

Growing Young Readers: Booklists and Reading Tips

Lynette D'Avella's List

"Books are like friends to me!" exclaimed my 8-year-old in a loud-ish whisper as we entered the library for our weekly visit. Walking hand-in-hand through the rows of books, I smiled inside and out that all of my four children had fallen in love with reading. Being old enough to remember to pause for reflection, I considered how this love for books came to rest over our family. For us, loving to read seems to be rooted in two things- routine and passion.

From the beginning, we placed books and reading into our daily routine. I cling to the perspective that if something is not part of the plan it is probably not going to happen consistently. Here are some of the practical ways I added "book time" to my kids' days. Place board books in the crib, read before nap time, have stories and snuggles in the rocking chair after nap, and of course a story (or 2, 3 . . .) at bedtime. As they get older, afternoon rest time provides a great opportunity for reading, listening to books and radio dramas, and quiet self-play. You will find these moments full of precious bonding, communication experiences, learning, and lots of laughs. Not every story is amazing, not every toddler is still, and not every teen wants quiet reading time – but the regularity of these activities is bound to benefit the child. Some of the strengths I have seen emerge in my own children are having awareness of print and illustrations, critical thinking skills, having empathy with characters in a story, gaining a great deal of practical knowledge and history, the skill of quiet rest, the ability to read and learn about anything they want to know. The beginning steps to all this started when they were just babies and continues today.

My passion for reading dates back to one of my earliest childhood memories of a little white cabinet with a special latch that held the children's books. Something about it was extraordinary. My mother read to me & I simply copied her example. My background is in elementary education. Through some well-trained mentoring teachers, I learned many tips of the trade to help kids connect with what they are reading. My desire for quality and meaningful children's literature took off from there. I'm the one who is never ready to leave the children's section in the bookstore . . . just ask my kids!

I encourage you to pour over books with your little ones, fill your house with treasured collections, make Christmas and birthday lists for grandparents including the "must-haves" in literature, and do your best to say YES to . . . "one more story!"

Below are some simple tips for each age group and a list of some of our all-time favorites. Enjoy!

Birth-18 Months Old

- From the moment of birth (and before!) you can sing and recite rhymes to your baby. This lays crucial groundwork for hearing and understanding our language. The repetition of these at nap time and bedtime demonstrates cadence and rhythm. Search online to find simple poems to read while your little wiggle worm is getting his diaper changed.
- Place cloth-style books in the car seat. Keep a basket of chunky small-sized board books for them to hold. It's perfectly fine if they get chewed on a little!
- Read short and simple books. Repetition is a good thing. Consider starting with a 5-minute block of time after bath time.
- Aim for this earliest reading time to convey a warm, comforting & pleasant atmosphere to your sweet baby.

[Counting Kisses](#) by Karen Katz

[Board Books](#) by Eric Carle

[A Prayer for a Child](#) by Rachel Field

[Snuggle Puppy](#) by Sandra Boynton

[Moo, Baa, La La La!](#) By Sandra Boynton

[Counting Book](#) by Cindy Szekeres

[Ten Little Ladybugs](#) by Melanie Gerth

[Pat the Bunny*](#) by Dorothy Kunhardt

[My Goodnight Book](#) by Eloise Wilkin

[Maisy Picture Book Set](#) by Lucy Cousins

18 Months – 3 Years Old

- This is a great time for sound effects! Zoom! Purr! Crash!
- Reading time doesn't always have to be still and quiet. Bouncing, acting out, and different voices keep busy little ones engaged.
- Point to this; point to that! Keep them thinking and looking with "Point to the [zebra, red car, etc.]"
- Read their favorites over and over—you *can* read [Good Night Moon](#) more times than you *think* you can!
- I always placed a few board books in the crib or at the end of the bed (after the little one was fast asleep). When he awoke, he knew that he was allowed to quietly "read" on his bed until it was time to get up.
- The highchair or playpen is great for board books, but know that they'll be . . . shall we say, well-loved!

[Piggies](#) by Audrey and Don Wood

[Momma, Will You?](#) by Dori Chaconas

[Chuga-Chugga Choo-Choo](#) by Kevin Lewis

[First Virtues for Toddlers](#)* by Dr. M. M. Simon

[Chicka Chicka Boom Boom](#) by Bill Martin Jr.

[Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?](#) by E. Carle

[Pigs Love Potatoes](#) by Anika and Christopher Denise

[Big Treasury of Little Animals](#) by Phoebe Dunn

[Guess How Much I Love You](#) by Sam McBratney

[We're Going on a Bear Hunt](#) by Helen Oxenbury

3 – 5 Years Old

- This a great age to create a very print-rich environment. It's fun to label everything: door, window, bed, bathtub . . . just think of things that they use daily and stick a post-it on it! There will be lots of cross-over when they discover these words in books.
- Show how reading takes place in everyday life. Show them how we use a seed catalog to know what type of seeds to order. Explain that you need that big book (or trendy blog) to know how to make a new recipe.
- Before reading a new book, do a "[picture walk](#)." Click this link to understand more!
- Ask questions before you read—*your goal is to create anticipation*.
- Ask questions as you read, like this: "I wonder what's going to happen next." or "Do you see the ___?"
- See if you can pull a quick one over on them, like this: Read about the "pig" on the page when it's clearly a bear. If they catch it, they will think you've gone mad – it's quite funny.

[To Market, To Market](#) by Anne Miranda

[The Train to Timbuctoo](#) by Margaret Wise Brown

[One Lonely Sea Horse](#) by Elffers and Freymann

[Harold and the Purple Crayon](#)* by C. Johnson

[The Little House](#) by Virginia Lee Burton

[If You Give a Pig a Pancake](#)* by Laura Nummeroff

[Planting a Rainbow](#) by Lois Ehlert

[There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly](#) by P. Adams

[Caps for Sale](#) by Esphyr Slobodkina

[Good Night, Good Knight](#)* by S. M. Thomas

5 – 7 Years Old: Tips

- Use books for a springboard of activity ideas. [Five in a Row](#) is a great resource for this!
- Read in different places: in a tent, at the park, in a tree, in the car (if someone else is driving).
- Read books of the same series to breed familiarity with characters.
- Check for prior knowledge while reading. For example, if you are reading [Curious George Goes to an Ice Cream Shop](#), pause and say: "Oh! an ice cream shop! Remember when we had ice cream cones at Susie's birthday party. This is a special store that sells ice cream. I bet George will think the ice cream is tasty."
- When you articulate their prior knowledge of the book's topic, you connect experiences (real and read) in the brain. I picture it like a spiderweb – connections and intersections happening all over the place!
- Dramatically demonstrate thinking out loud. Sharing what's going on in *your* head prompts creative thinking in *their* minds. For example, you may read a Curious George book and wonder out loud: "I wonder what trouble George is going to get into now. It amazes me how this silly little monkey is always getting into trouble. I bet if I took a ride in a hot air balloon "by accident" I'd probably get in trouble. What do you think?"

- Set the purpose: “Let’s read to see how the crazy little monkey is going to get up in the balloon!” or “Let’s read to see how George is going to get down from that balloon and back to the man with the yellow hat.”

5 – 7 Years Old: Books

<u>Tops and Bottoms</u> by Janet Stevens	<u>Eric Carle Treasury</u>
<u>Blueberries for Sal</u> by Robert McCloskey	<u>The Big Green Pocketbook</u> by C. R. Ransom
<u>Henny Penny</u> by H. Werner Zimmermann	<u>Tikki Tikki Tembo</u> by Arlene Mosel
<u>How Will We Get to the Beach?</u> By Brigitte Luciani	<u>The Hat</u> by Jan Brett
<u>The Frog and Toad Collection</u> * by Arnold Lobel	<u>The Gruffalo</u> by Julia Donaldson
<u>The Little Mouse, the Red Ripe Strawberry & the Big Hungry Bear</u> by Audrey and Don Wood	

7 – 9 Years Old

- This is a wonderful time to instill a love for chapter books. If the child isn’t reading chapter books on his own yet, read aloud a chapter at bedtime. Make it a special time . . . cozy blankets, a lit candle, a cup of tea. Even if they are reading on their own, reading aloud never needs to end. I find even my teens stopping in for chapter books read in the summer sun or eavesdropping on younger sibling’s storytime.
- Do your homework to find book series that will appeal to your child.
- Set aside time for your child to read independently in the afternoon or evenings.
- Give in to some seemingly silly books (like the [Geronimo Stilton Series](#)) about sharks or whatever their particular interest is at the time.
- Ask questions about what they are reading – and then **really** be interested. Spot- read (skim) their favorite books and be able to ask questions about the characters, setting, and plotline.
- Be intentional about extending their reading experience. For example, if your daughter is reading about [Kit](#) in the American Girl series, you could learn more about the Great Depression or take her on a tour of a modern-day newspaper office.
- Get books to match their interest. If he is interested in insects, surprise him with a basket-full of books all about bugs! Utilize your local library's online hold service. It is a huge time saver!
- When your kids read for school, guide them in figuring out difficult words. But, when they read for pleasure and ask you about a tricky word, don’t force them to decode it (that makes reading a chore). Just tell them the word, enabling them to move on.

[Katy No-Pocket](#) by Emmy Payne
[The Hat](#) by Jan Brett (ANY Jan Brett Book!)
[The Rainbow Fish](#) by Marcus Pfister
[The Day the Crayons Quit](#) by Drew Daywalt
[Munchworks](#) by Robert Munsch
[The House on East 88th Street](#) by Bernard Waber
[Kevin Henkes 8-Book Set](#)*

Beginner Chapter Books:

[The Littles](#) by John Peterson
[Cul-de-Sac Kids](#) by Beverly Lewis
[Janette Oke's Animal Friends](#) by Janette Oke
[The Little Bear Treasury](#) by Elsa Holmelund
[Cam Jansen Book Series](#) by David A. Adler
[Mr. Putter & Tabby Walk the Dog](#) * by Cynthia Rylant

9 – 12 Years Old: Tips

- Radio dramas are great to introduce at this age. Hearing wonderful stories told in a theatrical setting can certainly whet the appetite for quality literature. It also helps to prick the imagination with sound effects, music, and voices. See the section below about audiobooks & radio drama.
- Projects help books have a meaningful and lasting impact. If you are using books for school lessons, consider some alternatives to the traditional book report. Here are some ideas for your child/student:
 1. Fill a bag with items related to the book’s main events; take them out in order and re-tell the story.
 2. Make a mobile of the characters (find free images online)
 3. Dress up like the main character and tell the story.
 4. Act like a news reporter and write an article about a main event in the story.

5. Instead of re-inventing the wheel, use a great resource (even if it costs a few dollars) to help a book reading experience become a lifelong memory. Just search online; start at [Teachers Pay Teachers](#).

* Books with an asterisk are part of a series!

9 – 12 Years Old: Books

[Felicity: An American Girl](#)* by Valerie Tripp

[Mr. Popper's Penguins](#) by Richard Atwater

[Nancy Drew](#)* by Carolyn Keene

[Ballet Shoes](#)* by Noel Streatfeild

[The Borrowers](#)* by Mary Norton

[The Saturdays](#)* by Elizabeth Enright

[Five Children and It](#)* by Edith Nesbit

[The Boxcar Children](#)* by Gertrude Chandler Warner

[Bud and Me](#) by Alta Abernathy –the audio version is great!

[Childhood of Famous Americans](#)*

[Charlotte's Web](#) by E.B. White

[The Mayflower Adventure](#)*

[Mandie](#)* by Lois Gladys Leppar

[Sugar Creek Gang](#)* by Paul Hutchens

[Classic Starts \(King Arthur & Others\)](#)

[Little House on the Prairie](#)* Laura Ingalls Wilder

[The Hardy Boys](#)* by Franklin W. Dixon

12 - 15 Years Old

- At these ages, as life becomes busier and children often have other interests I find it still valuable to carve out afternoon or evening reading time. Before or after dinner or just before bed may be a good time for everyone to grab a book or magazine and take a break.
- Reading a paragraph/page/chapter back and forth (child/parent) can be very helpful at this age, especially if the reader is struggling. It will build up endurance.
- This is a great time to still keep up with what your child is reading. It's vital to help your child in developing his or her worldview. Reading/listening to a book and then having conversations about those topics during dinner, laundry folding, and the car can help you to connect with your child and pour into their lives.

[The Indian in the Cupboard](#)* by Lynne Reid Banks

[On the Edge of Dark Sea of Darkness](#)* by A. Peterson

[My Side of the Mountain Trilogy](#) by Jean Craighead George

[The Chronicles of Narnia](#) by C.S. Lewis

[Five Little Peppers](#)* by Margaret Sidney

[Mover of Men and Mountains](#) by R.G. LeTourneau

[The Black Stallion](#)* by Walter Farley

[Liberty Letters](#)* by Nancy LeSourd

[The Betsy-Tasy Treasury](#) by Maud Lovelace

[Heroes of the Faith](#)* various authors

[Misty of Chincoteague](#)* by Marguerite Henry

[Dragon Keeper Series](#)* Donita K. Paul

Family Read Alouds for Elementary School – Adult

- Summertime reading – after lunch on a blanket in the sunshine
- Evening reading – with a cozy warm drink or by the fire
- Snack time reading – who can say no to a story & snack (plus they are quieter while eating!)

[Gentle Ben](#) by Walt Morey

[The Fledgling](#) by Jane Langton

[Cheaper by the Dozen](#) by Frank B. Gilbreth

[Stuart Little](#) by E.B. White

[The Penderwicks](#) by Jeanne Biredsall

[The Little Princess](#) by Frances Hodgson Burnett

Radio Dramas and Audio Books for Younger Kids

[Your Story Hour](#) [Kids Corner](#) [Paws & Tales](#) [Sugar Creek Gang](#) [Tumble Books](#) [Adventures in Odyssey](#)

Radio Dramas and Audio Books for Older Kids

[Brinkman Family Adventures](#) [Focus on the Family Radio Theatre](#) [Jonathan Park](#) [The Aventure](#)

[G.A. Henty Audio Books](#) [Your local library may offer a free Tumblebook subscription, or free audiobooks.](#)

Magazines & Miscellaneous—these smaller chunks of reading are more digestible by some readers:

[National Geographic Kids](#)

[Laugh of Loud Jokes for Kids](#)

[Ask](#)

[Ranger Rick and Ranger Rick, Jr.](#)
[Tabletopics Family \(Conversation Cards\)](#)

[Would you Rather Book for Kids](#)
[5,000 Awesome Facts](#)

[Ladybug](#)
[I Spy Book Set](#)

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