

Promote Reading

"How the local paper can help"

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As children approach their teenage years, reading often takes a backseat to other activities. Face it, even though they know intellectually the important role that reading plays in their academic success, they can always find something better to do than crack open a new book.

There appears to be a decreased interest in reading for many children at or around the age of 9, even in those who loved reading prior to that. Experts attribute this to the child's ever-increasing busy schedule. Organized sports, television, video games, computer time, etc., all compete for your child's reading time.

So what are a few ways that parents can promote reading?

Use the local newspaper or a magazine as a way to promote reading. The stories are short and can be read quickly. The stories are local so the material might have more of an impact on your life.

Have your children share stories about interesting and famous people, like athletes, performers, politicians or others. Discuss what makes these people interesting and why they became famous. Ask about positive role models.

Use letters to the editor and look for familiar topics. Discuss with your child what does or does not make the letter persuasive. Does the author sound angry or worried? Are there facts to back up the statement?

Biz4Kids also encourages you to use the advertisements in the newspaper as a teaching tool. Identify key words and phrases meant to persuade the buyer. Discuss which products and which advertising approaches are appealing and explain why. Compare the persuasiveness of an advertisement to that of a letter to the editor. Take time to read the fine print. Does an ad sound too good to be true? It might be too good to be true!

Read and discuss movies and movie reviews. Choose a movie that interests both of you. After seeing the movie, compare your viewpoints with those of a reviewer.

Reading Is Fundamental, a national motivating force for literacy founded in 1966, offers these tips for parents who are trying to rekindle their child's love for reading.

- Help fit reading into their schedule. Kids say they would read more if they had the time.
- Set an example. Let your kids see you reading for pleasure.
- Give them an opportunity to choose their own material. When you and your child are out together, browse in a bookstore or library. A gift certificate or subscription is a nice way of saying, "You choose."
- Build on your child's interests. Look for books and articles that feature their favorite sports, hobbies or music.
- View pleasure reading as a value. Almost anything your child reads helps build reading skills.
- Make reading aloud a natural part of family life. Share a newspaper article or a passage from the book you are currently reading – without turning it into a lesson.
- Surf the Internet for the hottest titles, and encourage your child to do the same.

It is just too easy for kids to find other ways to spend their time, especially with so many other activities to consider. Every day, set aside time so you don't have to nag to get your child reading.

Children learn by example: good and bad. To cultivate a love of reading that lasts a lifetime, you must provide the example through your own actions. Make time for reading yourself and do it in front of your child if not with the child. Remember: actions speak louder than words!

IDEA: During the winter break set a goal for you and your child to share two articles a day with each other!