

# How can parents encourage reluctant readers?

Children may express reluctance toward reading for a variety of reasons. Often, adult guidance; variation in style of writing, text length, and subject matter; and well-chosen books are just the ticket to attract reluctant readers.

As with anything children would rather not do, forcing them, comparing them to other kids, and using other negative reinforcements backfire. There are many ways to encourage kids who are reluctant.

Here are some ideas:

**Encourage reading for fun.** Wimpy Kid author Jeff Kinney says that sometimes adults focus so much on getting kids to read they forget about the fun. But kids who are having fun will read.

**Go graphic.** There are many high-quality graphic novels that draw in readers through illustrations, short-form text, and engrossing story lines.

**Seek out sports.** For kids who'd rather be physically active than read a book, consider books about teams or by athletes, such as *You Never Heard of Sandy Koufax?!* by Jonah Winter about the famous lefty; *Hothead* by Cal Ripken Jr.; or other books about sports.

**Think big print.** The *Here's Hank* series by Henry Winkler features a dyslexic hero and a large, easy-to-read typeface.

**Let them follow their interests.** You may not love *Captain Underpants*, but if that's what your kid wants to read, put aside your judgment for the greater good.

**Find characters who reflect your kid's experience.** Kids like to see themselves in the stories they read. Look for books with characters and situations that mirror their experience -- for example, kids of color or with divorced parents or who live on a farm or who love dogs. Whatever helps kids identify with the story will keep them more engaged.

**Look for different reading opportunities.** Reading is valuable no matter what the format: Pokemon cards, product labels, game manuals, recipes. Mix in shorter-form material with longer stuff.

**Get techy.** Ebooks and storybook apps that offer some multimedia along with the narrative can be entertaining and educational and may draw in kids who are turned off by text alone. Use them alongside traditional reading.

**Fact-check.** With their amazing stats, incredible images, short-form text, and start-anywhere formats, books of facts such as *Guinness World Records* and *Ripley's Believe It or Not* entice kids who'd rather not tackle longer stories.

**Take turns.** With a book your child has chosen, take turns reading a page (or two) to each other. Ask

questions along the way.