

Ten Tips to Encourage Teens to Read (Ages 13+)

Set an example. Let your children see you reading for pleasure.

Fill your home with a variety of reading materials. Leave books, magazines, and newspapers around. Check to see what disappears for a clue to what interests your teenager.

Give teens an opportunity to choose their own books. When you and your teen are out together, browse in a bookstore or library. Go your separate ways and empower them to make their own reading selections.

Build on your teen's interests. Look for books and articles that feature their favorite sports teams, singers or actors, hobbies, or TV shows. Give a gift subscription to a special interest magazine. Reading informational texts for pleasure is as important as reading a novel.

View pleasure reading as a value. Almost anything your youngsters read--including the Sunday comics--helps build reading skills.

Read some books written for teens. Young adult novels can give you valuable insights into the concerns and pressures felt by teenagers. You may find that these books provide a platform on which to talk about sensitive subjects. "Coming of age" stories about friendship, family, death, heartbreak, and travel are a great way to connect books to self.

Make reading aloud a natural part of family life. Share an article you clipped from the paper, a poem, a letter, or a random page from social media -- without turning it into a lesson.

Acknowledge your teen's mature interests. Look for ways to acknowledge the emerging adult in your teens by suggesting some adult reading you think they can handle. Perhaps even choose a book you can both read and discuss.

Keep the big picture in mind. For all sorts of reasons, some teenagers go through periods without showing much interest in reading. Don't panic! Time, and using a few of these tips, may help rekindle their interest.

Embrace New Literacies and Digital Literacies. Children are digital natives and are often on devices. Maximize this behavior and encourage reading on these devices in addition to books.

*This tip sheet is available in other languages. Find them at rif.org.