

MINNESOTA CENTER for Reading Research

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to DiscoverSM

HOW DO I GET MY CHILD TO READ AT HOME?

Many of us would relish an afternoon under a shade tree with a good book. Independent reading is not only an enjoyable way to spend time, but it is also critically important for children of all ages to become better readers. Many children just love to read, but for some it seems to be a chore that they have to be forced into. Below are some research-based ideas that may help your child read more at home and develop a love of reading.

LET INTEREST BE THEIR GUIDE

- It makes sense that children (or anyone) are more likely to read something if they are interested in it, so let them pick books to read.
- **Don't rely on titles** because those can be misleading. Take your child to the library or bookstore and let kids skim before picking a book.



PICK EASY BOOKS, BUT DON'T BE SCARED OFF BY RITS, LEXILES, AND READABILITY

- Interest alone will not assure that children will actually read the book. If the book is too difficult, then they can become frustrated and further dislike reading. Recent research out of the MCCR found that how difficult or easy the book is to read mattered more than interest in the topic in actually engaging children in reading. Make sure that your child can read about 95% of the words.
- You may have seen numbers like RIT (which stands for Rasch units), Lexile ranks, and grade-level readabilities. All of these numbers try to estimate the difficulty of a book, but they are just that – estimates! It is almost impossible to determine how easily any one child will read a particular book. If your child's teacher says that she reads a Lexile range of 720 to 850, but she wants to read a book that is a 920, then let her look through it and read it if she wants to. She may very well have the background knowledge and vocabulary to read the book and could improve her knowledge and reading skills as a result. Take a chance, but let her abandon the book if she loses interest.

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USE SOCIAL INFLUENCE

- Older children (e.g., 5th through 12th grade) rely on their peers when forming opinions. Therefore, social influences (i.e., everybody is doing it) can be a powerful force in their lives and can be used as an opportunity to instill a love of reading.
- Every year Renaissance Learning publishes a list of books that children at all grades like the most and read the most.
- The list is available at <http://doc.renlearn.com/KMNet/R004101202GH426A.pdf>. Encourage children to read books that are popular for their age groups.
- If your children are reading books that are popular among their age groups, then provide them with opportunities to talk to friends about them.



Start a book club, a blog, join library discussion groups, or engage in social media outlets geared for reading such as <http://www.shelfari.com>.

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOOK

- We have to rethink literature to keep up with our children's view of reading and technology. Recent research by MCRR faculty demonstrated how multimedia applications can engage adolescent readers who struggle with reading.
- Websites can be a great source of literature, but children need more than pretty pictures and bright colors. Interactivity can be great, but be sure that it enhances reading and provides deeper learning rather than just providing bells and whistles.
- Graphic novels are a relatively new entry into the reading world that many children find engaging.
- Be sure to talk to your children about what they read. Don't ask for a report; simply engage them in a conversation.

