

10 tips to help your son with reading

Research demonstrates that boys as a group are lagging in reading and writing skills. If your son is having difficulty, he may need different approaches to encourage interest in reading. Here are 10 simple tips you can use at home to improve your son's literacy skills.

1. **It takes time to build confidence and skill.** It's not how hard the book is that counts, it's the amount of reading that matters. Let your son choose the books he wants to read, even if it's below his reading level. This will help him feel better about his reading skills and give him confidence to try more challenging material.
2. **Let him make his own choices.** If it's his choice, then he'll want to read it. Don't worry if he chooses the same types of books to read over and over or if they have edgy humour. Remind yourself that he's actually reading and enjoying it.
3. **Everybody enjoys a good story, so read to him.** If your son finds a story interesting but the book too hard, share the reading. This will also make the book more fun to read.
4. **Be a role model.** Make sure your son sees you reading and writing. If he sees you doing it, he'll respect you and the activity more.
5. **Challenge his mind in other ways.** Reading and writing are only a couple of ways to challenge your son's mind. Spend time with him and share some brain teasing games like chess, crossword puzzles, board games – even video games. An active mind is better prepared for reading.
6. **Give his teacher a call.** Next to you, his teacher knows him best. Talk to your son's teacher for updates on his reading and writing. Discuss ways that you can help encourage your boy's literacy skills.
7. **Have him read all sorts of material.** There's much more to read than just books. Try reading the instructions to a model airplane or new video game. It's all reading and it's all good practice.
8. **Tap into your son's hobbies and interests.** Turn his interest in sports and music into a reason for reading. Give him books and magazines about things that he already finds fun and interesting and he'll soon discover that reading can be interesting too.
9. **Use the Net.** Just because it's on a computer screen doesn't mean it's not reading. The Internet is loaded with great sites and games that are perfect for your son. Let his interests be his guide to the sites he'll want to read. Exchanging emails with friends and family is also a great way to practise writing. Just be sure he knows all about Internet safety and that the parental controls are on.
10. **Make his day with a positive word.** A pat on the back, school work on the fridge, a smile and the words "good going" ... these are gestures that will motivate your son to love reading and writing. So whenever your son finishes a reading or writing assignment, has read a new book or written a story, show genuine interest in it and tell him you're proud.

The Ministry of Education has produced a special publication on boys' literacy. Although it is intended for teachers, many parents may find it insightful. Download [Me Read? No Way! A practical guide to improving boys' literacy skills](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/brochure/meread/index.html) at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/brochure/meread/index.html>