Summer Learning Spotlight

Reading

Middle/High School
Summer 2026

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Emphasize the importance of reading this summer—and watch your student return to school motivated and ready to read. Use these strategies and activities to keep your teen reading and writing all summer long.

Help your teen achieve summer reading goals

Meeting a goal of reading at least 20 minutes every day helps your teen maintain skills. The best part? In the summer, your teen gets to decide what, when and where to read. To reach this goal, have your teen:

- **Create a tracking system.** If the school break is seven weeks, that's about 23 hours of reading. Your teen can make a poster, keep a spreadsheet or use an app to record titles and minutes spent reading each day.
- **Partner with friends.** Working in a group helps keep teens accountable. They can read together or do quick check-ins to share progress. Encourage them to discuss vocabulary, concepts and themes.
- **Set digital reminders.** Your teen can set an alarm for convenient reading times, like during the hottest part of the day. If your teen doesn't feel like reading, suggest setting a timer and reading for just 20 minutes. Your teen may get lost in a book and want to keep going!
- **Find comfy reading spaces.** Help your teen look for cozy, air-conditioned nooks in at the library or shady spots at the park or pool. Associating pleasant places with reading can make settling down with a book more inviting.

Join your teen by setting and sharing reading goals of your own!

Reading offers writing inspiration

Songwriters, authors and even other teens all make great writing "mentors." Challenge your teen to find writing inspiration in their work. Your teen can:

- **Dig into song lyrics.** Encourage your teen to notice techniques songwriters use, including alliteration, rhyme and metaphor. Suggest that your teen try writing a song using some of those techniques, and maybe even find a tune to go with the lyrics.
- **Read children's picture books.** Have your teen pay attention to things the authors use to connect with young readers, like funny animal characters or repeated phrases. Ask your teen to write a story for a younger child using one or more of them.
- **Browse teen literary publications.** Look online together for literary magazines featuring work by teenagers. Challenge your teen to submit a piece of writing.

Build reading into summer routines

To make reading a regular part of your teen's summer, include it in family routines. Plan to:

- **Read as a family** at least once a week, maybe after dinner each Friday or late Sunday afternoon.
- **Visit the library regularly.** You might stop by with your teen before your weekly grocery trip.
- **Talk at dinner** about something you each read each day.
- **Download an audiobook** to listen to every time your family goes somewhere in the car.

- **Ask your teen to research** new places before you visit. Your teen can read about the vendors who will be at a market, then make a list of interesting stalls to check out.

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Give reading comprehension a multimedia boost

Reading frequently and broadly helps students improve comprehension. But it may be surprising to learn that movies, TV shows and even music can also help your teen become a better reader. Help your teen:

- **Activate prior knowledge** before watching a movie or show together. Discuss what you each know about the genre, setting and topic. For a movie that takes place in space, your teen might think about concepts like time, distance and physics. If it's a historical drama, discuss what life was like during the time period in which the program is set.
- **Develop curiosity** with documentary shows. Science and history documentaries are great tools for expanding knowledge. They can introduce your teen to new topics and vocabulary, which makes it easier to comprehend similar information when it's presented in a textbook or article.
- **Read between the lines** when listening to music. Have your teen read the lyrics and try to decipher possible meanings. This skill, also known as inferring, is vital for recognizing meanings in works presented in class.

Offer your teen some different reading options

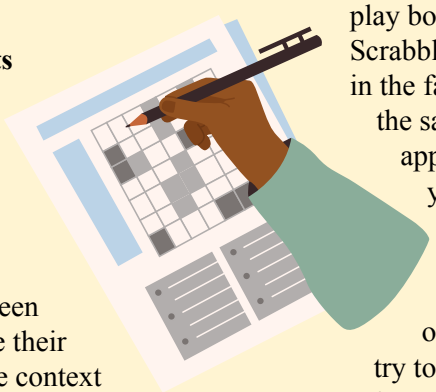
Literature and nonfiction texts make up the majority of school reading. But other kinds of reading material also provide skill-building practice. Variety can revive interest in reading. Encourage your teen to try:

- **Interesting cookbooks.** A growing number of popular cookbooks are inspired by movies, TV shows and restaurants. Your teen can also find cookbooks written by celebrities. Suggest reading the recipes and trying one or two.

- **Memoirs or autobiographies** of people your teen admires. Encourage your teen to pay close attention to common nonfiction features like time lines and photo captions.
- **Books or articles** in a foreign language your teen is studying. Reading these is a great way to prepare for coursework in both English and the target language.
- **How-to books** on skills your teen would like to learn. Whether your teen wants to crochet or code, step-by-step informational texts help students sharpen skills needed for reading math and science textbooks.

Expand your teen's vocabulary

Strengthening vocabulary involves seeking out new words, learning their meanings and using them frequently to transfer them to long-term memory. To make the process fun:



- **Listen to podcasts** together on subjects like science, history, economics and health. Keep your ears open for new words. Ask your teen to try to determine their meanings from the context of the show, then look them up in a dictionary. Later, discuss what you learned from the podcast, making sure to use the new words.
- **Play word games together.** Solve crossword puzzles and play board games like Scrabble. Have everyone in the family download the same word game app, and share your completed games. Or, have each person choose a word of the day, and try to incorporate everyone's words into family conversations.

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