

## ENCOURAGING YOUR CHILD TO READ

Now that your middle grader can read independently, chances are he or she would rather plop down in front of the television than curl up with a good book. That's a concern, because reading is a skill that your youngster is still developing, and it requires a lot of practice.

As a home activity reading has stiff competition. What can you do to help reading gain a better spot in the line-up of activities competing for your child's time and energies?

### **\* Eliminate the Negative**

Expressing your concern about unused reading skills can be tricky. You must not only underscore the need to read, you must also make the fulfilling of that need attractive.

Don't nag. "You never read anything" sounds like "You never clean your room." Try not to cast reading in the role of a chore to finish as quickly as possible.

Don't use reading as a last-resort remedy for nothing-to-do. An exasperated "Why don't you go read a book?" is not an enticement.

Don't be too fussy about what your child does read. Practice is what's needed to build fluency. (Children's tastes usually change with experience.)

### **\* Accentuate the Positive**

Make a casual accounting of how much your child is actually reading. It may be more than you suspect -- though little of it may be in books: TV listings, comics, cereal box offers, sports scores, game directions.

Use whatever interests this reading reflects to provide additional materials that have a chance of being read. You might look for magazines on cars, entertainers, sports. You might also call attention to ads offering free brochures or catalogs.

If you've stopped reading aloud to your child, start again. Include books that can be reread independently afterward. Make books a bond between you and your child by making "insider" references to books you've both read.

Become a reading model (nonpushy, subtle), conveying the sense that reading is both needed and enjoyed: make regular trips to the library, comment on news you've read, call on reference books to settle questions. Treat the reading of a book as a normal, ongoing experience -- neither a chore nor a reward only after chores are done.