

5 Ways to Encourage Reading

1. Provide Reading Material

Children can't read if they don't have anything to read! We know that children in homes full of reading material are more likely to read themselves. Even if children aren't reading yet on their own, reading material should be available. Both books and magazines for children should be in the house. Of course, it's best if parents read to their children, but whether parents read often to their children or not, the material should be available.

The books should represent a wide variety of topics and genres. These should include picture books, fiction, and nonfiction on a variety of topics.

2. Read Out Loud Together

Reading to children is a great way to encourage reading. Many parents think that once their children begin to read, they no longer need to read to their kids. However, reading together can be a very special time. It not only fosters a love of reading, it also provides an opportunity to strengthen emotional bonds.

Early readers may hide their ability to read because they fear the loss of that special time with parents. It can help if parents say things like "I enjoy reading with you. When you learn to read, I hope we can still spend time like this. Maybe then we can even take turns reading to each other."

3. Visit the Library

Children can't read if they don't have anything to read! Sometimes parents think their children aren't interested in reading because their kids don't enjoy the typical children's books. However, many gifted kids prefer to read non-fiction. If they have material to read on their favorite topic, dinosaurs or computers for example, they may be voracious readers.

Making regular trips to the library also tells children that reading is important - and fun - enough that it's worth the time set aside for visits. Parents can also use library visits a way to learn more about their children's interests.

4. Include Notes with School Lunches

This activity is especially fun for young early readers, children who started to read before age five, sometimes as early as two. If these early readers are in preschool, they'll really enjoy getting special notes they can read at lunch time. The notes needn't be too long, though, just long enough to wish the child a good day and say "I love you."

Once kids are in first grade, the window of opportunity for sending notes along with lunch

shrinks. Beginning readers should still enjoy it, but for older children who are beginning to become more independent, it may become a bit less exciting.

5. Create Reading "Scavenger Hunts"

Technically these aren't scavenger hunts so much as they are reading puzzles. This is a great activity for birthdays and other gift-giving holidays. Rather than giving a child a gift directly, parents start out with a note that can be inserted in a card or some other container such as a plastic hollow egg.

The first note provides directions or hints on where to find a second note. The second note provides a hint for the next note and so on until the last note, which sends the child to a gift. These hunts can be as challenging for the parents to create as they are for the kids to solve!