

TIPS TO ENCOURAGE READING

by Nicola Morgan

(For parents and schools)



All the adults a child interacts with have an enormous effect on building that young reader. You don't have to be an expert or a trained teacher or even a confident reader yourself. You just have to really want the child to love reading and then you can easily follow these guidelines.

1. Value all reading equally, especially at early/reluctant stages. The more children **enjoy** it, the more they will do and the better they'll become. Show positive interest in every book choice.
2. When a child is keen and confident, **encourage** wider choice but always allow return to favourite books or personal choices. There's nothing wrong with comfort reading.
3. Don't over-promote a particular book – we're allowed not to like what "everyone" else likes!
4. Ask human booksellers/librarians to recommend. (Avoid "Amazon recommends".)
5. Give huge choice. Libraries are ideal because they're free, so not enjoying a book won't matter.
6. Don't be blinkered by publisher-led promotions / best-sellers – there's so much more. Explore.
7. **We** know reading is good for us but don't treat reading like spinach. **Know** the benefits and discuss with child which benefits appeal to them. Different readers want different things but "because it's good for you" is a poor motivator.
8. Author events work! Ask your school to think about booking a visit from an author.
9. Create reading time/space. The habit of reading before bed is perfect. Make it lovely.
10. "Model" reading – if they see you love reading, it helps children aspire to it.
11. No TV in bedroom; limit computer/smartphone. I suggest whole family screen-off time.
12. Allow children to stop a book they aren't enjoying if they've given it a go. It *should* be pleasure.
13. Don't over-protect teenagers. Discuss issues, rather than avoid. Novels are safer than gossip.

Worried about a reluctant reader?

14. Don't worry about quality of text – all text is practice. Never dismiss a choice.
15. Find topics that interest the child. Non-fiction is **equally** valuable reading.
16. De-stress the situation – **never** show worry in front of him.
17. Find "high-low" books – (high interest, low level) eg from publisher Barrington Stoke.
18. Take child to a book festival and get a signed book? It's exciting to feel part of that.
19. Don't invade time a child is spending doing something else enjoyable.
20. If genuinely concerned, discuss with school librarian or teacher and press for help if needed.

Most of all

- Support libraries – especially school libraries
- Support librarians – especially youth and school librarians. A school librarian can change lives.

Nicola Morgan is the author of award-winning books of fiction and non-fiction and is an international expert on aspects of wellbeing, adolescence and reading. She lectures on the science and benefits of reading (and other topics connected to wellbeing and adolescence. See her website for lots of free resources and details of her work, including her exciting and award-winning novels for teenagers.

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