

## Encouraging Teens to Read

As an adult, you know that reading is important and you understandably want to make sure that the teenagers in your life grow into adulthood with all the skills they need to succeed. Families/caregivers can help teenagers decide for themselves that reading is important to their lives.

### Talking to teens about reading...

Reading is not just important while teens are in school; proficient reading skills are essential to future success in the workplace. But making a pitch for reading can be a real challenge. If you are the parent/caregiver of a teenager who has lost interest in reading or never liked it much, here are some suggestions for connecting with your student about books and reading.

### What's in it for your teen? Through reading they can:

- ❖ Become an expert. An expert on any subject they like—from sports stats to spelunking, coins to carburetors, or anything in between.
- ❖ Live dangerously. Through reading teens can share the challenges, fears, thrills, and achievements of those they are reading about without the risk.
- ❖ Have a few laughs. Many teens will enjoy sitting down with a book by their favorite stand-up comedian, a collection of jokes or cartoons, or a humor magazine.
- ❖ See the world. Without leaving their room, teens can visit places that fascinate them.
- ❖ Travel through time. Historical fiction and science fiction move a reader back and forth in time.
- ❖ Use their brains. Teens may enjoy solving a mystery by figuring out whodunit, outwitting a crafty villain, or thinking through a perilous situation.
- ❖ Get some free advice. Lots of novels feature teenage characters who have problems and pressures similar to those your teenager may be dealing with.
- ❖ Discover new interests. Through reading, teens may develop an interest in something they knew nothing about before.
- ❖ Find a cause. Teens can get smart on an issue that matters to them.
- ❖ Escape. Teens can escape noise, tension, or boredom by escaping into a book.

## Ways to encourage teens to read...

- ✦ Set an example. Let teens see you reading for pleasure.
- ✦ Furnish 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 make your own selections. A bookstore gift certificate is a nice way of saying, "You choose."
- ✦ Build on your teen's interests. Look for books and articles that feature their favorite sports teams, rock stars, hobbies, or television shows. Give a gift subscription to a special interest magazine.
- ✦ View pleasure reading as a value in itself. Almost anything your teenagers 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 neutral ground on which to talk about sensitive subjects.
- ✦ 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 an encyclopedia—without turning it into a lesson.
- ✦ Acknowledge your teen's mature interests. Look for ways to acknowledge the emerging adult in your teen by suggesting some adult reading you think they can handle.
- ✦ Keep the big picture in mind. For all sorts of reasons, some teenagers go through periods without showing much interest in reading.

