would enjoy reading.

31. **Let them read to you.** If your child wants to read something to you, even if it is a slow-go, be patient and let them read, no matter how long it takes.
32. **Allow some computer time.** Sit with your child and search the internet at home or at a library. Any topic imaginable can be found and there are more things to read online than you could find anywhere else.
33. **Use positive reinforcement** whenever you can to praise a child for finishing a book, or even just for spending time reading. Children of all ages need to hear praise from the adults in their lives. This is even more affective when you are able to praise them in front of another adult who can congratulate the child on their accomplishment.
34. **Do a project together.** Find something you can do together such as build a model airplane, or crochet a scarf. Have your child read the directions to you as you complete the project together.
35. **Have daily, scheduled reading time.** Don't force difficult reading during this time, allow this to be a time when the child can choose to read anything they choose. Thirty minutes a day is recommended, but if that is too much for your reluctant reader start with five or ten minutes and work up from there.
36. **Give them a note.** Put notes in lunchboxes, under pillows, with the toothpaste-anywhere you can surprise your child with a note. They don't need to be long and detailed, just enough to provide reading experiences throughout their day. You can even let them participate and write notes to others in the home.
37. **Give children writing materials.** Reading and writing go hand in hand so children should be encouraged to write as well as read. Be sure to provide a variety of materials such as colored pens/pencils and different papers to make writing more fun.
38. **Be a model.** Children are much more likely to become readers if they see their parents read. Whether you like books, magazines, or the daily paper-be sure your kids see you taking time to sit down and read. It is especially important for boys to see men reading since more boys tend to be reluctant readers.
39. **Get a library card.** When kids get their own library card and can pick out their own books they have ownership in their reading. The library is the ultimate spot for even reluctant readers to find things that interested them, and at little to no charge, it's a place that fits any family budget. Go to the library, and go often!
40. **Find a book club or reading group.** Many bookstores, libraries and schools offer book clubs for kids to be involved in to discuss a book they are reading. This gives them a chance to read and visit with peers and see other kids enjoying reading. If you can't find a group, start one by finding some other parents who have kids who would participate.
41. **Looking for trivia or facts?** Some children are fascinated by trivia and would love to fill their brains with interesting and amazing facts. Try exposing them to a book like the Guinness Book of World Records or another similar book. There are even books out there like the Guinness Book that are more aimed at children.
42. **Make a Basket-O-Books.** Place books and other reading material in a variety of places in your home so that they are always available. You just never know when the urge may strike to pick up a book!

43. **Don't make a big deal about mistakes.** When a child is reading out loud, try not to correct every single word they may mispronounce. If the meaning is affected, then a correction should be made, but if a child is corrected constantly they will certainly not enjoy reading and will become reluctant if they are not already.
44. **Participate in a summer reading program.** Many libraries offer reading programs during the summer time for students to track their reading and earn rewards. See if a library near you has a program like this.
45. **Let children be authors.** Let your child tell you a story while you type the words for them. Print the pages leaving room for them to illustrate their book. As the author of their own book, children will love reading the words on paper that they created. This can be a great activity to follow up an outing or field trip where the child can write a book about their experience.
46. **Take-along book.** Anytime you are going somewhere with your child that you may experience wait time, such as a doctors office, let them choose reading material that they would like to take with them. They are much more likely to read something they choose than that old decrepit stack of books at the doctor's office.
47. **Don't limit word exposure to books.** Talk, play, sing, tell stories etc. Well developed verbal skills are an important early indicator of future reading success.
48. **Find video or computer games** that teach and encourage reading skills. Of course, we must limit the amount of time our children are exposed to this type of media, but technology can be a great tool to get kids reading.
49. **Find a book series that your child is interested in.** Many authors write series books such as *The Magic School Bus* Books or the *Harry Potter* series. Once they are interested in a series, they will be able to keep reading about the same or similar characters in different stories. You might even try reading the first in the series with them, and then allow them to forge ahead on their own.
50. **Listen to books on tape.** Many authors are now reading their books on tape or CD for readers to listen to. This way, kids can follow along without having the pressure of having to figure out all of the words themselves. Books on tape can be found in any level from beginning readers all the way through adults!
51. **Try a variety of approaches.** Don't get discouraged! If one idea is a flop, don't give up! Keep providing new and different reading activities for your reader and you'll be sure to find something that clicks with them.

Of course, every tip given above is not going to fit every child. It's up to you to really observe your child. Figure out how they are wired, and try activities that you think are the best fit for them.

Getting kids to read is often a challenging task, but one that is so important it's worth all the time and effort you can give.

Karen Robertson

www.treasureboundbooks

Karen.robertson2000@hotmail.com