

8. The Reluctant Reader

Teenagers who are called “reluctant readers” are often very capable readers, but may just find reading difficult or not really an enjoyable activity for them, so they don’t practice their reading skills. Here are some things you can try at home to help your teen get beyond the reluctance and develop a love of reading that can last a lifetime.

- **Model reading for pleasure** – make recommendations on the books you read and why you read them.
- Be observant – notice the reading materials that interest your child and provide access to them (e.g., comics, graphic novels, fiction or non-fiction books, magazines, etc.).
- **Get a library card** – Sign your family up for a free Edmonton Public Library (EPL) card at epl.ca/signup.
- **Build your own library** – visit garage sales or thrift stores to build your own diverse collection of books. Many have book bins for ‘give away’ or are available at a nominal cost.
- **Consider a magazine subscription** – Sometimes teens who won’t read a whole book will be quite happy to read short magazine articles on topics of interest. There are many magazines written specifically with teenagers in mind. There are even some e-zines—online magazines. The public library carries magazines and most larger bookstores have a teen magazine section.
- **Have your teen join a club** – go on-line to learn how you can register your child for EPL’s Summer Reading Club epl.ca/src.
- **Discover digital books** – many digital books and online literacy resources can be accessed through EPL’s website and your family can download a wide variety of fun and interesting apps too.
- **Find a book version of a video or movie that your teen enjoyed** – Young people often enjoy reading a book and being able to criticize the movie when it deviates from the plot or characters in the book. Many reluctant readers are actually competent readers and can make these comparisons very effectively.
- **Read books aloud** – Reading aloud the first chapter of a new novel for example, can really work well if your teen has difficulty beginning a new book. If the setting, initial plot problems and characters are introduced in the read aloud session, your teenager may find it easier to engage with the novel. Jim Trelease’s *The New Read-Aloud Handbook* and Michele Landsberg’s *Guide to Children’s Books* have many suggestions for good read-aloud titles. Also, read aloud snippets of newspaper or magazine stories that you think may interest your teenager.
- **Try out paired reading** – Read books and magazines with your teen, reading together at the same pace. Encourage them to keep the same pace as you, so you get into a good rhythm. If they make a mistake as they read with you, give them a few seconds to correct it. If they don’t catch their mistake, say the word correctly and ask them to repeat it back to you, then continue on reading, making sure you praise their progress. From time to time, also pause to ask questions and talk about interesting points in the story or article. Ask open-ended questions using words like ‘who,’ ‘what’ and ‘why’ to help your teen gain insights into what they’re reading.
- **Limit the TV watching time** – Often television can take over family life! Consider having a time when “the box” is switched off and the whole family is encouraged to read!