

# Summer Learning Spotlight

## Reading

Middle/High School  
Summer 2023

THE  
**PARENT**  
INSTITUTE®

## Motivate your teen to read this summer

Reading may not be the first thing on your teen's agenda for the summer. But students need to read regularly so their skills don't get rusty. With a little creativity, you can inspire your teen's desire to read. Here are a few ideas:

- **Make lots of interesting** reading materials available. Start with a trip to the library, and check out a variety of things for your teen to casually pick up and read. Get books of world records, jokes and poems. Consider "coffee table" books on topics like fashion, music, travel and art.
- **Hold a summer "film series."** Take turns choosing a book that has a movie version. After everyone reads the book, pop some popcorn and watch the movie together. Discuss how the book and movie are similar and different. Which version did everyone like best? Why?
- **Pair reading with trips.** Going on vacation or staying



- with relatives this summer? Encourage your child to read a novel set in a place your family visits or research the history of the area.
- **Be reading "tourists."** In your town or during a trip, explore comic book stores and used book shops. Browse thrift stores and yard sales that sell books.
- **Share reading with others.** Have your teen read to younger siblings, cousins or neighbors. If your student babysits, suggest reading to the child. Your teen might also read to older relatives or to residents at an assisted living facility.

## Provide a purpose for writing

Reading and writing go hand in hand, so promote regular, real-life reasons to write this summer. Encourage your teen to:

- **Take photos of summer** adventures and write captions—the funnier, the better!
- **Write a letter to the editor** of a newspaper to express an opinion on a current event.
- Your teen should read the newspaper first to find an issue that sparks interest.
- **Become pen pals** with an older relative. In addition to practicing writing, your teen will strengthen family bonds.
- **Make a travel brochure** about your local area for out-of-town relatives or friends who visit.

## The public library is cool!

Libraries offer a nearly endless supply of free reading material, and are usually air-conditioned, making them ideal summer hangouts for students. To make the most of the library, your teen can:

- **Meet up with friends** to read and recommend books for each other to check out.
- **Explore the building**—not just its books. Encourage your teen to check out its nooks and crannies, its stairways and cozy places to sit. The library should be a place that feels like home to your teen.
- **Browse the library's website.** Your student will find e-books, information about special events at the library and reference resources. The library may even offer online academic help, videos and virtual field trips.
- **Join a book club.** Have your teen ask whether the library has a book club for students. If there isn't one, your teen can ask a librarian about starting one.
- **Try fun challenges.** Can your student read a book from each section of the library? Read the oldest and newest books?
- **Kick-start a new hobby.** Suggest that your teen look for cookbooks, craft books, volumes of science and engineering projects, etc.
- **Volunteer.** Your teen can gain work experience and feel the satisfaction of helping the community by shelving books, tutoring younger students, creating displays, etc.

## Broaden your teen’s knowledge base to boost comprehension

To make sense of reading material, students tap into what they already know. That’s why having a wide range of experiences can improve reading comprehension. You don’t need to travel far and wide to expose your teen to new knowledge. You can:

- **Talk with older relatives, neighbors or family friends.** Invite them to share stories about daily life when they were younger or historical events they’ve lived through.
- **Watch documentaries** and listen to podcasts about everything from technology to unsolved mysteries to endangered species.
- **Enjoy the arts.** Tour art galleries, attend a free summer concert series or see a play at a community or college theater.
- **Explore other cultures.** Visit international food marts and try new foods. Listen to music in different languages. Attend cultural festivals. Watch movies set in other countries. Read books with characters of different backgrounds.
- **Discover science.** Head to a museum, planetarium or animal sanctuary. Have your teen read signs and brochures. Some museums even provide hands-on experiences for students.
- **Check out historic sites** or stroll through downtown historic districts. Ask your teen to read engravings on monuments and information on historical markers.

## Help your teen ‘crack the code’

Research shows that when older students struggle with reading, it’s often because they can’t read the words—not because they have poor comprehension. Share these strategies to help your teen unlock challenging words:

- **Break it into syllables** (*os-mo-sis*) then put it all together (*osmosis*). Hearing it aloud may be enough for your teen to recognize it. If not, suggest looking it up in a dictionary.
- **Circle prefixes and suffixes.** The word *unmanageable* may look hard. But circling *un* and *able* will leave your teen with *manage*—a pretty manageable word!
- **Relate it to known words.** If your teen knows the word *economics*, it will be easier to read *economist* and *economical*.

## Support a struggling or reluctant reader

It’s easy for students to get discouraged when they can’t yet read the same books as their peers. To motivate your teen to keep trying:

- **Find books that match** your teen’s interests. Students are more motivated to read books they enjoy—and that’s especially true when reading is a challenge.
- **Suggest nonfiction** material that your teen can read in short chunks, which may seem less intimidating. Good options include news or magazine articles, almanacs, cookbooks and trivia books.
- **Encourage your teen to listen** to audiobooks while following along in a print copy.
- **Have your teen reread** favorite books. Rereading familiar books builds confidence in struggling readers. Also, your teen may



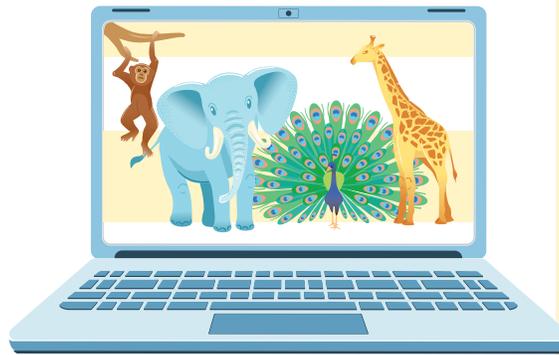
discover something new with each rereading, leading to a deeper understanding.

- **Ask a librarian for graphic** novel versions of classic literature. These can help your child understand plots and themes, making the original books easier. They’re available for everything from *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare to *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald.
- **Promote a positive attitude.** Encourage your teen to say things like “That was a tough book, but I kept going and read the whole thing.” Praise effort and progress instead of ability.

## Encourage educational screen use

You want your teen to read and learn. But activities that don't involve a screen don't interest your teen. What if you could both get your way? With these tips, you can. Have your teen go online to:

- **Explore colleges and careers.** Your teen can read college websites to learn about academic programs and campus life. And the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics provides detailed information about today's careers at [www.bls.gov/ooh/](http://www.bls.gov/ooh/).
- **Play word games** to build vocabulary and improve spelling and grammar. Your teen can download free apps with crossword puzzles, guess-the-word games, word scrambles, etc.
- **Learn from social media.** A few educational accounts to follow include NASA, National Geographic, Merriam-Webster, The National Museum of American History and The National Zoo.
- **Download e-books from the public library.** They're free, and your teen will always have something on hand to read.



- **Study a foreign language.** Help your teen download a free app that teaches the language your teen is studying or might like to study in school. Let your teen stream TV shows in the language and turn on closed captions in English to follow along.

- **Go on virtual field trips.** Without leaving home, your teen can explore Mars ([accessmars.withgoogle.com](http://accessmars.withgoogle.com)), walk the Great Wall of China ([www.thechinaguide.com/destination/great-wall-of-china](http://www.thechinaguide.com/destination/great-wall-of-china)), see animals at the San Diego Zoo ([zoo.sandiegozoo.org/live-cameras](http://zoo.sandiegozoo.org/live-cameras)) or tour national parks ([artsandculture.google.com/project/national-park-service](http://artsandculture.google.com/project/national-park-service)).

## Offer prompts to encourage summer journaling

Keeping a journal is a relaxing way for your teen to practice writing this summer. Here are a few interesting prompts to get your teen started:

- *Describe your ideal summer.*
- *Imagine what phones will be like 50 years from now. What features will they have?*
- *Would you rather live in a place that's always hot or always cold? Why?*
- *If you could be a video game character, which one would you be? Why?*
- *What three values are important to you and your friends?*
- *What is your most prized possession? Why?*
- *If you owned a restaurant, what would you name it? What would be on the menu?*



## Expand your teen's vocabulary

A rich vocabulary can make your teen a better reader and writer—and boost success in all subjects. Teach your teen these vocabulary-building strategies:

- **Read a wide variety of materials.** One of the best ways to build vocabulary is to read. Encourage your teen to read biographies, science fiction, historical fiction, field guides, etc.
- **Use a print dictionary and thesaurus** when possible. While looking up a word online, your teen will just learn about that word. A print dictionary is different: Your teen will see many other words on the same page, as well as the guide words at the top.
- **Practice using context clues.** Surrounding words

or sentences can make an unfamiliar word's meaning clear. Practice during dinner. Take turns inventing a word and using it in sentences. If you say, "I had to stop for a line of *gurbs* crossing the street today" and "*Gurbs* fly south in winter," can your teen determine that *gurbs* means *geese*?

## Review homework and study skills

Maintaining study skills over the summer boosts success with summer assignments and helps ensure that your teen will be ready to learn in the fall. Encourage your teen to:

- **Plan in advance** when to study, read and work on assignments. In summer, the hottest part of the day may be the best time for your teen to stay indoors and read. Your teen will also need to consider your family’s summer plans when scheduling time to complete reading assignments.
- **Divide up assigned reading.** Have your teen figure out how many pages there are in all and how many days of summer are left. How many pages does your teen need to read each day to complete the assignments before school starts? By sticking to the schedule, your

teen will avoid having to read an entire novel on the last weekend of break.

- **Find a quiet place** to read or study that’s free of distractions. Your teen should turn off notifications on devices and close windows and apps that aren’t necessary for schoolwork.
- **Take notes while reading.** Your teen can write important events or information on sticky notes and use them as bookmarks. Or your teen might draw a “family tree” to understand the relationships among characters.



## Support your teen in summer school

For many teens, hanging out with friends isn’t the only activity on the agenda this summer. Classes in reading and other subjects are helping students maintain skills and make up ground lost during the pandemic. If your teen is among them:

- **Boost motivation.** Students may feel they’re missing out on summer. Point out that classes will make your teen more confident about school in the fall. Also, explain that lots of kids are attending summer school this year—your teen is not alone.
- **Partner with teachers.** Let them know you want to support your teen’s learning. Find out how to stay in touch. Ask what they expect your teen to accomplish and what your teen should do at home to prepare for school next year.
- **Take attendance** seriously. Every class counts, especially since summer is short. Make it clear that you expect your teen to attend every class (unless your teen is sick or there’s a family emergency), and try to plan trips and appointments outside of class time.

## Have your teen ask and answer questions about books

Your teen can build comprehension by asking and answering questions while reading. Here are some questions that encourage your teen to think independently and creatively—and that work for just about any book.

For fiction:

- *What would be another good title for the story?*
- *How did the main character change throughout the book?*
- *How would the story be different if it were set in another place or time period?*
- *What other book did this one remind me of?*
- *Who would I recommend this book to? Why?*

For nonfiction:

- *What did I like best about the book?*
- *Why might the author have written this book?*
- *What are three facts I learned?*
- *What do I still want to know?*
- *How did nonfiction features like bold words, photo captions, diagrams, etc., help me learn from the book?*