

TIPS TO BOOST READING FOR PLEASURE - by Nicola Morgan



Inspire but don't pressure. ALWAYS focus on reading for *pleasure* above all else; expertise follows enjoyment.

Remember how motivation theory works. Think of exercise as an analogy: how do we get people who don't like exercise to exercise? Not by telling them to do it but by finding exercise they can like and how they can like it.

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: graphic novels, non-fiction, funny books, anything.
2. When a child is keen and confident, gently *encourage* wider choice but always allow return to favourite books or personal choices. There's nothing wrong with comfort reading.
3. Ask booksellers/librarians to recommend. (Avoid "Amazon recommends" as too narrow.)
4. Don't be blinkered by publisher-led promotions or best-sellers – there's so much more. Explore.
5. Give huge choice. Libraries are ideal because they're free, so not enjoying a book won't matter. Young readers must not have pressure to like a particular book.
6. Don't force anyone to finish a book they're not enjoying (when reading for pleasure.)
7. **We** know reading is good for us but don't treat it like spinach. Different readers want different things but "it's good for you" is generally a poor or short-term motivator.
8. Engineer reading time for the family. The habit of reading before bed is perfect. Make it lovely.
9. "Model" reading – if they see you loving reading, it helps them aspire to it. Talk about what you liked and what you didn't like.
10. Limit (but don't ban) computer/smartphone/TV. Have whole family switch-off-screen times.
11. Don't over-protect teenagers. Discuss issues, rather than avoid. Novels are safer than gossip.
12. If a reader likes reading ebooks, there's no problem with this – but switch off notifications!

Worried about struggling or reluctant readers?

13. Don't worry about quality of text – all text is practice. Never undermine their choice.
14. Find topics that interest them. Non-fiction is equally valuable reading, especially if it contains narrative (eg true stories) and is gripping.
15. Read to your child or use audio books – there are great benefits there.
16. De-stress the situation – **never** show worry in front of your child
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. You don't even have to read at a festival!
19. Don't make your child stop doing something else enjoyable: wait for a good moment.
20. If genuinely concerned, discuss with school librarian or teacher and press for help if needed.

Most of all

- Support libraries – especially school libraries. School libraries should be centre of school, loved and used by all.
- Support librarians – especially youth and school librarians. A school librarian can change lives.

Nicola Morgan, The Teenage Brain Woman, is the author of award-winning books of fiction and non-fiction and is an international expert on aspects of wellbeing, adolescence and reading. See her website for lots of free resources and details of her work, including her exciting and award-winning novels for teenagers. www.nicolamorgan.com