Simple advice on helping a junior child enjoy reading

Congratulations! Your child has gone past the first stage of learning to read. He no longer needs to point at every word and can read or 'decode' many of the words in simple books. Of course he is not yet a totally fluent or confident reader, able to tackle anything he comes across. That takes years of practice. And as parents, it's our job to help provide as many opportunities for that practice as possible. So, how can you help him to keep going?

- **Follow your child's interests:** Is your child mad about video games or football? Dolphins or High School Musical? Whatever her interests, there will be something out there to grab her (while improving her reading skills)! Your job is to find that something! And remember, reading isn't just about books – magazines, comics and the internet are all excellent places to find appropriate levels of reading material for your child.
- **Variety:** There are so many different kinds of text out there: websites, recipe books, comics, instruction manuals, football magazines, information books and, of course, stories. Each is organised in a different way and requires different reading skills. The more experience and practice your child has tackling each of these, the better a reader she will become.
- **Reading with your child:** Some children and parents carry on reading together at bedtime for years. Even if your child doesn't want to do this, do read what he is reading from time to time. It is still fun to talk to someone else about favourite stories or articles, even if your child has read it independently.
- **TV tie-ins:** Nowadays there are often fiction and non-fiction books based around films and TV programmes, whether it's Mamma Mia or Doctor Who. Even looking at a programme's website is a great opportunity for reading practice which can lead to your child discovering further reading material which she might be interested in.
- **Make books special:** Try to put a bookshelf in your child's room or somewhere else in your home just for your child's books. This helps to give books status, whether they have been bought, given as a present, borrowed from the library or are lent by a friend.
- **Comics and magazines:** There are lots of children's magazines and comics on the market, so it's quite likely that there's one out there your child will enjoy as well, whether they're into football, kittens or Transformers. Why not help your child to order his favourite comic from your local newsagent and let him collect it every Saturday?

Golden Rules

- DON'T think that because your child can make his way through simple school reading books without too many mistakes that he has mastered reading. Fluent confident reading will take years of practice.

- DO find things for your child to read which centre on his non-school interests. Try to help your child to understand that reading is something we do for fun and not just at school.

- DON'T think that books are the only or best way to practise reading. Comics, magazines and some websites are also great ways for your child to get enjoyable reading practice.

- DO let your child see you reading for enjoyment from time to time. It is true that children do as we do, not as we say.

- DO read some of the same things that your child reads. It's nice to be able to talk to someone else about what we've read.

- DON'T criticise or pressurise your child if they're not that keen on reading. Instead try to find reading material about their hobbies or interests which might encourage a reading habit. But if they're still not interested take a step back for a little while.

- DO encourage your child to lend books or comics to friends and let him borrow them from others. This might spur them on to reading even more, and it helps to keep your costs down.

- DO let your child use the internet to learn more about her interests but DON'T allow her to have unsupervised access.

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