

9 Simple Ways to Boost Your Child's Reading Confidence

BONUS: HOW TO TELL IF THEY'RE STRUGGLING TO READ AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT



Classics made simple
and sturdier
for the youngest readers!

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He Bear, She Bear by Stan & Jan Berenstain
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The Shape of Me and Other Stuff by Dr. Seuss
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The SIMPLEST SEUSS
for TODDLERS' USE

"School is hard. I can't do it."

As parents, we want our kids to do well in school—to work hard and get good grades so they'll be well-prepared for "the real world." But we also want them to *like* school, right? Because if they don't, it's all drama all the time, from the morning routine power struggles to evening homework meltdowns. Ugh.

Kids decide they don't like school for all sorts of reasons, but here's one we hear a lot: "School is hard. I can't do it."

While it's true some children struggle academically more than others, parents are often surprised to hear this statement from their *good* students. If that sounds familiar, it's likely your child lacks *confidence*, not ability.

Helping students develop reading confidence is crucial to their long-term success. Language comprehension is the foundation of all learning, and our high-tech world is powered by written communication. **When students feel proud of how well they read, they'll love doing it—which sets them up to be enthusiastic, lifelong learners.**

So how do you boost a kid's reading confidence? Try these nine tips.

#1 Help your child fall in love with reading by making it fun.

The more we enjoy an activity, the more we want to do it. So, turn reading time into an “I can’t wait!” instead of a chore.

- **Create a cozy “reading nook” somewhere in your home.** Set up a small bookshelf, toss some pillows on the floor, and drape some fabric over a couple of chairs to make a fort. Use your imagination, and invite your child to help you design the space so they feel some ownership and excitement.
- **Read for fun, not just for assignments.** Take regular trips to the library, and let your child make their own selections. You can suggest books you think they’ll enjoy—a topic of special interest to them, perhaps—but don’t force it. Let them try different genres, from magazines and comics to cookbooks and biographies. If they choose a book beyond their reading level, that’s OK: Simply read with them!
- **Go all-in when you read to them.** You likely already know how important it is to read aloud to your child. But let’s be honest: Sometimes, it’s tough to muster the energy. It might help to remember that your child adores you. They want your time and attention more than anything in the world! So, when you read to them, give them everything you have: your energy, your full attention, your silly voices... all of you! They’ll love reading with you, which leads to a love of reading in general.
- **Switch it up.** Audio books are a meaningful way to help expand your child’s vocabulary, listening skills, and their imagination—which are all helpful for reading comprehension.



More ideas

Do one thing at a time

The brain is a sequential processor, unable to juggle more than two things at the same time. Businesses and schools praise multitasking, but research clearly shows that it reduces productivity and increases mistakes. Try creating an interruption-free zone throughout the day—turn off your email, phone, and social-media sites—and see whether you get more done. If you have trouble untangling yourself, download software that blocks your access to certain websites for a certain amount of time that you specify.

Divide presentations into 10-minute segments

Remember my students who said they got bored in 10-minute lectures? The 10-minute rule, which has been known for many years, provides a guide to creating presentations people can pay attention to. Here's the model I developed for giving a lecture, for which I was named the Hoechst Lecturer, Teacher of the Year (awarded at one of the largest annual meetings in psychiatry).

I decided that every lecture I'd ever give would be organized in segments, and that each segment would last only 10 minutes. Each segment would cover a single core concept—always general, and always explainable in one minute. The brain likes general meaning before detail, and the brain likes hierarchy. Starting with general concepts naturally leads to explaining information in hierarchical fashion. Give the general idea first, before diving into details, and you will see a 40 percent improvement in understanding.

Each class was 50 minutes, so I could easily burn through five large concepts in a single period. I would use the other nine minutes

in the segment to provide a detailed description of that single general concept. The trick was to ensure that each detail could be easily traced back to the general concept with minimal intellectual effort. I would regularly pause to explicitly explain the link. This is like walking through the forest to get to the beginning of the class, I sprinkled liberal repetitions of "where we are" throughout the hour.

This prevents the audience from trying to multitask. If the instructor provides the audience with the presentation, the audience is not multitasking. Instead, the audience is paying attention to the instructor and attempting to understand what the instructor is saying. The audience is not trying to drive while talking on the phone or trying to pay attention to ANY two things at the same time.

After 10 minutes had elapsed, I had to stop. Why did I construct my lecture that way? I knew that I had only about 600 seconds to get my message across. The next hour would be useless. And I knew that I had to do something after the 601st second to "buy" another 10 minutes.

After 10 minutes, the audience's attention is getting ready to plummet to near zero. If something isn't done quickly, the students will end up in successively losing bouts of an effort to stay with me. What do they need? Not more information of the same type. Not more completely irrelevant cues that breaks them from their line of thought, making the information stream seem disjointed, unorganized, and patronizing. They need something so compelling that they blast through the 10-minute barrier—something

Turn reading time into an "I can't wait!" instead of a chore.

#2 Let your child read to you.

When you read aloud to your child, they understand, “Reading is valuable.” When you invite your child to read to you, they learn, “My reading is valuable.” If they don’t want to read to you, they might be feeling some pressure to perform. In that case, try dropping back a step in reading level so they feel more certain of their skills. You can also take turns reading—alternating sentences or pages—to avoid frustration or fatigue.

Hearing your child read also gives you insight into how their skills are developing and if they might need extra help. (We’ll get back to that in a minute.)

#3 Manage your expectations.

Young readers will make mistakes; it’s part of the learning process. So, resist the temptation to constantly correct small errors. Remember your goal is to help them fall in love with reading so they feel confident about new challenges.

#4 Lend a hand.

If your child’s struggling over a word, it’s OK to suggest they sound it out. But if they seem particularly discouraged, simply voice the word and move on.

Here’s why: Practice is helpful for many young readers, but not all of them. In fact, for kids who may have a learning challenge, practice can lock in bad habits and be frustrating. Imagine expecting someone to play a beautiful piece of music on the trumpet simply by blowing air through the instrument over and over. Until the student learns how to form their lips around the mouthpiece to create sound, no amount of practice will help. In the same way, repetitive reading practice without the underlying processes in place only leads to the feeling of defeat and avoidance of what should be an enjoyable activity.



Your goal is to help them fall in love with reading so they feel confident about new challenges.

#5 Give some easy wins.

As your child's reading skills develop, texts will become more difficult—which can lead to frustration. Instead of always encouraging them to level-up, have them choose an “easy” book to read to their adoring younger sibling, your faithful pooch (as long as he's lazy enough to stick around for the whole book), or even a stuffed animal.

#6 Acknowledge how hard your child is trying.

Our brains aren't naturally wired to read, so the learning process is exhausting. Be sure to praise your child for their efforts, not just for their success. Also, it's helpful for kids to see their parents stay positive in the midst of a struggle. If you manage your frustrations well, so will your child.

#7 Try not to hover.

Many kids get nervous practicing new skills in front of people—just like some adults! So if your child is enjoying unprompted time in their reading nook, allow them some privacy.

#8 Write books together.

Haul out some paper and crayons or markers, and write your own books together. Keep it nice and simple so your child can enjoy reading their own words.

#9 Repeat books.

When we're learning new skills, it can be enormously gratifying to recognize how far we've come. From time to time, pull out a book your child mastered long ago—and after they've read it cover to cover, gush over their progress. “I remember when you had trouble sounding out the word cat, and you just breezed right past it. That's amazing, buddy! How do you feel?”



**Praise your child for their efforts,
not just for their success.**

BONUS: How to tell if your child is struggling to read (and what to do about it)

As you observe and listen to your child reading, keep these questions in mind:

- Do they often skip, add, or omit small words?
- Do they often select simple books with very little text?
- Do they choose the same book over and over?
- Do they guess at words based on the first letter?
- Do they have trouble remembering the names of letters or the sounds they make?
- Do they seem to memorize words instead of sound them out?
- Do they skip words in a sentence without stopping to self-correct?
- Do they often sound out the same word every time they encounter it?

If you're noticing any of these signs on a regular basis, your child may have an underlying learning challenge. **But don't worry!** Here's what to do:

Don't wait for your child to "outgrow" the problem.

The possibility that your child may have a learning challenge can feel overwhelming, and it's natural to hope it'll get better over time. Unfortunately, the longer it takes for kids to get help, the further behind they tend to fall. We know from research 75% of kids whose help is delayed to age 9 or later continue to struggle through their time in school. Early identification and intervention is the key to your child's academic success.

Don't assume your child has a visual issue.

Reading challenges arise when the parts of the brain involved in reading are "wired" differently—which happens in nearly 20% of the population. For this group, reading development is hard fought until they're taught by experts who understand their specific needs. Certainly, a basic vision exam is a good idea, but reading problems cannot be corrected by vision exercises or special glasses.

Ask for help.

Watching your child struggle is heartbreaking, but learning to read doesn't have to be so difficult! At We Teach Reading, we've helped thousands of kids overcome reading difficulties with a personalized combination of:

- research-backed teaching methods
- highly interactive learning activities
- multi-sensory instruction
- and loads of fun!

So, schedule an assessment, let us put together a step-by-step learning plan, and watch your child blossom into a confident and enthusiastic reader and learner.

[Schedule An Assessment](#)



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