
Helping Reluctant Readers

For many kids, reading just doesn't come easily. Some kids have difficulty connecting letters and their corresponding sounds. Others have yet to discover that special enchanting story that grabs the imagination and shows just how fun reading can be. For all kids, though, being at ease with letters, their sounds, and words is an important foundation for learning throughout life.

Here are a few simple ways to help kids become eager readers:

Start with your child's picks. Comics or joke books may not be your first choice to cultivate literacy, but they can motivate kids to read.

Don't worry that these texts may not be substantial enough. They can play important roles in helping kids understand some fundamentals, like how events take place in a sequence and stories are laid out. They also help build vocabulary and show that books can be visually appealing. Once your child becomes comfortable with the experience of reading, you can encourage other literature selections with a variety of challenging content.

Read and reread and reread. Many kids reach for the same books over and over again. That's OK. Through repetition kids can master the text and eventually sail through it with ease and confidence. Each new reading of the book may also help them understand it just a little better. And that positive experience may inspire them to give new books a try.

Read aloud. By reading aloud, you can help build your child's vocabulary, show that you enjoy reading for fun, and help your child connect sounds with letters on the page. Above all, reading aloud provides together time that you'll both enjoy. And it doesn't have to end once kids get older. The comfort of a parent's voice and undivided attention is something kids never outgrow.

Create opportunities to read and write beyond the pages. Provide kids with many rewarding chances to read every day. Write notes and leave them on a pillow, in a lunchbox, or in a pocket. Ask friends and relatives to send postcards and letters. Leave magnetic letters and words on the refrigerator, and you may find kids spontaneously creating words, sentences, and stories. On road trips or errands, play word games that strengthen language skills. You might try "I Spy" ("I spy something that starts with an 'a' ...") or games where you pick a category like "food" and then everyone has to name foods that begin with a certain letter. Kids often like reading

signs seen while you're on the road, like those on restaurants.

Get help if you're worried. If you're concerned about your child's ability or willingness to read, don't wait to get help. Consult with your child's doctor or teacher. If they share your concern, they may be able to suggest resources to help your child become an eager reader.

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