

## Reading Age 6 Summary

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### Why Reading?

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



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

- Allow your child some choices when establishing a reading routine. Allowing choices increases your child's sense of control and motivation to read with you. Questions you could ask to better understand your child's preferences include:
  - *"How do you want to spend your time after school?"*
    - *"Would you like a snack first?"*
    - *"Do you want to change into play clothes first?"*
    - *"Do you want time to rest or run outside and play?"*
    - *"Considering all the activities that typically occur after school, when is the best time for us to read together?"*
- Experiment with different times to figure out your plan for reading together. You may want to take a week and try different times to see what works best with your child's energy. Some families enjoy making reading together a part of their bedtime routine. Other families like to get ready for school and read a story before leaving the house to start the day positively. Still, others feel that reading while having an after-school snack is an ideal way to transition back to being at home. Work on discovering that rhythm with your child, and you'll go a long way toward setting them up for success!
- Create a space that can consistently be used for reading time. Although reading can occur anytime and anywhere, having a designated place ensures a well-lit, quiet, and comfortable spot. Your reading space aims to provide a well-equipped, consistent place for your child to focus on a story. Setting up a reading nook can be highly motivating to a child and may encourage more of their own time spent on reading.
- Treat reading time as a treat, not a chore. If you save reading for after things like doing homework or getting ready for bed, reading together is a desirable time to be together.
- Offer your child a role in the reading process. Whether that means turning the pages or keeping your place with their finger running under the words being read aloud, engage your child as an active reader (even before they can read on their own).
- Listening to audiobooks can also be a fun way to incorporate reading with a child 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 child'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. Allow your child to pick out their pillows, bean bag chairs, or bookmarks. They could make a sign with their name to designate the space.



## Teach New Skills

- When your child invites you to learn more about what they are reading or asks a question, listen with interest. You can also ask prompting questions such as:
  - “What interests you about this story or these characters?”*
  - “What are the characters feeling or thinking?”*
  - “Why are they making the choices they make?”*
  - Or, in the case of nonfiction, *“What are you learning about?”*
  - Share your curiosity and interest in the subject, but do not provide an answer.
- Model reading. Remember, your child is watching you and will notice if you do or do not read around your home. If reading is one of the activities you tend to do in your free time, your child will observe that behavior and be 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 children are asleep, think about ways to bring reading into your conversations. Perhaps you can discuss a book you are reading.
- Research information together in books. Although it's tempting to research a topic online, include books or articles in your research process. If your child 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 children of seeking out the information they require through books.
- Depending on your child's school, reading can become highly stressful. Children pick up on that pressure and may fear they won't be able to read with proficiency. Remove that burden at home. Focus on joy and connection. Make reading fun. The best way for your child to learn to enjoy reading is through practice and exposure, which will happen if your child wants to read. Focus on enjoyment.
- Follow your child's lead on books. Take a trip to the library and see what they select. Give them the choice of which books to read together.
- You do not need to be a subject matter expert as a parent. Your child may have questions about what they are reading. Ask yourself, “How can I provide the guidance and support for them to answer the question or solve the problem themselves (even if they get it wrong)?”

**Tip:** Picture books with no words can be an enjoyable break from learning the words for children. Have your child tell the story just by looking at the illustrations.

**Tip:** Playing story games with your child, like cooperatively making up a story, can stir imagination, creativity, and a love of stories.

### STEP 3 Practice to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Use “Show me...” statements with a positive tone and body language to express excitement and curiosity. When your child learns a new ability, they are eager to show it off! Give them that chance. Say, *“Show me you know what’s next when our timer goes off.”* This can be used when you are in the after-school routine and need that alert to move on to reading time.
- Do a “brain break” trial. While reading one night, maybe at a natural breaking point, play “brain break.” Practice moving away from your book. Get a drink of water. Walk outside and sniff the fresh air. Then, go back and ask, *“Do you feel refreshed and ready, or do you need a little more time?”* If your child needs more time, ask, *“What would make you feel ready to continue?”* A hug on a teddy bear or a couple of runs around the house might do the trick.
- Recognize effort by using “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 child to help them be successful. The challenges of daily routines recur day after day. Remind in a gentle, non-public way. You can whisper in your child’s ear, *“Remember what time it is? What shall we read today?”*
- Provide opportunities for your child to use language and words in a way that is just a bit more challenging than what they have done before. The goal is to create experiences beyond those with which they are comfortable.

**Trap:** Resist the temptation to repeat yourself. Children often need more time to perform tasks that challenge them, even if you believe they are simple. Be sure to wait long enough for your child to show you they are competent. Your waiting could make all the difference in whether they can do what you need.

### STEP 4 Support Your Child’s Development and Success

- Promote a learning attitude. Show confidence that your child can learn anything with time and practice (because they truly can!). Your comments and reflections will matter greatly in how competent they feel to meet any learning challenge, especially when learning to read!

- Ask key questions like:
  - *“It looks like you feel stuck. Could I help you sound it out? Should we look up the meaning of a word together?”*
  - *“How are you feeling about your reading tonight?”*
- Stay engaged. In addition to reading together, it can motivate your child to see you read your favorite book alongside them for company.

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



## Recognize Efforts

- Recognize and call out when things are going well. It may seem obvious, but it's easy not to notice when everything moves smoothly. Noticing and naming the behavior provides the necessary reinforcement that you see and value your child's choice. For example, when children complete their homework on time, a short, specific call out is all that's needed: *“I notice you’re almost at the end of your book. You must be enjoying it! Excellent.”*
- 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 child 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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