

Chapter One: **Why?**

Why don't kids like to read?

There are all sorts of reasons, in all sorts of combinations. But they boil down to certain key underlying issues we'll start to explore here. In order to help your child love to read you need to know the underlying issue for why she doesn't like to read.

In my experience, kids dislike reading for four general reasons, which we'll explore in the next several chapters:

1. **Too boring**
2. **Too tricky**
3. **Too blurry**
4. **Too "sitty"**

Too Boring

Too boring means one of two things: either the reading level is too hard, or your child hasn't found the right book or subject that gets him hooked. I'll help you figure out which issue applies and give you action steps for what to do about it.



Too Tricky

Particularly if you love reading and never had any problems learning to read, it's easy to forget that reading is one of the hardest things your child will learn to do. I'll help you determine the problem and what you can do to help.

Too Blurry

Vision, learning difficulties, and the ability (or inability) to pay attention all powerfully affect learning. How do you know if one of these is a problem for your child? We'll look at the red flags and what to do next.

Too "Sitty"

Sitting still doesn't appeal to many kids, mine included. If you have a child who doesn't like to sit and read, I'll help you find alternatives to sitting—all of which include reading!

Plan for Success

Here are some essential guidelines for setting your child up for success as you help him learn to love reading.

Remember:

Age ≠ Ability

Reading doesn't happen because your child turns six. Just because schools are pushing your child to read in kindergarten does not mean that your child, your individual little person, is ready to read. In fact, he probably isn't.

Don't push him. Please.

Reading will happen—when your child's brain is ready. The exception? When there is a learning disability. You'll start to suspect a learning disability when you notice the red flags listed in Chapter 3, symptoms such as poor memory, low comprehension, and confusion with directions. Otherwise, don't worry. If you push, you'll almost guarantee that he'll think reading is awful, too hard, a punishment, a torture . . . you get the idea. Sure, he may figure out reading eventually, but will he love it? No.



Read Aloud Daily

(Even If Your Child Can Read Silently)

Want to know the biggest predictor of your child's reading success?

You. **Reading to him. Every day.**¹

Read aloud to your child every day, from birth to tween. Or until he asks you to stop? Keep going as long as you can. Why? Because you'll build vocabulary, expand background knowledge, and talk about new and difficult concepts. Not only that, it's a time to relax and bond with your child.

Even if all you can commit to is five minutes a night. Do that. And feel free to be dramatic when you read. Especially with younger children, make voices, make faces, act it out. Make it fun!

Limit the Biggest Distraction

Turn off the TV as much as possible. That goes for you as well as for your child.

Maybe you'll curse me now, but when your child chooses to curl up with a good book instead of being hypnotized by the TV, you'll thank me. Get used to no TV except on the weekends. You can't expect a child to focus on reading with the TV distracting him.

Try it for two weeks and see what happens.





Engage in Grown-Up Reading

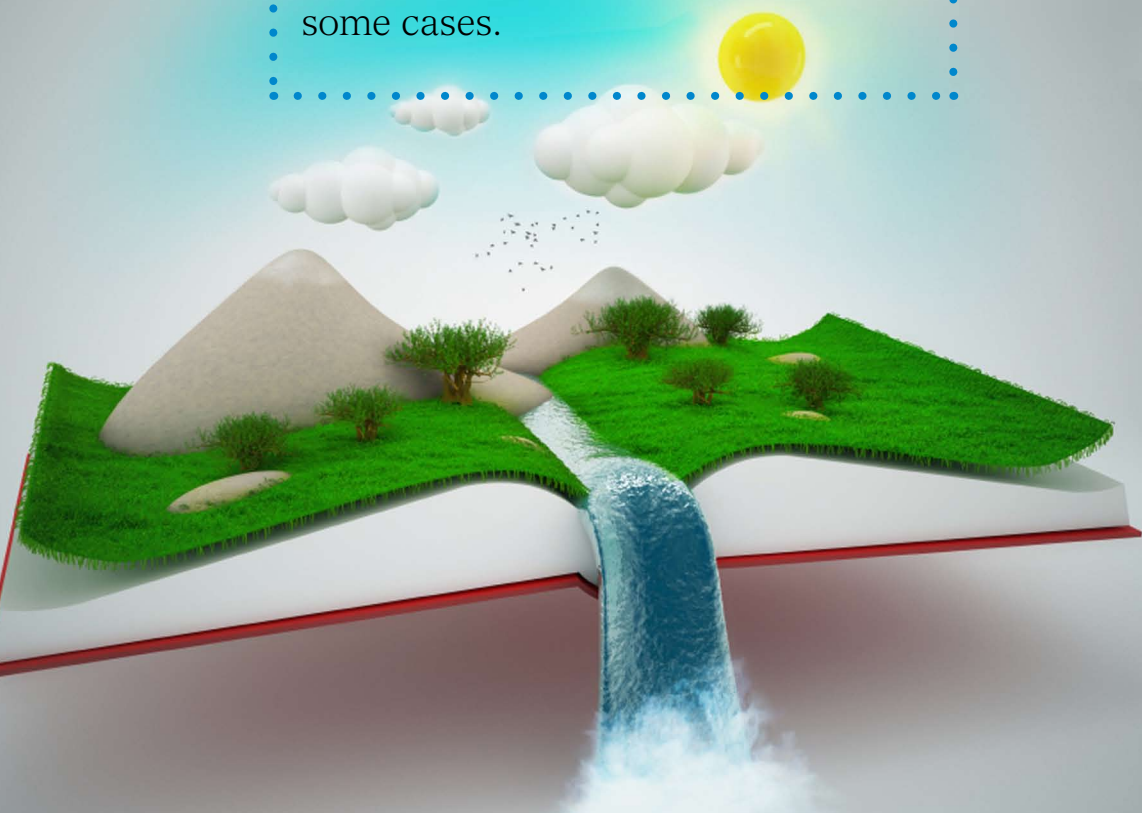
The apple doesn't fall far from the tree, right? Kids copy what we do.

Here's your chance to read that book you've been wanting to read. So, read a book. Or two. Or ten. Show your child how you choose your books (do you keep a list? Read in categories? Browse and buy anything that appeals to you?). Talk about the ones you want to read. Demonstrate how you make time for reading, even a little bit, every day.

Show him how readers behave by showing that **you're a reader.**

Keep Picture Books in the Picture

Picture books are valuable reading! As your child gets older, don't forget about them in favor of chapter books. After all, don't you sometimes enjoy an easier read alongside more challenging ones? Our kids are no different. Let them have their picture books. In many cases, however, the reading level of picture books is much higher than you'd think—up to fifth grade in some cases.



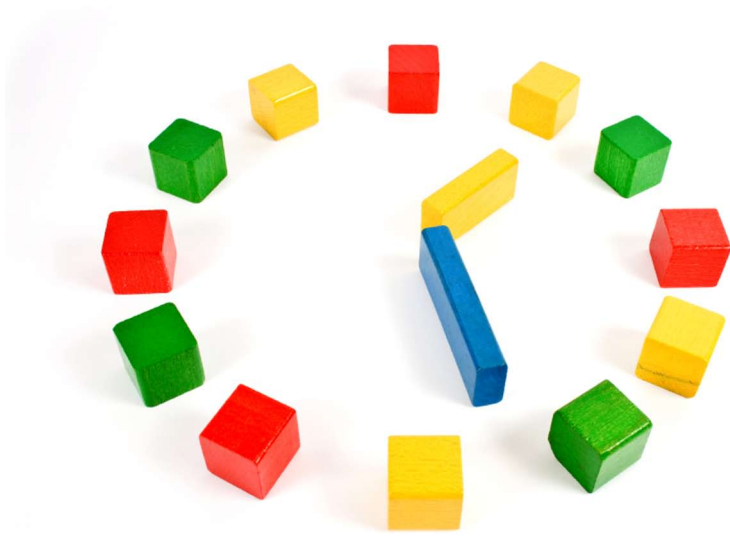
Offer Choices

Remember being told what to read in school? It's not motivating.

Kids get enough of that in school, so let them choose their own books to read. You can offer ideas and choices; you can guide their selection; you can even teach them how to determine whether a book is at their reading level . . . *but let your child make the final choice(s).*

Download this amazing poster from Walker Books and Daniel Pennac, illustrated by Quentin Blake, entitled "[The Rights of the Reader](#)," and use it to guide your reading lives.





Help Your Child Make the Time

It seems like a no-brainer that kids need time to read, but often their schedules are so jam-packed that they don't have the time and mental space needed for reading. Look at your family schedule. Is there time for each child to sit down and read for 10 to 30 minutes every day—and for you to read together for at least some of that time (see *Read Aloud Daily (Even If Your Child Can Read Silently)*, above)?

Move things around in your schedule if you don't.

If no one in the family is making time for reading, your child will wonder: How important can it be?

Reading is important. Make time for it.