

# Raise Children Who Read for Fun

Try this 10-part plan to help your children develop into readers who read for fun.

By **Allison McDonald**

I love reading. I take books with me everywhere -- in a bath, on the treadmill, and in the car while my kids have sports practices. I am the type of reader I hope my children will grow up to be. Reading doesn't just come easy for me, it is also a refuge. It feeds my curiosity, it lets me escape, and it is a way for me to connect with others. I want all these things for my children and have a 10-part plan to help them develop into readers who read for fun.

## **1. Make reading a part of their daily routine.**

Find a time every single day to read to them and stick with it. It will just be something they always do.

## **2. Fill the home environment with reading.**

Books, magazines, comics, reference materials... have it available. Watch movies that are based on books, buy toys that are characters from books, tell stories using your favorite characters from books.

## **3. Make reading an event.**

Go to the library, go to the bookstore, and make it as exciting as going to the park or zoo. Make it an event, not something you slip in between errands. Make it fun!

## **4. Let them choose what they read.**

This one is hard for parents. This isn't the get-out-of-homework-reading pass. This is about letting them choose what they read for fun. Every family will have different books that are and aren't acceptable for them but within those boundaries, however wide they may be, let them choose what they read for fun.

## **5. Bite your tongue when your child reads things you do not love.**

There are plenty of books I don't love, but if my children are enjoying themselves reading I will bite my tongue. Be careful when you criticize reading material because what you intend as a *criticism of the material* a child can hear as a *criticism of reading* as a whole.

## **6. Make sure they see you read for fun.**

Practice what you preach. Make time to read for fun too. It doesn't have to be literature -- there's nothing wrong with fluff. The important thing is that they see you getting pleasure from reading.

## **7. Bend rules when reading is involved.**

Many voracious readers were created after bedtime. Letting bedtimes slide if and only if they are reading is a great motivator once children are reading independently. When kids are younger the simple act of reading one more chapter with them, or choosing one extra picture book can send a great message.

## **8. Never force feed reading.**

Avoid using reading as a punishment. This can make a child who loves reading into a child who associates it with being in trouble.

**9. When they find an irresistible book, help them find more just like it!**

When my son gets into a book series I reserve the next books at the library before he is done with the first. Having that next helping right there is such a great tool for keeping the momentum going.

**10. If they are struggling, pay attention and advocate on their behalf.**

Learning disabilities like dyslexia, behavioral issues, and even emotional upsets can contribute to reluctant or struggling readers. If you think that your child may have more than a lack of interest and be struggling with reading, talk to your child's classroom teacher and/or pediatrician. They will be able to help you find the right interventions and help for your child. After you figure out the issue, you can get back to reading for fun.

Not every child will turn into an adult who reads for fun. Parents can follow every step here and still have a child who prefers the outdoors, likes music more than stories, or just doesn't find the act of reading enjoyable. But as a parent, I know that I want to create the strongest foundation for my children and these steps are the foundation for raising readers who will read for fun.