

## So you have a reluctant reader...?

Reading for pleasure is possibly the single-most important activity your child can do to improve achievement in school. Research has shown that reading helps cognitive development; a recent IoE study revealed that students who read at home do 'significantly better' across the curriculum – including 9.9% better in maths – than students who don't read. Linked to this is the fact that reading is the best way to improve vocabulary, essential for success in every subject.

Reading also has social and emotional benefits. It increases self-esteem and studies show that students who read are more empathetic. Growing up is tough -- reading can help young people explore complex problems from the safe fictional world of a book.

The problem, of course, is convincing young people of the importance and joy of reading; it is particularly tough in a world of electronic distractions. Here are some tactics you could try with your child:

- Find books with a connection to something they love. If they are football fans, look for football fiction for teens – try *Booked* by Kwame Alexander; *Football School Star Players* by Bellos; or Dan Freedman or Tom Palmer's books. If they like military/action/war, then try the *Dog Tag* series by CA London or Andy McNab's teen books. If they like to watch Youtubers, try Zoella's book club. And if they are into gaming, try fast-paced chapter books or 'choose your own adventure' stories. (Tip: try teen/YA author Alex Scarrow's books – he was a professional video-game developer before he turned to writing; or Jeff Norton's *MetaWars* series, billed as 'a video game you can read').
- Access the recommended reads lists: On our website, we have a number of reading lists and can also provide lists that are broken down in terms of age or interest. Please ask Mr Clarke for lists if needed.
- Any type of reading is helpful, so try graphic novels. Graphic novel versions of *The Recruit* by Muchamore, *Silverfin* by Higson and *Stormbreaker* by Horowitz are popular. Currently, the *Heartbreaker* series is incredibly popular.
- Try Barrington Stoke books: these are produced with tinted pages, special fonts and spacing, thicker paper and editing to reduce comprehension barriers and/or issues resulting from dyslexia.  
<https://www.barringtonstoke.co.uk/>
- If your child is ready, you might select a 'grittier' book. Make a big deal about whether they are old enough to read the book. Tell them maybe they should wait six months as 'there is some language and some blood'.

Pretty soon they will be begging you for the book, and you can eventually give in, saying 'since you are now in Year ..., I guess it is okay'. Charlie Higson's *Enemy* series is a gritty series written for teens, as is *Zom-B* by Darren Shan. We have a list of 'difficult issues' books if you are interested.

- Visit the library with your child. Stockport Libraries have access to far more than we do! Browse the shelves yourself and your child will soon be bored enough to browse themselves.
- Try a 'phone free' hour. Even if they do not read to start, it will give them space from other distractions to re-discover reading.
- Be enthusiastic about what they are reading: Ask them to describe a character or to read aloud an exciting bit. You might read a teen/YA book yourself; the plot-driven nature of many of these books means they are relatively easy reads – perfect after a day at work.
- Let your children see you reading for pleasure, and talk about what you read and how you choose books.
- If you have younger children, ask your older (reluctant reader) child to read aloud to them. This is a big confidence booster and it helps with sibling bonding. Michael Morpurgo is a particularly good shared read, as his books have something for everyone; I highly recommend *Kensuke's Kingdom* for sibling read-alouds.
- Children can also read to pets. I have seen this work in a couple families!
- Continue to read aloud to your children (even if they are fluent readers).
- Offer incentives: Perhaps a trip out somewhere if they read a certain number of books in the summer? I knew a grandmother who gave her granddaughter £1 per book she read and she claimed it was a great investment in the child's future. I wouldn't recommend doing this forever, as we don't want children to read only for rewards, but it works for summers or for times when a 'breakthrough' is necessary.
- Another idea is to find the book version of a movie: *Stormbreaker*, *Eragon*, *Harry Potter*, *The Book Thief*, *I am Number Four*, *The Princess Diaries*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Percy Jackson*, *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent*, *Maze Runner*, *Fault in Our Stars*, *Twilight* and *Inkheart* and *Wonder* are all films based on children/YA books. Both of you can read the book, and watch the movie together -- then discuss the differences.
- Have them pick up a device – an e-reader! Then check with your local library about borrowing e-books or try the Kindle daily deal.

- Try audio books: Stockport Libraries have free, downloadable audio books plus Audible has a wide range of teen books. Many teens like the idea of being able to do something active while listening to a book. By listening to an audio book, your teen will pick up new vocabulary, hear complex sentence structures and engage with stories.
- Listening to audio books as a family is another good idea. Long car journeys can be transformed!
- Visit a bookstore and allow your child to select a book of their choice. The visually appealing marketing and layout of best-selling books can attract even reluctant readers.
- Try biographies/autobiographies that interest your child.
- Non-fiction books linked to a child's interests are a great way to spark a desire to read.
- Gentle encouragement works best.

*Credit – Alice Visser Furay @  
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