

Summer Learning Spotlight

Reading

Middle/High School
Summer 2025

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Give books the film treatment

As summer blockbusters hit theaters, use them to inspire reading! Suggest that your teen think like a filmmaker while reading books. Have your teen:

- **Create a trailer.**

Challenge your teen to summarize a book's plot, select key details and write a script for the trailer, like a preview for the book. Then, record your teen delivering the script.



- **Design a poster.** Your teen will need to think about what the setting might look like and which fonts and colors might best convey the book's mood and themes.
- **Write a cast list.** While reading, have your teen think about which actor would be ideal in the role of each character. Your teen will need to focus on what the characters say, think and do, which deepens understanding of a book.

Reading over the summer is an important way for students to increase knowledge and maintain literacy skills. So offer your teen as many appealing ways to do it as possible. From skill-builders to games, this guide offers a wide assortment of teen-friendly strategies.

Boost nonfiction reading skills with science articles

From rocket launches to advances in artificial intelligence, the news this summer is sure to be full of interesting science stories. To improve your teen's nonfiction literacy skills:

- **Share science articles** you read, and ask your teen to do the same for you. Discuss the articles during dinner or in the car. Then, look for opportunities to learn more about a topic together. You could ask relatives and friends about ways they use AI at work, for example.
- **Suggest keeping a scrapbook** of graphics that accompany science articles. Graphics like charts, maps and infographics help readers understand nonfiction texts. Ask questions about your teen's collection, such as: *What was your initial reaction to this graphic? What message is the creator trying to communicate? How did it add to the story?* and *Who is the target audience?*

Grow your teen's reading ability

Research shows that many middle and high school students struggle to read grade-level words, which prevents them from understanding what they read. To help, encourage your teen to:

- **Collect long words** and become familiar with word parts. Suggest that your teen scan a book chapter or section and write at least five multi-syllable words in a notebook. Have your teen look up each word in a dictionary and draw lines dividing it into syllables (*ad/van/ta/geous*). This helps with pronouncing the word and spotting known parts (like *advantage*). After collecting a few dozen words, your teen can highlight common prefixes (*ad-*, *im-*, *sub-*) and suffixes (*-able*, *-ic*,

-eous). Soon it will be easier to read other words that contain those parts.


- **Build knowledge.** If your teen is struggling to understand a book, suggest doing a little online research about major events in the book or about the place or time period in which it takes place. Armed with new vocabulary and knowledge, your teen may find the book makes more sense.
- **Reread.** Repeated readings boost confidence and fluency. Suggest rereading some old favorites. Did your teen's current reading experience differ from the first encounter with the book? If so, how?

Source: L. Jacobson, "New Study: Many Older Students Struggle to Push Beyond Reading 'Threshold,'" *The 74*.

Source: S. Sparks, "Reading and Writing Like a Scientist," *EducationWeek*.

Opinions, lists, adventures and more add fun to summer writing

Reading and writing skills are closely connected. Writing a little each day this summer will help your teen's literacy skills stay sharp and ready when school starts again. To provide fun ways to practice, ask your teen to:

- **Express opinions.** Should school be year-round with more short breaks throughout? At what age should children be allowed to use social media?
 - **Collaborate.** Your teen and a friend could take turns making up a sentence or paragraph for a story. After texting back and forth all summer, your teen can compile and edit the complete story.
 - **Write a choose-your-own-adventure story.** Challenge your teen to write a story which offers readers choices that determine the plot. Your teen can draw a flowchart or use a website or app to plan out the options and their results.
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- **Write a letter to a future self.** Have your teen write a letter to open in a few years. It might include this summer's memorable experiences, ideas and feelings and names of influential friends and adults.
 - **Start a "list journal."** Suggest that your teen make a quick list each day. Topics could include: potential college majors or careers, a bucket list of places to visit, new recipes to try, karaoke songs to sing and extracurricular activities to consider.

Audiobooks offer another way to read

Many teens who are reluctant to pick up a book will willingly listen to an audiobook. And research shows that the brain processes reading material similarly whether it's listening to an audiobook or reading a printed book.

To help your teen get the most out of audiobooks:

- **Encourage pausing** to look up unfamiliar words in a dictionary. Hearing a word and then seeing it in print doubles your teen's exposure to it.
- **Look for audiobooks narrated** by people your teen admires. Many celebrities have narrated

audiobooks. Suggest that your teen pay attention to ways the events and language in the book affect the narrator's tone and expression.

- **Suggest following along** in a print version while listening. This can build your teen's reading confidence and fluency.
- **Enjoy audiobooks as a family.** Listen at home or while traveling, and encourage lively family discussions about the books.

Source: F. Deniz and others, "The representation of semantic information across human cerebral cortex during listening versus reading is invariant to stimulus modality," *Journal of Neuroscience*.

Practice finding misinformation

Spending summer hours idly scrolling and surfing online exposes your teen to misinformation. To boost media literacy:

- **Play "Two Truths and a Lie."** You and your teen should each find three pieces of information online—two true and one false. Swap and do research to figure out which one isn't reliable.
- **Do a spam folder clean out.** Together, look for clues that indicate an email might be a scam. (Don't click on links or attachments!) Warning signs include: requests for personal information, grammar or spelling mistakes, and links with incorrect fonts, letters and numbers that don't match the company name, etc.

Source: Z. Abrams, "How to Teach Students Critical Thinking Skills to Combat Misinformation Online," American Psychological Association.

Build vocabulary

Use time this summer to pump up your teen's word power. At home or on the road, your family can:

- **Take turns choosing** a familiar word and giving as many definitions as possible. For example, *run* has more than 600 meanings (go for a *run*, get a *run* in your tights, *run* errands, *run* for office). Other surprisingly *polysemus* (multi-meaning) words to play with include *bank*, *set*, *call* and *right*.
- **Listen for new words** in songs on the radio. Look up definitions for words such as *august*, *elusive*, *solace* and *fractals*.

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