Reading Tips for Students and Families

Upper elementary and middle school | Grades 4–8

A good book gives you something to wonder about, talk about, and explore. Try these tips on your own or with someone at home.

For readers

Find something that interests you

Try mysteries, fantasy, graphic novels, poetry, or books about real people and places. If a book isn't a good fit, ask a librarian or teacher for another suggestion.

Make a little time for reading

Find a comfortable spot and start with 10–15 minutes. Read on your own, take turns with someone, or follow the words while listening to an audiobook.

Think about what is happening

Ask yourself: "What changed?" "Why did the character do that?" or "What am I learning?" Use details from the book to explain your thinking.

Have a plan for confusing parts

Reread a few sentences. Look at pictures, headings, or nearby words for clues. Check an unfamiliar word's meaning or ask someone for help.

Share something worth talking about

Tell someone about a surprising fact, a character's decision, or a favorite part. Would you recommend this book? Explain why.

For families

Give your reader a say

Help them find books connected to their interests. Make room for different kinds of reading, including comics, magazines, and nonfiction.

Read together, even as they get older

Read side by side, share a chapter aloud, or listen to an audiobook together. Invite them to join you without making every reading moment an assignment.

Have a conversation

Ask one question and give them time to respond. Try "What surprised you?" or "What makes you think that?" Share your ideas, too.

Notice their efforts

Be specific: "You went back to find a clue," or "That detail helped me understand." If reading is often frustrating, ask their teacher which supports could help.

Try this with your book

Choose one question to discuss together:

- What is something you understand now that you didn't before?
- Which character's choice would you have made differently?
- What would you like to learn more about?

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