

How Do I Raise a Reader?

Adapted from an article by Erin Kurt, educator and writer on topic important to parents

Reading helps us in every area of our lives. It helps us become successful in school and later in our careers and it helps us grow as individuals by either teaching us new information or by allowing us to step into someone else's shoes. Reading can also help us become more compassionate and empathetic, as well as give us pure enjoyment and relaxation.

Instilling a love of reading in your child is one of the best gifts you can give them in their life. Here are 11 ways to do just that.

1. Read to them regularly, with expression and in different voices.
2. Model reading. Let your child see you read often. It can be cookbooks, magazines, the newspaper, novels or non-fiction.
3. Talk about the books or articles you have been reading. This is a great thing to do at dinner time. Share the excitement or intrigue you have experienced.
4. Schedule 30 minutes after dinner or every Thursday evening as "Family Reading Time".
5. Start your own "Family Book Club" if your children are between 10-18 years old. If your child is studying a novel in school, why not make that the book for the month?
6. Buy books where their name appears. This is a fabulous technique for encouraging reluctant readers! It worked brilliantly with me as a child. I used to be the student who would read the first and last chapter of a book, along with the summary, and write a book report. This all changed when my mother bought me a novel with the main character's name being Erin. Powerful, yet so simple!
7. Find books that come with a CD either in bookstores or the library so your child can listen and follow along. This is also a fantastic way to encourage reluctant readers or to keep the motivation high for those children who are struggling with learning how to read.
8. Always give books as at least one part of a birthday, Christmas, Easter, or holiday gift.
9. Give books "just because" for teamwork tasks (aka chores) being well done or because you noticed them demonstrating a positive virtue like compassion.
10. Take your child to the library regularly. It could be to participate in a library program or just to hang out and read. What about making every second Saturday your family's library day and follow it up with a hot chocolate so you can all talk about the books you read?
11. Read aloud books that have been made into movies and then watch the movie and do a comparison about which was better – the book or the movie. I had read the book "Coraline" to students of mine five years ago and now that the movie is coming out these students who are now teenagers are organizing themselves to meet at the movie theatre to watch it and compare – just like we did as a class with "The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe". Beautiful!