Summer Learning Spotlight

Reading

Middle/High School
Summer 2024

THE PARENT INSTITUTE®

Summer reading—lots of it—is vital for keeping your teen's skills sharp. And it's special, because the choice of what to read is largely up to your teen. Here are some ways to help your teen enjoy a fun and educational summer of reading.

Step up reading stamina

Students' ability to focus on reading for long periods of time has declined dramatically in the past five years, according to a recent survey of educators. It takes time to build up reading stamina, which is why the long summer break is the perfect opportunity for your teen to develop it before school resumes. To help:

- **Encourage your teen** to find comfortable reading spots—on the deck, in the backyard, by the pool, etc.
- **Help your teen choose books** that aren't too difficult. It's easier to stay focused when reading is a pleasure.
- **Plan family reading time** when everyone is home, perhaps on a rainy summer afternoon. Turn off all devices, which can easily distract teens from reading.
- **Suggest reading** entire news articles instead of just social media posts. Teens often get their news from headlines and blurbs, which take less stamina than full stories.
- **Have your teen set goals.** Suggest setting a timer and reading for 10 minutes. Did your teen stay focused the whole time? If so, aim for 15 minutes next time. If not, suggest starting with five minutes and working up from there.
- **Start a stamina-building** book club with your teen. Read one chapter aloud, then have your teen read a chapter aloud. Next, you can both read silently, and finally, discuss what you've read.

Source: S. Sawchuk, "Reading Comprehension Challenges and Opportunities, in Charts," and "How to Build Students' Reading Stamina," Education Week.

Refresh your teen's reading supply

Now that school is out, you may wonder how to make sure your teen has enough reading material. The public library is a great place to start! In addition to regular library visits:

- **Collect free resources** from public agencies. Your teen may be excited to read the motor vehicle department's manual for new drivers or to browse a program and event guide from the parks and recreation department.
- **Make sure your teen knows** how to download free e-books from the library website. Ask a librarian for help if needed.
- **Look for summer yard sales,** used-book shops, thrift stores and library book sales in your area—and in places your family visits.
- **Encourage your teen to swap** books with friends. When they meet to hang out, they can each bring a book to trade.

S-T-R-E-T-C-H vocabulary during summer outings

Everywhere your family goes this summer, there will be plenty of new words for your teen to learn. Read trail signs at local or national parks. Stop by the town hall to read brochures about local attractions. Look for free entry days at area museums, and read exhibit signs. Challenge your teen to figure out the meanings of unfamiliar words by looking for clues in the words that surround them. Then, look them up at home.

Set reading sights on the future

What classes will your teen take next year? What career fields seem interesting? Suggest your teen get a glimpse of the future by reading!

Help your teen find books and articles about related historic events, scientific discoveries, and developments in fields like artificial intelligence, healthcare and business. Your teen will get practice reading for information—and start thinking about life after high school.

Copyright © 2024, The Parent Institute®, a division of PaperClip Media, Inc.
May be reproduced only as licensed by *Parents still make the difference!*® and *Helping Students Learn*® newsletters

Four ways to improve your teen's reading comprehension

Having a large vocabulary and a "storehouse" of prior knowledge are important for understanding reading material, and frequent summer pleasure reading is an effective way for your teen to build them.

You can help in several ways:

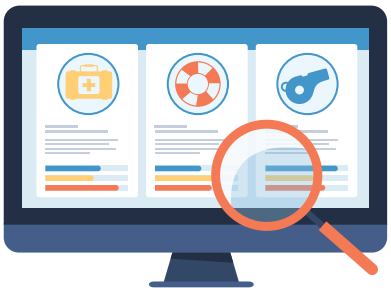
1. **Talk about what your teen** is reading. Share anything you know about a book's setting or topic. Ask your teen's opinion of the characters' choices or the plot's ending. For nonfiction, ask, "What did you learn?" and "What do you still want to know?"
2. **Have your teen look up** unfamiliar words in a dictionary. Together, practice pronouncing the words and using them in conversations—strategies that help to reinforce new words in long-term memory.

3. **Expand your teen's knowledge** by watching educational programs and listening to podcasts together. Include your teen in adult conversations about work, current events, daily responsibilities, etc.
4. **Suggest that your teen try** a wide variety of types of reading, including realistic and historical fiction, memoirs and biographies, news and magazine articles, essays and poems.

Reading is a summer superpower

Help your teen discover what reading can do! In the summer, reading can give your teen the power to:

- **Make plans.** Ask your teen to research summer entertainment options. Is there a free local concert series? Are any of your teen's favorite bands playing nearby? Are there fairs or festivals your teen can go to with family or friends?
- **Find employment.** Whether or not your teen is old enough for a part-time job, suggest reading job descriptions and applications to learn what employers require. To find applications, your teen can visit websites of area stores, restaurants, etc., and click on "Careers." Or, your teen might research what it would take to land a particular job, like lifeguard or camp counselor.



- **Relax.** Reading is a great way to unwind. Encourage your teen to start a habit of ending each day by reading for pleasure, whether it's a graphic novel, a biography of a favorite athlete or an outdoor adventure story.

Offer your teen a writing challenge

Having a real audience can inspire your teen to practice writing. Suggest that your teen write online reviews of summer activities or products. Your teen could review a local ice cream parlor or water park, or critique the season's blockbuster movies.

Or, encourage your teen to write a picture book for a younger sibling or cousin. It could be a true family story or a made-up adventure starring the child who will receive the book.

Games can help your teen have fun with words

Put some education into summer screen time by challenging your teen to play online word games, such as Wordle, Wordscapes or Wrodeo. Games that involve forming words from given letters or guessing a hidden word are fun for teens. Get the whole family in on the fun by turning a game into a daily or weekly competition.

Encourage your teen to try solving crossword puzzles, too—they improve spelling and vocabulary and often include puns and clever twists your teen may enjoy.

THE PARENT INSTITUTE®

Copyright © 2024, The Parent Institute®, a division of PaperClip Media, Inc.
May be reproduced only as licensed by *Parents still make the difference!*® and *Helping Students Learn*® newsletters