

How Can I Help My Teen With Their Reading Skills in Different Subjects?



Each school subject (such as math, science, and history) requires your teen to use their reading skills in different ways. REL Pacific has developed this resource to help parents and caregivers just like you support your teenager's reading skills, during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. You can use any of the strategies that work best for your teen.

Strategy 1: Provide strategies for your teen to use if they don't know about certain topics or words.



Find out what they already know before they start reading.

Ask them:

- What do you know about this topic?
- What do you think it is about?
- How does this relate to you?



Break up the text into small sections if it's too difficult.

You and your teen can take turns reading each text section aloud. Pause to ask questions (see Strategy 2 for examples). Make sure to tie the key ideas from each section together at the end.



Repeat and use new words often.

Your teen can write down unfamiliar words or questions on sticky notes that you can review together later. You can also use the dictionary, videos, or other media to find definitions and build knowledge of those words and topics.

Strategy 2: Talk about the text on a deeper level.



Dig deeper into the text's meaning by using key ideas or facts from the text when talking to your teen.

Ask them:

- What does _____ have to do with _____?
- Why do you think the author included this part about _____?
- Let's think about the key ideas and try to come up with the big picture.
- What information is necessary or unnecessary?



Talk and share ideas and knowledge together.

Find time to chat (for example, during a meal) about topics or vocabulary your teen is learning about, and get the whole family involved too! You can also ask whether the information they're reading about would look different as a tweet, a science report, or a play. This helps your teen think about different writing strategies.

You can use any of these strategies in your home language if you or your student is learning English. Talk with your school about translating this or other resources.

Students with disabilities may need additional support. Talk with your teen's special education teacher to discuss appropriate at-home strategies you can use.

Strategy 3: Help build your teen's interest and motivation in reading.



Be interested in what your teen is writing or reading about, whether it's for class or for fun.

Create a positive learning environment by asking questions like, "What's your favorite part about ___?" or "Which character would you want to be your friend?"



Encourage your teen to read all sorts of material!

Magazines, blogs, comics, and other sorts of media are all great resources to develop reading skills and build knowledge.



When your teen gets assigned text for their classes, ask them how it relates to their interests, everyday life, or current events (see Strategy 1 for examples).

Sometimes, the last thing your teenager wants to do is talk to you about their school reading. And that's okay! Let them know that you are available to help them if they need it. Be patient and welcoming when they do come to you for help.

Resources

The Meadows Center: “[Helping Your Kid With...](#)”

This site provides worksheets, guides, and videos to help families provide best practices to teach their children math and reading skills.

[IEP and Skills Regression](#)

This web page helps families with a student who has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) think about how to make a plan if school closes and how to work to help students remember what they have already learned. This planning can also be helpful for any parent with kids in school.

[AdLit.org: Parent Tips](#)

This web page presents articles to support and encourage teen readers.

[Iris Center at Vanderbilt University](#)

This center provides evidence-based resources, modules, and strategies for a range of subjects, including reading, literacy, and language arts.



References

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