

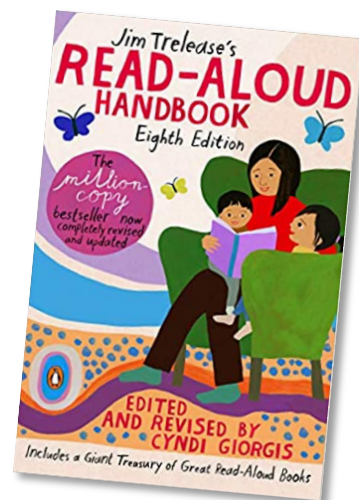
Resources for Caregivers: Nurturing Readers

Children spend about 900 hours a year at school versus 7800 hours at home; we parents and caregivers play a crucial role in establishing and growing our kids' love of words and reading. How can we make reading a part of everyday life?

Be a reading role model

Whether or not you consider yourself a reader, you read to discover new information, make informed decisions, engage with your community, and learn about the world around you. From reading the news to skimming a warranty to poring over travel magazines, YOU are a reader—even if you never crack a book (though I hope you do!). We want kids to see themselves as readers, too.

It's hugely important to show our children that we value reading; if we're wild about reading, it's more likely they will be, too. That means we must read to children, but also *in front of them*. What are you reading? When? Can they see you? (Alas, I often read at bedtime, when my kids are asleep...) As author Jim Trelease says in *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, sharing the habit of reading is passing a literary torch to the next generation. And role models needn't be limited to parents; look to grandparents, neighbors, babysitters, teachers, principals, and more.



Foster a culture of reading

One of the best ways to do this is to have books and reading material **everywhere**—all over the house, in the car, in your bag for times spent waiting in doctor's offices or siblings' lessons. Provide a wealth and range of reading materials; a rotating menu of books exposes children to a variety of subjects, formats, and genres, piquing their curiosity. **Research shows that the more kinds of printed material in the home, the higher a student's reading, writing, and math scores.**ⁱ

- Ensure your children have their own library cards; make a big deal out of that first one! Spend time at the library. Participate in a school or library summer reading program.
- Encourage friendships with other kids who read. Consider a kids' or parent-child book club. Reading communities increase reading motivation and interest!
- Treat kids like terrific readers, and it can be a self-fulfilling prophecy; the way we talk to kids becomes part of the narrative they tell about themselves.
- Read what your child is reading so you can discuss. Make connections, ask questions, infer, predict. Talk to them about what you're reading. **Talk about stories all the time!**
- Create a Reading Graffiti wall/board/poster to share quotes, favorite lines, and insights from what you're reading.
- Consider audiobooks in the car or instead of movie nights. A full 70% of kids who have listened to an audiobook agree it has encouraged them to read more.ⁱⁱ

Help kids find appropriate and interesting books

Many kids who say they don't like to read just haven't found the right book! Parents underestimate that kids need help finding books. Choosing books empowers readers and gives them a sense of ownership. Plus, 89% of kids ages 6-17 agree that their favorite books "are the ones I have picked out myself."ⁱⁱⁱ

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- See my Resources for Caregivers: Book Recommendations handout for web sites and books to consult for oodles of book list and recommendations.
- Subscribe to children’s magazines or check them out from the library.
- Keep reading picture books, at all ages. They are a beautiful, unique art form with a distinctive interplay of text and images, where art and text each tell part of the story. The best picture books are story-gems of wisdom polished into 32 pages! They’re accessible and a wonderful jumping-off point for introductions to new topics or ideas.
- Get kids hooked on a series. Familiar storylines and characters can be comforting and hugely motivating, especially for newly independent readers.
- Find an ally. Kids told Scholastic the best book recommendations came from teachers and school librarians (51%) and peers (50%). When you’re with your kids’ friends, ask those friends what they’re reading. Ask other parents what their kids are reading. Swap!
- Take kids “shopping” at the library or at used book sales.
- See what children gravitate toward. Research shows kids of all ages increasingly want books that make them laugh and books that provide diverse characters and settings.^{iv}
- Not into strictly narrative books? Encourage comics, graphic novels, or wordless books. Many caregivers fear that if kids engage in “lighter” reading they will never read more deeply. But evidence suggests that this type of reading provides the skill and motivation to read more demanding texts.^v
- It’s OK to “book taste” and not finish something. That’s a reader’s right!

Make it fun

It’s human nature to gravitate toward things that we find enjoyable or that make us laugh. Get the endorphins flowing to help create a positive association between reading and good times.

- Read poems, riddles, tongue-twisters, silly songs and stories, jokes—including on school lunch napkins!
- Ask Alexa for a limerick! Or a joke, or a short story...
- Explore book-to-movie adaptations and discuss how things were adapted. (Require the whole family to read the book before seeing the movie.)
- Make a blanket fort, tree house, or bathtub spa oasis in which to read.
- Read to a pet or stuffed animal. Explore libraries’ Read to a Dog programs.
- Start a kids’ book club. Tie book-specific crafts, décor, and food to your meetings.
- Check out author web sites for extensions, activities, and personal stories that bring creators to life. They’re real people just like you!
- Add another dimension, like reading a recipe and cooking or baking a masterpiece.
- Offer privileges: Provide a special bookcase for their collection of books, and/or let new readers stay up later if they’re reading—associate it with maturity.

“Reading at home should be beautiful, fun, curiosity-quenching and inspiring.
It’s great if you can help support your child while learning to read, but your most important job is more profound: to foster a love of reading....
- *How to Raise a Reader* by Pamela Paul and Maria Russo

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Keep reading aloud

Don't stop reading aloud because kids can read on their own! Sharing books creates bonds and memories, reinforces a pleasurable connection between books and family, and provides topics for discussion. Read alouds also expose kids to stories, authors, and genres they might not otherwise experience or choose.

Already stopped reading aloud to older kids? Try easing back in by reading them an article you think they'd like, read aloud the book they're assigned for school, or take turns reading a chapter of a family read aloud at dinner.

Engage reluctant readers

If your child is below reading level, strive to give them opportunities to feel successful. **All have the ability to become strong readers.** Kids must believe that about themselves, and believe that reading is worth learning to do well. Like all students, developing (a kinder and more accurate term than struggling) readers should read, read, read.

- Don't worry if your child likes to read the same book over and over. Re-reading builds connections in the brain and boosts confidence and fluency.
- Seek out books that have more pictures and white space: poetry, comics, graphic novels, and other visually-driven formats. More white space makes for less intimidating reading. Novels in verse are an excellent option, too.
- Read wordless books, which build visual literacy and help teach how to decipher images.
- Try playful, non-intimidating formats like joke books or I Spy, and/or books about video games or toys.
- Keep trying books until you find a genre that grabs your child. Many kids are "fact collectors" who prefer nonfiction to stories.
- Read a blog or web site about a favorite topic.
- Keep a reading chart in a visible place to log and celebrate progress.

ⁱ Trelease, Jim. *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, 7th edition. New York: Penguin Books, 2013

ⁱⁱ Scholastic Kids & Family Reading Report, 2018

ⁱⁱⁱ Scholastic Kids & Family Reading Report, 2018

^{iv} Scholastic Kids & Family Reading Report, 2018

^v Scholastic Kids & Family Reading Report, 2018