

## Reading Age 18 Summary

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### Why Reading?

Becoming intentional about a daily reading routine, looking for ways to incorporate reading into your family time spent together, and considering the quality of the experience of how you read together can all contribute to a teen's development.

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#### Get Your Teen Thinking by Getting Their Input

- Get curious about the books your teen is reading at school. They may be reading books you remember. Engage them in a discussion about the books they are reading. You could ask questions like:
  - *"What are you interested in reading these days?"*
  - *"I know there's a lot you have to read for school. What are you reading for pleasure?"*
- Allow choice to add to your teen's sense of control and motivation to read.
  - *"How do you want to spend your time after school?"*
  - *"Considering all the activities that typically occur after school, when is the best time to read?"*
- Consider joining a book club with your teen, where you both read the same book. Various book clubs are available online or through your local library.
- Approach reading time as a treat, not a chore. If you save it for the enjoyable time after business, like homework or getting ready for bed, then reading together can be viewed by all as a desirable time to be together.
- Don't attempt to champion a particular book. Your teen might show interest if you prefer a title, but holding on too tightly to the idea might turn them against it.
- Make a family rule to turn screens off one hour before typical bedtime. Research shows this is important to ensure a good night's sleep. It also offers time for reading if that's when you want to include it in your routine.
- Create a family reading rule. Invite discussion at dinner about books that the family is reading. Engage in the topic equally so your teen is not carrying the burden of the conversation.
- Follow your teen's interests. They are asked to engage in reading that may not interest them at school. It is okay if your teen only wants to read graphic novels for fun. Listening to audiobooks can also be a fun way to incorporate reading with a teen who shows little interest in picking up a book. Listening to a book together on a long car ride can be a great way to share in a reading experience.

- Consider removing easy technology distractions at least an hour before bedtime and incorporating reading into your teen’s wind-down routine. Transitioning from the excited brain activity of technology to sleep can be difficult, but reading can be an excellent transition.

**Tip:** Make it fun! Designing a reading spot together can be an enjoyable experience. Let your teen pick out their own pillows, bean bag chairs, or bookmarks.

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## Teach New Skills

- Ask open-ended questions. When your teen invites you to learn more about what they are reading or asks a question, listen with interest. Use any invitation as a learning moment for you to learn about your teen. You can also ask prompting questions such as:
  - *“I have noticed you reading a lot of historical fiction. What interests you about historical fiction?”*
  - *“What are some of your favorite books?”*
  - *“What interests you about this story or these characters?”*
  - *“What are the characters feeling or thinking?”*
  - *“What are you learning about?”*
- Share your curiosity and interest in the subject, but do not provide an answer or make conclusions since you want your teen to reach their own conclusions.
- Model reading. Parents who read have teens who read. Your older teens notice whether you read or not. If reading is one of the activities that parents tend to do in their free time, teens observe that and are much more likely to pick up a book in their free time. If you’ve fallen out of the habit of reading or you read before bed after your teen is asleep, think about ways you can model reading. Perhaps you can discuss the books you are reading. Perhaps you spend time at the library together and pick up your selection while you are there. Consider: “How is reading a regular part of what we do as a family?”
- Research together. Though it’s tempting to do all research online, be sure to include books or articles in your research process. If your teen is doing a science project on animal habitats, internet research can be helpful. But be sure also to seek books that provide useful background information. This cultivates a habit for them of seeking out the information they require through books.
- Support your teen’s reading habit! If you have a separate budget for entertainment and education, consider that reading should fall under “education” because of the many and varied benefits. Visit the library frequently or allow purchases when you go to your local bookstore. Let your older teen lead the way in selecting their reading preferences, and try to hold back judgment on them.
- Depending on your teen’s school, reading can often become highly stressful. If your teen’s school focuses on rigor and loads students with extensive reading, teens can begin viewing reading as a drag. Remove that burden at home. Focus on joy and connection. Make reading fun.

**Tip:** The “brain break” strategy is used by emotionally intelligent adults. So, if your teen questions the validity of your actions, you can reassure them that this is a form of self-management that skilled adults use to move through difficult problems or work.

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## Practice to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Use “I’d love to hear...” statements. When teens learn a new ability, they are eager to show it off! Give them that chance. Say, *“I’d love to hear more about the book you are reading.”* This can be used when you are in the after-school routine and need that alert to move on to reading time.
- Your teen will routinely have to provide summaries of books they read at school. Asking your teen about the books they are reading helps them practice this skill. Get curious about their points of view. Ask questions to gather more information. Probe further when they give you short answers. For example, if you ask how your teen likes a book, and your teen responds with “It’s okay,” you can follow up with:
  - *“What keeps you interested in the book?”*
  - *“Tell me a little bit about the story.”*
  - *“What do you hope happens in the story?”*
  - *“What’s the overall message of the book?”*
  - *“What do you think about the message?”*
- Recognize effort. Recognize effort by saying “I notice...” statements like, *“I notice how you sat down to read without my prompting. Looks like you’re enjoying it. Great!”*
- Proactively remind your teen to help them be successful. You may whisper in your teen’s ear, *“Remember what time it is? What are you reading today?”*

**Trap:** Resist the temptation to repeat yourself constantly. Teens are eager to push away and demonstrate their independence. Have confidence that your modeling is enough to promote a positive reading habit.

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## Support Your Teen’s Development and Success

- Promote a learning attitude. Show every confidence that your teen can learn anything with time and practice (because they truly can). Your comments and reflections will significantly affect how competent they feel to meet any learning challenge, especially when tackling complex text or moving through research.
- Ask key questions.
  - *“It looks like you aren’t really enjoying this book. What might help?”*
  - *“How are you feeling about your reading tonight?”*

- Coach on communications. You might notice your teen having a hard time and getting stuck even with your support. You might then say, *“It seems like you are unsure which sections you need to read. How can you figure this out?”*
- Stay engaged. It can be highly motivating for a teen when a parent reads their own favorite book while keeping them company. You can also host a family reading party. Pop some popcorn, and all sit down with your current read.

**Tip:** Become aware of your reactions to reading. Make sure that your tone and attitude are one of enjoyment, curiosity, and learning.

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RECOGNIZE

## Recognize Efforts

- Recognize and call out when things are going well. It may seem obvious, but it’s easy not to notice when everything is moving along smoothly. Noticing and naming the behavior provides the necessary reinforcement that you see and value your teen's choice.
- Recognize small steps along the way. Don’t wait for significant accomplishments—like the full bedtime routine going smoothly—to recognize effort. Remember that your recognition can work as a tool to promote more positive behaviors. Find small ways your teen is making an effort and let them know you see them.

**Trap:** It can be easy to resort to bribes when recognition and occasional rewards are underutilized. If parents or those in a parenting role frequently resort to bribes, it is likely time to revisit the five-step process.

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