

THE READING JOURNEY: READING TIPS FOR EACH STAGE

Sharing a book with your child allows you to share adventures and experiences. It allows you to ask questions, talk about what has happened and decode what you think together. Sharing a book can be a bonding experience and for young children, cuddling up with a parent to read a book can and should be a special time.

Reading is important, but don't feel that you have to take on the role of the teacher or put pressure on your child to exceed their capabilities. It is great to instil a love of books and language from an early age, led by your child and their interests and pace of development.

Lots of Breda students say that they can often get distracted when trying to read, and this is where support from home can be beneficial in establishing helpful routines around reading. For example: insist reading is completed before screen time.

Alternatively, ensure reading is completed in bed before sleep; this is much healthier than looking at a screen before going to sleep and will also improve sleep quality. Also, ask your child questions on what they have been reading to encourage them to continue and to check their comprehension.

• THE BEGINNING

It is never too early to start your child's reading journey!

- Talk to your bump, as your baby can hear sounds as early as 18 weeks. Talking regularly with your unborn child will help them recognise your voice, and they will be comforted listening to you even before they are born.
- Once your baby arrives, then share books with them. They will not yet understand any words, but they will love cuddling up, hearing your voice, and, in time, looking at the pictures. Use black and white picture books in the early days, as these are much more effective as your baby's eyes and vision develop.

• THE EARLY YEARS

- Sharing picture books is fun. Do not worry if you do not have much time, as just a few minutes each day will make a big difference. Also, do not worry if your child gets distracted, chews the book, or wanders off, as this is perfectly normal.
- Turn off the screens and put down your phone to make it easier for both of you to enjoy the story without any distractions. Sit close together and encourage your child to hold the book themselves and turn the pages. Look at the pictures; do not just read the words. Maybe there's something funny in the images that you can enjoy together.

- Talk about the book and ask questions. Get them to guess what will happen next. Picture books are an excellent way to talk through your child's fears and worries or help them deal with their emotions. Give your child space to talk and ask how they feel about the situations in the story.
- There is no right way or wrong way to share a story, as long as you and your child enjoy the experience. Use funny voices, act out situations, and your child will love this. Involve other family members, such as grandparents, as story time is something that everyone can enjoy, and it is an excellent way for relationships to strengthen.

• THE PRIMARY SCHOOL YEARS

Reading with your child should be a delightful experience. Your child will feel safe reading, and then gradually, they will grow into a strong, competent, and confident reader. You will have given your child a wonderful gift and a foundation to build on; a love of books that will broaden horizons and open doors; a love of books that can last for the rest of their lives.

- The more you read to your child, the better, but the evening bedtime story is often the easiest, the most appropriate and most enjoyable moment. Ten minutes may be enough with a young child, but if you can manage fifteen, that would be even better.
- Settle on the bed with your child, cuddle up and enjoy whatever book has been chosen. The downside to this (if it has a downside) is that your child will soon pick up their favourite books and demand them to be read again and again until you are bored – but your child will not be – they will love it. Every time you reread the same book, your child will hear new words in the story that will make the meaning even clearer. They will also see, recognise, and learn the print on the page.
- Do not confuse learning to read with bedtime reading, which is reading for pleasure. Learning to read has an academic focus and should be separated from the bedtime book. Bedtime reading is the time for relaxation and preparation for sleep. If you are reading a lovely bedtime story to your child, do not suddenly hand the book over to them and demand, "Now you read the next page." Doing this will put your child under pressure and may make them associate anxiety and failure with reading. Often children are put off reading in this way.
- Do not worry if your child keeps choosing books that you consider very simple, as the reinforcement lets them build up their confidence. Your child will feel safe with their much-read and much-loved books. If you are reading for pleasure, then you do not need to be concerned with driving your child on to the next reading level at school. It is about 'pleasure'.

- Show how much you enjoy books. Ensure that your child also sees you and other family members reading. Dads have a critical role to play here with boys. If you want your child to enjoy reading, then you need to enjoy it yourself.

• THE TEENAGE YEARS

As your child moves into secondary school, reading can be seen by them more as work than fun, and teenagers may stop reading for pleasure or stop reading at all. Here is some advice to support your teenager through these years:

- Young Adult (YA) novels tackle the edgy issues teenagers struggle with, from romantic longing to peer pressure to grief and trouble at home or school. Teenagers will gravitate toward relatable subject matter whether they are personally grappling with these issues or are seeking vicarious thrills.
- Merge movies with books. Hollywood is turning to teen literature for ideas more than ever. Offer your teenager the print version to read before or after a big film comes out and discuss with them the similarities and the differences between the two. Which was better? The book or movie? Why?
- Graphic novels, once dismissed as comic books, are now recognised as literature. These books may be the key to getting some teenagers hooked on books and are available in a wide range of genres, from adventure and fantasy to historical fiction, memoir, and biography, so certainly, there is a graphic novel out there to suit your teenager's taste.
- Encourage your teenager with appropriate adult-level books. Find non-fiction titles on subjects your teen's curious about, such as climate change, race, political corruption, or true crime. Check adult non-fiction bestseller lists to see what is going viral.
- Try some poetry. Novels in verse and performance poetry are an increasingly popular trend. Poems are easy to read as they have all that white space on the page. The spare and lyrical approach to poetry can pack a punch.
- Let your teenager get an audiobook to listen to on the way to school or on long drives. They can download audiobooks to their smartphones to not risk looking uncool because they will be under headphones or have their earbuds in.
- Model reading at home, where your teenager can see you. Express your interest and enjoyment and talk about what you are reading. Always take a book with you when you go to the beach or waiting in a long queue. Demonstrate to your teenager that reading is a pleasure and not a chore.
- Keep reading material around. Children who grow up with heaps of books around them tend to read more. Fill the bathroom, car, dining table (wherever

there is a captive audience) with comic books, graphic novels, and magazines geared to their interests. There is nothing wrong with "micro-reading."

- Hand your teenager a gift card to your local or online bookshop. They may discover the treasure-hunt fun of looking for a brilliant book.