

Helping a Child Who Says, “I Hate Reading”

When a child says, “I hate reading,” arguing about the statement usually does not make reading more appealing. Treat it as information. The child may be struggling with the skill itself, repeatedly receiving books that are too difficult, feeling pressured to perform, or simply not finding material that feels worth the effort. Start with curiosity: “What part of reading do you dislike the most?” Listen for whether the problem is decoding, understanding, stamina, embarrassment, or lack of interest. If reading is consistently difficult, involve the teacher rather than trying to solve a skill problem with motivation alone. For older students, the What Works Clearinghouse specifically recommends increasing motivation and engagement in literacy learning along with explicit vocabulary and comprehension support.¹ At home, reduce unnecessary battles and increase meaningful choice. Reading Rockets notes that allowing children to select books can increase motivation.² Choice can include nonfiction, graphic novels, magazines, biographies, how-to texts, audiobooks paired with print, or material connected to a strong interest. Keep the first goal small. Ten successful minutes can be more useful than forty minutes of conflict. Read together, alternate pages, or let the child listen while following the print if that lowers the barrier. Do not attach a lecture to every reading session. APA guidance for families emphasizes that children persist and learn better when they believe abilities can grow.³ Use language that connects effort to skill: “This is hard now, and practice can make it easier.” Praise specific behaviors such as choosing a book, staying with a difficult paragraph, asking about a word, or finishing the agreed reading time. The goal is to rebuild competence and ownership, not force enthusiasm on command.

Did You Know?

- ✓ WWC guidance for adolescent literacy includes increasing student motivation and engagement as a recommended literacy practice.¹
- ✓ Reading Rockets recommends giving children meaningful choice in what they read as one way to increase motivation.²
- ✓ APA guidance notes that children tend to persist and learn better when they believe their abilities can grow.³

Research Sources

- [1. Institute of Education Sciences, What Works Clearinghouse. “Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices.” Released August 2008.](#)
- [2. Reading Rockets. “What Parents Can Do: Reading Tips From Kids.”](#)
- [3. American Psychological Association. “Top 10 Principles from Psychology for Families to Help Children Learn and Succeed in School.”](#)

Ten-Minute Reading Reset Plan

Use this page to lower pressure, find one workable entry point, and give your child more ownership of the next reading experience.

Child's name: _____ Date: _____

Reading choice: _____ Minutes: _____

1. Find the Barrier - About 2 Minutes

Ask what makes reading unpleasant today. Listen before offering a solution.

☐ Too hard ☐ Boring ☐ Too long ☐ Hard words ☐ Other: _____

2. Offer Two Choices - About 2 Minutes

Give two acceptable reading options so the child has real input.

Choice A: _____ Choice B: _____

3. Set a Small Goal - About 1 Minute

Agree on a short amount that can be completed successfully.

Today's goal: _____ pages / _____ minutes

4. Support Without Taking Over - About 3 Minutes

Choose one support, then let the child do as much as possible independently.

☐ Alternate pages ☐ Read aloud together ☐ Audio + print ☐ Help with words

5. End With Competence - About 2 Minutes

Name the effort or strategy that worked. Do not require the child to say reading was fun.

What worked today: _____

What Parents Can Say: "You stayed with it and found a way to make the reading manageable."