

## My child avoids reading. What should I do?



There are several useful things that parents can do to help their children develop enthusiasm for reading. Many of them were addressed in previous questions. Here we briefly review those earlier suggestions and add others.

**Choose easy reading materials.** Children will enjoy reading more when they are able to identify most words easily and can concentrate on understanding and enjoying what they read.

**Provide both fiction and non-fiction reading materials.** Some children prefer informational (non-fiction, fact-based) books. Selecting books about things your child is interested in might just spark his interest in reading.

**Take turns reading to each other.** When an adult reads with a child, it creates a more enjoyable experience. The child is likely to want to read more, especially when reading a more difficult book. When taking turns, the parent and child might read every other page in a book or the parent might read the entire book to the child first and then listen to the child read the same book.



**Talk about what is read.** Having conversations about the characters, events, and/or information in the books will help to encourage an interest in reading. Conversation can/should occur before, during, and after reading the book. And, discussions should be conversational, not test-like. Remember the goal is to get your child interested in reading and to view it as a form of entertainment. Recall conversations you have with other adults about your own reading. Think about how you've talked with your child about television shows or movies you've watched together and try to have similar kinds of conversations around books.

For example, you might say things like:

- What do you think is going to happen?
- I bet he is going to...
- Look at his face! He looks... (mad, excited, confused...)
- What would you do if that happened to you?
- I liked the part where...
- Why do you think...?

**Read the same book more than once.** Many children enjoy, and benefit from, reading the same book over and over again. This can be a real confidence builder because the child is likely to find it easier and easier to read the book each time. When a text is easy to read, the reader is likely to read it smoothly and to sound more like a storyteller than like someone who is learning to read. The feeling of reading smoothly also builds confidence. And, repeated readings can help children build their sight word vocabularies (the words that



**Engage your child in playful practice activities.** Beginning readers need to learn lots of details about the workings of written English such as the names and sounds of letters and how to write them. When children become fluent (fast and accurate) with such foundational skills, they will be able to devote most of their thinking to making sense of the things that they read and to creating sense in the things that they write. Therefore, it can be helpful to engage them in some playful practice activities to help promote this fluency. A description of games and activities that can be used for this purpose can be found on our website: [www.albany.edu/crsc/parents](http://www.albany.edu/crsc/parents).