

“...I had a mother who read to me.”

11 ideas to help foster a love of reading in our children

Adele Hickman and Marie Payne

*You may have riches and wealth untold
With baskets of jewels and caskets of gold
But richer than I you will never be
For I had a mother who read to me.*

Strickland W. Gillilan, “The Reading Mother,” Best Loved Poems of the American People,
comp Hazel Felleman (New York City, New York: Doubleday Publishing Co.)

1. Read to your children often and regularly, and don’t stop just because they can read for themselves. You might consider using reading time with mom as a reward. A fun way to keep kids involved and interested is to stop reading mid chapter, you will have them begging for reading time (you might even catch them sneaking a chance to read ahead)! With younger children, be willing to read their favorite books over and over, they will learn new things every time you do. Be willing to change voices, be a little dramatic, your kids will love it!

2. Have your children read aloud to you. Talk about what they are reading, be patient and encouraging. This is a good way for you to pick up on things with reading that might be frustrating or confusing to them so you can help them through it. Reading is a big deal for younger kids, they will be excited to show you what they can do, make sure to give them lots of applause! For older kids it is good practice; if they are reading to someone they can’t just skip over the hard words, and when they do come to a hard one, if you are there listening you can help them sound it out and learn what it means.

3. Support your school’s reading programs. Most schools will have different reading incentive programs throughout the year, or they may have some kind of regular home reading program. Support and encourage your children to participate in these. Often the school will have provided enough of an incentive, you may just need to remind them and provide a time and place for them to do it.

4. Volunteer to help with reading at your child’s school. Even if you aren’t helping your child specifically, this will help you get a feel for what their teachers are expecting from them and then you can encourage and reinforce those things at home. Besides, what better way to send the message of how much you value reading than being there where your child can see you helping other kids besides them learn how to do it too.

5. Let your child see you reading for enjoyment. If they see you read, and can tell you are having fun, they will want to know why. Consider reading the books that they are reading. For one thing, it's just a good idea to make sure what they read is appropriate for them (don't assume that anything from their school library is okay, take the time to check it out). Besides, kids love to tell about books they are excited about and they will love it if you know what they are talking about and can be excited with them. This can also give you some insight on the types of literature they enjoy so you can be on the lookout for things to encourage them with in the future.

6. Read and study as a family. This includes but is not limited to scripture study. Consider doing some group family research to plan your next vacation, or to find out more about a current event or historical anniversary. This would be a particularly good year to study about the Restoration. Read up on the life of Joseph Smith, find some picture books with church history sites in them – make it come alive for your family. Make sure that as you read as a family, that you stop and discuss what you are reading, make sure everyone understands.

7. Teach your children how to use the library. This week it's dinosaurs, next week it might be astronauts. Encourage your children to find books about whatever is interesting to them right now. When they are young their interests change so fast, but at a library they can satisfy their curiosity. Libraries also may have story times and other events that are fun and encourage reading. Going to the library is also a good opportunity to teach kids how to treat books and the property of others with respect.

8. Find activities to share with your children that require reading. When you go shopping, give your kids a shopping list; when you are cooking, have them read the recipe book. Look for games that require spelling or reading skills, have them help you read signs along the road. When you go out to eat, have them read the menu. Any of these types of activities will help kids see the importance of being able to read without you having to say a thing. It will help them feel confident about participating in the real world when they can read those things on their own.

9. Surround your child with books and other reading materials. Books from the library are great, but having a lot of books in your home sends an important message. Kids should have some books of their own. Consider giving books for birthdays and other special occasions. Newspapers and magazines are some other good things to have around but again, make sure they are appropriate. Some newspapers will have a weekly section just for kids. For older kids it is fun to provide them with a question that can be answered in the paper or the Friend or the Era etc. and then see if they can find the answer.

10. Provide a well lit, comfortable place for your child to read – and the time to do it. Make sure your child can see well enough to read, and has a comfortable quiet place to do it. Then be willing to give them the gift of uninterrupted time to read for a little while each day.

11. Utilize any resources necessary to help you child learn to read. Teachers can help locate materials for learning-disabled students, physically-disabled students, ESL students, etc. Disabilities need not stop a child from learning to read; there are resources and support available for anyone who is struggling.