

Reading activities to try at home (9-12)

How teens approach learning can vary by class, day, or even what's going on in their lives. The four learning modes described below come from Amy Berry's *Reimagining Student Engagement* (2022), a title focused on helping parents and educators see teens as "true agents of their own learning."

Whether your child tends toward one mode or several, these activities can help nurture their reading confidence, curiosity, and growth.

Modes of student engagement

EXPLORER

Deeply engaged and curious. Enjoys learning and exploring interests. Sees challenges as chances to grow. Has energy and motivation when the work feels meaningful to them. Creates their own ideas and solutions.

PASSENGER

Shows up but only does the minimum. Enjoys socializing more than learning. Lacks interest, rushes through work without checking, and procrastinates when bored or stuck. Looks for shortcuts instead of learning deeply.

RESISTER

Avoids or pulls away from schoolwork. Speaks negatively about self and abilities. Struggles with motivation and rejects help even when they need it. Feels discouraged and acts out or shuts down when overwhelmed.

ACHIEVER

Works hard and aims to do well. Stays organized, sets goals, and learns from mistakes. Pushes to meet high expectations. May sacrifice sleep, worry about disappointing others, or feel stressed by perfectionism.



Activities for all modes

The Reading Soundtrack: Invite your teen to pick one song that matches the mood of a scene or character they read. Any genre works.

The Single Question Book Club: Once in a while, ask just one simple question about what they read. The catch? They get to choose which question. Start building a shortlist: What was the funniest part? What confused you? What would you change? What do you want to know next?

The Weekly Snack Sesh: Pick a weekly time for you both to grab a favorite snack and read anything for 5–10 minutes. The snack ritual adds something special, and it doesn't even matter if you're reading the same thing.

The "Would You?" Reflection: After your teen completes a bit of reading, ask, "Would you want to be in this character's situation? Why or why not?" There are no right answers, so listen with an open mind.

Activities for EXPLORERS

Feed your child's curiosity, support topic exploration, provide autonomy, and help them share their passions with others.

FOLLOW YOUR PASSION

Ask your teen about their current obsession: coding, fashion, art, K pop, forensic science, naps, or something else. Next, help them find a book connected to their interest.

- **Bonus:** Check out Sora's curated collections and magazine offerings.

TEACH ME SOMETHING READING CHAT

Invite them to teach you about something they learned from a book. It could be a fact from nonfiction, a life lesson from a novel, or something in between. Explorers love sharing knowledge; just keep the pressure low and be receptive.

FAN TO FANDOM

If you've got a creative writer at home who's found a story world to love, encourage them to write an alternate ending, a character's backstory, or a "deleted scene." They can share it with you (if they feel comfortable) or even record it as a voice memo instead of writing.

- **Bonus:** Help them find a safe online fan community or forum where others create similar content; seeing peers engaged in the same passion can be hugely validating.

AUTHOR EXPLORATION

Extend engagement beyond the page by having them explore the writer of a book they love: What inspired the book? What challenges did they overcome? What else have they written?

Activities for PASSENGERS

Spark genuine interest, increase choice, and help teens go from “checking the box” to caring about the content.

THE 10-MINUTE TRYOUT

Let your teen sample a book for 10 minutes and then choose whether to keep going or abandon it (guilt free!). This builds agency and reduces the “I have to finish this” dread.

- **Bonus:** Have them borrow samples in Sora before checking out the real thing.

3:1 BOOK PICKS

You choose three books for different moods (funny, thrilling, romantic). They pick which one they’ll read next. Student choice is far more powerful than student pressure, but Passengers sometimes feel overwhelmed by choice. This option provides guidance and autonomy.

CREATE A “LAUGH LIST” OR “CRY LIST”

Ask them to find one part of what they read today that made them laugh, think, or feel anything (even mild annoyance). Sharing emotional entry points can build connection, and this activity gives them permission to react.

THE SCREENSHOT SHARE

Ask them to screenshot and share with you a quotation that resonated with them. Simply identifying something worth noting is valuable and doesn’t require additional analysis.

- **Bonus:** Start a shared journal of memorable quotations, or post a favorite somewhere visible, like a mirror.

Activities for RESISTERS

Create safety, rebuild confidence, and help them see reading as a safe, empowering part of who they are.

“YOU PICK, I LISTEN”

Have your teen pick anything to read aloud for one minute. It could be a meme thread, a game guide, a lyric snippet, a Tumblr post, or something else. Simply listen without critique and thank them for sharing part of their world. Resisters do best when they feel heard, not judged.

DO NOTHING READING MINUTES

Invite your teen to sit with you for five minutes while you both simply “chill with a book.” They don’t even have to read, just be near the act of reading. Sometimes removing pressure opens doors.

- **Bonus:** A cozy lamp or soft blanket to make the space extra comfortable and inviting.

FIVE WORD REACTIONS

After they read even one page, invite them to summarize their reaction in five words (funny, dramatic, boring, confusing, weird, relatable, etc.). The goal is to get them to express, so keep the pressure low and don’t make it sound like a quiz.

- **Bonus:** You do the same (for the same title or something different), then compare.

TELL ME THE PART YOU LIKED LEAST

Instead of asking about what your teen enjoyed, ask what annoyed them, confused them, or felt unrealistic. Discouraged teens often find complaining easier, and even complaining can lead to rich talk about their reading.

Activities for ACHIEVERS

Reduce perfectionism pressure, build intrinsic motivation, and help them connect reading with joy rather than performance.

“THE NOT-FOR-SCHOOL” BOOK

Encourage your teen to choose a book that has zero connection to their classes, extracurriculars, or college prep. The goal here is to read for pleasure with no strings attached.

“DROP THE HIGHLIGHTER” READING BREAK

Achievers often over-annotate. Invite them to read one chapter with no tools: no notes, no sticky flags, no additional analysis. Reading for pleasure only!

- **Bonus:** Create a hand-made bookmark that celebrates reading for fun. Upcycled cereal boxes make great supplies.

TRY A GENRE REBELLION

Encourage them to read something outside their usual “smart kid” track. There are many things they can try on for size: graphic novels, romances, something spooky or sci-fi, short stories, humorous essays, or collections of poetry. Healthy achievers explore; unhealthy achievers stay rigid.

“WHAT SURPRISED YOU?” CHAT

Instead of asking comprehension questions, ask: “What caught you off-guard in what you read today?” This reinforces curiosity over correctness.

- **Bonus:** Keep it conversational by sharing with them something that surprised you recently, from your own reading, a podcast, or simply everyday life.