

# Building Literacy At Home - A Guide

## Find Books And Reading Material At The Right Level

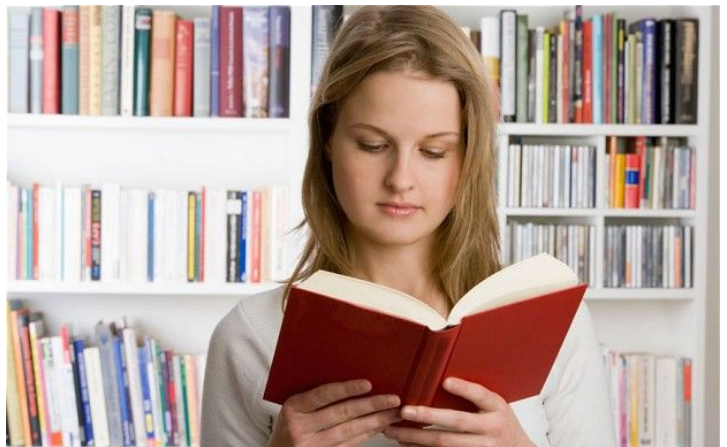
**Obtain your child's reading level:** One of the biggest reasons that teenagers don't read is that they do not have books that are the appropriate level for them. Books and stories that are too easy (below a teen's reading level) are boring. Books that are too hard (above a teen's reading level) are frustrating. The trick is finding a "just right" book. Ask your daughter targeted questions specifically about the material to confirm what her perceptions of the book were.

**Teach your daughter to determine if a book is on the right level for her:** Many teenagers will be tempted to read books that are below their reading level, because they are comfortable with them. This is fine every once in awhile, but it won't do much to help them grow as readers, and they may become bored with reading quickly. Other teens will be tempted to read books that are too hard for them because they want to impress you or their peers, but they will quickly grow frustrated and not learn anything from the book. Each time your daughter picks up a book, ask her to determine which of these categories it fits into:

- **Too easy**
  - You've read it many times before. You might be able to repeat a lot of the story or even the phrasing without looking.
- **Just right**
  - You haven't read this book before.
  - You understand most of what the book is saying.
  - There may be a few words (less than five) on each page that are difficult for you.
  - You read most of this book fairly smoothly, but you do hesitate on a few sentences.
- **Too hard**
  - There are more than five words on almost every page that you struggle with.
  - You don't understand the plot and can't summarise what has happened in the book so far.
  - If you read aloud, you read very slowly and without much expression. You hesitate a lot.

**Check books yourself to see if they are too easy or too hard:** You should do this once you know your daughter's reading level. It's best to do it in conjunction with a conversation with your daughter about whether she thinks the book is "just right" or not.

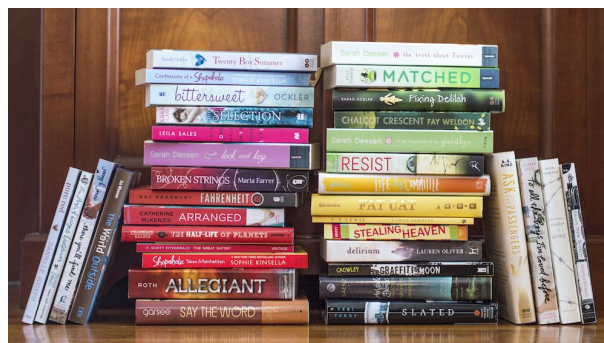
- If you're not sure whether your daughter is struggling with a book or not, ask questions like "What's that book about?" or "How do you think it's going to end?" to get a feel for her comprehension.
- Watch how comfortable she is with describing what happens in the book or how in-depth she gets with her descriptions to determine her understanding.
- You can also ask your daughter to read a passage out loud to you to determine whether she is stumbling over words or not.



## Finding Books That Will Interest Teenagers

**Encourage your daughter to try different genres:** Many people default to fiction (especially novels) when they are choosing reading material. It's important to offer teens a wide selection of literary styles. Encourage a wide variety, even once your daughter expresses a preference for one genre. Your child might be interested in an unexpected book or story, which will open up new avenues. Try to provide some reading material in each of these categories:

- Fantasy and science fiction
- Historical fiction
- Biography
- Informational books about science
- News articles
- Reference books
- Poetry
- Short stories



**Find high-interest books:** Sometimes the classics won't cut it! Particularly if your daughter doesn't enjoy reading or has a reading age below her chronological age, it's important to find material that keeps her engaged.

- It's particularly important to find high-interest reading for low-level readers. If your daughter is not reading at her chronological age, many of the books at her level will be about children who are younger than her or subjects geared toward younger children. Look for lists of "hi-lo" books (high interest, low reading level) online to find things that your daughter will enjoy.
- Teenagers may also enjoy reading comic books and graphic novels.
- High interest series are a great way to get teenagers invested in reading for the long term. Some high interest series appropriate for teens include the **Harry Potter** series, the **Hunger Games** series, the **Divergent** series, the **Twilight** series, the **Vampire Academy** series, the **Maze Runner** series, and **The Wolves of Mercy Falls** series.
- For nonfiction, look for material on exciting topics such as scary weather phenomena, sports figures and celebrities, outer space, or news events involving teenagers.

**Look for books that have corresponding films or plays:** One way to get teens excited about reading is to find books that also exist in other formats. Try reading a book together about a month *before* the movie version comes out, and then watch the movie together to see how it compares.

- Ideas for books that have corresponding films include: the **Harry Potter** series, the **Hunger Games** series, the **Twilight** series, the **Chronicles of Narnia**, **The Outsiders**, **The Martian**, **The Fault in Our Stars**, **The Perks of Being a Wallflower**, **The Princess Diaries**, **The Giver**, **The Book Thief**, **Matilda**, **Little Women**, **Harriet the Spy**, **Holes**, and **If I Stay**.

**Tip:** Find books with similar subject matter as your daughter's favourite films or plays. This is a great gateway for them to get into new series and genres.

**Consider a book club:** Almost every teenager craves social interaction. Turn reading into a social activity by finding a local teen book club that your daughter can join or by founding one yourself.

- Be sure to find or organise a group of teens on approximately the same reading level.
- Pick high-interest books for the whole group, or discussion will lag.
- If you're organising the club, consider picking books with corresponding film adaptations. Then the group can watch the movie together and compare and contrast it with the book.

## Build A Culture Of Reading

**Read aloud together:** Even when children turn into teenagers, reading aloud is still beneficial.

- Reading aloud is a great way to expose teens to books that are above their reading level. You can help them with difficult words if they are reading aloud. You can also model reading with expression and fluency.
- Be sure that teens follow along as you read. They shouldn't listen passively; actively paying attention to the words on the page will help them with comprehension.
- Expand on unfamiliar vocabulary - look up definitions and link back to words your daughter already uses and is familiar with. Encourage use of new vocabulary.

**Talk to your daughter about what she is reading:** Ask her about the plot and the characters if she is reading fiction. Ask her to tell you about current events if she is reading news articles. Encourage her to predict what might happen next or even to read her favorite passages to you. Don't overload her with questions, otherwise, your daughter may dread reading since it will feel like too much work.

- **Before your daughter reads a book, you can ask:**

- "What do you already know about this topic?"
- "What do you think the title means?"
- "Why do you think this picture is on the cover?"

- **While your daughter is reading a book, you can ask:**

- "Who is your favourite character?"
- "How do you think this book is going to end?"

- **After your daughter finishes reading a book, you can ask:**

- "Was there a part you liked best/worst?"
- "Where did the book take place?"
- "What was the most important thing that happened in your book?"



**Tip:** Talk to your daughter about what *you* are reading. If novels aren't your thing, you can tell them about the current events you read about in the news or tell them about the new scientific breakthrough you read about in a magazine.

**Provide a variety of reading material:** Teenagers' reading levels and interests will change rapidly. It's important to provide them with a wide variety of genres and reading material at many different levels.

- Used bookshops and charity shops are great places to find books.
- You don't have to buy books to make them available. Your local library is a good alternative. Help your daughter to get her own library card so that she can take extra responsibility for her reading.

**Fill tablets and mobile devices with reading material:** While your daughter is using her mobile phone or tablet, encourage her to spend some of that time reading.

- Many public libraries now have an e-reader option.
- Project Gutenberg, Google, Open Library, and Internet Archive all offer free ebooks.
- Magazines and newspapers targeted at teenagers are also a good option. You can get a subscription that comes in both paper and digital versions for many such periodicals.

**Stock up on audiobooks:** Audiobooks are great for modelling fluent reading. They can be more entertaining than even reading aloud, because the readers are often adept at voices and accents.

- Play audiobooks on long car trips.
- Turn on an audiobook that the whole family will enjoy in the evenings. It's okay if everyone sits around and plays Candy Crush while they listen together. Don't forget to talk about the plot and the characters later though!
- Don't let audiobooks replace regular reading altogether. Teenagers still need to read normal books to improve their fluency and comprehension.
- Audiobooks can be an expensive option, but you can find lots at public libraries. You can also subscribe to services such as Audible.com in order to get audiobooks frequently.



**Set a good example:** Let your daughter see you reading whenever possible. If you're not a fan of books, let her see you reading the newspaper or your favourite magazine. Remember that you don't necessarily have to read classics to show your child that reading is fun. Pick up a romance novel or a sci-fi thriller if you prefer.

**Tip:** If you have set reading times for your daughter, try to be reading at that time as well.

**Incentivise reading:** Encourage your daughter to read more by giving her positive reinforcement when she does. Keep lists or charts of all the books that your daughter reads.

- Be sure to set attainable goals. You can base the goals on the number of books or the number of pages your daughter reads. For younger teens, start out with small goals like 300 pages or 5 chapter-books. For older teens and stronger readers, raise the bar a bit. You might even base the goal for older teens on number of chapters.
- If your daughter reads very slowly or feels frustrated with these goals, you could create a goal based on the amount of time they read instead.
- Incentivise carefully. You don't want to create a system in which your daughter ONLY reads for rewards. Consider using a trip to the bookshop (to buy more books your daughter enjoys) as a reward for reading.