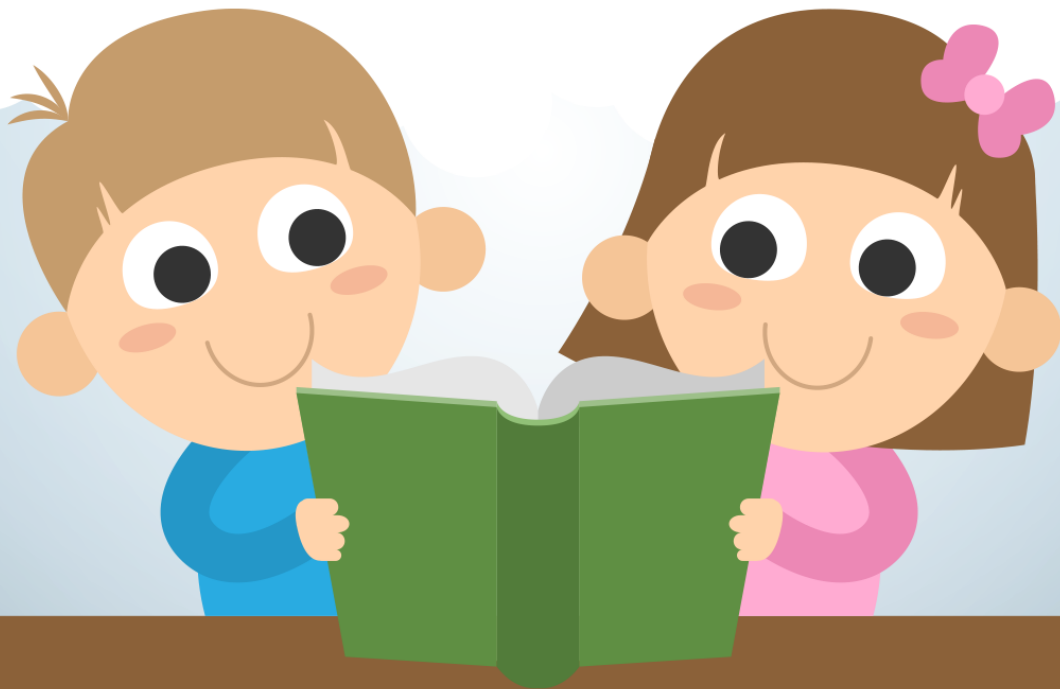


# TOP 10 TECHNIQUES TO BUILD READING CONFIDENCE in CHILDREN



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Reading is a skill that we use every single day. We read newspapers, street signs, directions, text messages, food labels, emails, safety warnings...

Reading is everywhere!

It doesn't matter if you are a child or an adult, reading is an essential part of everyday life. But reading can be a challenging skill that many students struggle to master.

When students struggle with reading, a dangerous cycle can begin.

Students who feel embarrassed about reading often shut down and fall behind in school. As a parent, you never want to see your child fall behind.

So, what can you do?

Well, if you have ever asked yourself...

"What can I do to help my struggling reader? How can I help my child develop confidence in their reading abilities?"

...then you have come to the right place!

Today I am going to give you some easy tips on how to build confidence in your struggling reader.

## **Tip #1: Let your child read to a family pet or stuffed animal.**

Try to think of something that you struggle with...a skill that is difficult for you to master.

Would you want to work on this skill in front of a room full of people? Or even one or two people?

Probably not.

Often when we learn something new, or improve upon a skill, we struggle.

Struggle is normal!

But struggling in front of others can cause embarrassment or shame. Especially with reading.

Your child may feel that you or their classmates are judging them as they struggle to read. This feeling of embarrassment may cause your child to shut down and stunt their progress.

Do you ever wonder why people sing in the shower more than anywhere else?

Because they are alone!

There is something very freeing about being alone...

...no one to judge you, no one to criticize you, no one to laugh at you!

This freedom can be extremely helpful for a reader who lacks confidence.

However, reading in the shower might be a bit difficult...waterproof books are hard to find!

So, instead of reading in the shower, encourage your child to read to a family pet!

A dog, a cat, a bird, even a fish!

This allows your child to feel as though someone is listening to them but not judging them.

Reading to the family pet not only offers a non-judgmental audience, but it is proven fact that interacting with animals can lower stress levels and help children relax.

When a child reads aloud it builds fluency. However, when your child reads aloud to you, it can be difficult to refrain from correcting their mistakes as they read.

Even though you are trying to help your reader, over-correcting can shatter confidence and cause hesitation in children who struggle with reading.

Reading to a family pet also allows for practice with distracted reading.

You might be thinking that distracted reading sounds like a bad thing...but gaining practice with distracted reading can build major reading confidence!

All kids can get distracted when they are reading, especially if they are not avid readers. This is normal!

And distractions are even more likely to occur when reading to the family pet...  
...maybe a face full of kisses or pausing for a scratch behind the ears!

These distractions are the perfect opportunity for the child to read at their own pace, stopping when needed, and refocusing when ready. All of these elements build up confidence in your reader.

No family pet?

Don't worry! A stuffed animal, doll, or action figure can offer the same confidence boosting support as reading to a pet!

## **Tip #2: Extend reading practice beyond just books.**

Have you ever sat down with a novel and just felt overwhelmed with the amount of reading that lay ahead of you?

If you are an enthusiastic reader, the answer is probably no.

But if you are a reluctant reader, the idea of reading an entire book can seem daunting. Or boring. Or just plain impossible!

Too often young students are forced to read books that are of no interest to them or too difficult/easy for their reading level.

This can cause frustration and create a permanent dislike for reading in general. Plus, forced reading can be a major confidence killer!

However, before you can build confidence in your child's reading abilities, you need to help them develop a desire to read.

So, how can you help your child want to read?

Easy!

Keep it interesting! Read more than just books! Show them that reading is more than sitting down with a textbook or assigned chapter book that is of no interest to them.

In other words, read the world around you!

Kids often associate reading with boring chapter books or school textbooks. But there are tons of things to read all around us in our everyday lives!

Start by asking your child what would they like to read about? What are they interested in? Sports? Music? Animals?

The possibilities are endless.

Next, explore other mediums that your child can read aside from just books. Perhaps magazines, newspapers, or even blogs or websites!

Aside from seeking out non-traditional texts to read, you can practice reading what's around you!

When you are watching your favorite television program at night, put on the captions and ask your child to read along.

When you are at the grocery store, ask your child questions that require them to read food labels to answer.

Or, when you are out driving in the car, ask your child to read the billboards or road signs to you.

Often it is not the actual act of reading that keeps kids from becoming confident readers, it is the material that causes them to lose interest, therefore stunting their skills and killing their confidence.

Keep reading interesting and fun by reading more than just books and your kids' confidence will soar!

### **Tip #3: Let the student become the teacher.**

It is no secret that the best way to develop a deep understanding of something, is to explain it to someone else.

Research over the years has confirmed that kids who tutor other kids gain a stronger understanding of the material at hand.

Why do you think this might be?

Well, when you are responsible for someone else's learning, it is a huge motivation to perfect your own knowledge and understanding of the topic.

After all, it would be pretty hard to teach something that you don't know, right?

When it comes to building confidence in reading, teaching can be an extremely useful tool.

You might be wondering, but who is my child going to teach?

Well, there are several options here.

Younger siblings are a great place to start. Even if your child is a struggling reader, reading with a younger sibling gives them an opportunity to feel advanced in their skills. This builds major confidence!

No younger sibling? No problem!

Even though you (likely) know how to read, you can play the part of an emerging reader to give your child the opportunity to correct and assist you.

For some kids, hearing their parent stumble over reading might be just too weird and they won't be able to take it seriously.

That's okay! There are other ways for your child to become the teacher in order to boost confidence.

After your child has read something, whether it be a book or magazine or article, ask them questions and let them explain what they read.



Encourage lively discussion about what they read and have them teach you about the content.

This improves comprehension and makes the reading relevant...two big confidence boosters!

Other ways to let your kids teach while reading might involve cooking together or following a set of directions to make or build something.

For instance, find a great recipe and have your student read the directions, explaining to you how to prepare the dish.

Or, put together a piece of furniture or plant a garden and allow your child to instruct the process by reading a set of instructions!

The Roman philosopher Seneca said, "While we teach, we learn." So take a step back from being a teacher-parent, and let your child become the teacher! You might be surprised how much you learn!

### **Tip #4: Use technology to boost interest in reading.**

It is a well-known fact that people tend to excel at things that they are interested in. And when they excel, they gain confidence.

This means that in order to be good at something and to feel confident, it must peak your interest in some way.

What if you have a child who is completely uninterested in reading? Won't it be difficult to build their reading confidence?

The answer is yes. But don't lose hope yet!

All you have to do is get them excited about reading! And technology is the perfect way to do just that.

In this day and age, technology is a powerful motivator for students. Integrating technology into reading can not only boost interest and confidence, but it can rapidly improve reading skills.

There are a multitude of ways in which you can use technology to foster reading confidence.

Reading confidence and reading skills go hand in hand. Building your child's reading skills will inevitably build their confidence.

So, how can you use technology to get your child excited about reading?

For starters, there are hundreds of apps and websites that build fluency and comprehension in fun and interesting ways.

Allowing your student to use one of these apps during their designated reading time will not only encourage learning but it will keep them interested!

Try introducing your child to some of the following apps or websites:

- **ABC Spy App**: actively helps kids learn letters and pronunciations
- **Bookster App**: storytelling app that reads to kids and allows them to

record their voice to the story as well

- **Dr. Seuss's ABC App:** kids have the option to read the book or have it read to them; words are highlighted for easy follow along
- **Amazon Kindle App:** purchase books or magazines for any level with audio companion; words highlighted for easy follow along; click on words for definitions
- **MeeGenius App:** audio playback; personalization where child can substitute their name in the book; toddler to young teen
- **www.storylineonline.net:** famous actors and actresses reading beloved storybooks
- **www.readtomelv.com:** celebrities reading books aloud; Common Core aligned activities and discussion questions accompany each book

These are just a few of the hundreds of useful apps and websites available to boost reading interest and confidence.

Check out this website for more suggestions:

<http://www.weareteachers.com/blogs/post/2014/08/08/16-apps-that-motivate-kids-to-read>

Kids today have an innate understanding of technology which can be extremely useful as a learning tool. If they already feel confident in the use of technology, use that confidence to bolster their interest in reading!

## **Tip # 5: Give your child a choice in what they read.**

At this point, it should be pretty obvious that in order for your child to gain confidence as a reader, they have to want to read.

And how can you help them want to read?

Well, aside from using technology and exploring a variety of reading mediums, you can give them a voice and a choice in what they are reading!

Time and time again research has proven that kids are far more engaged in reading if they are allowed to choose the material.

But what if they choose material that is too easy, too difficult, or inappropriate?

Giving your little reader a choice does not necessarily mean letting them free in the bookstore and saying, pick whatever you want! (Although this is, of course, an option.)

Start by having a conversation with your child about what their interests are or what they would like to know more about.

Discuss their hobbies, their fears, their curiosities.

Based on these discussions, you can select a variety of different content to allow your child to choose from.

And when I say variety, I mean variety!

Try not to limit your child's choices to only storybooks, only chapter books, or only educational-based topics.

Offer your child a variety of materials such as storybooks, comics, magazines, newspapers, fiction, non-fiction, biographies, essays, narratives, science-fiction, tutorials, etc.

By giving your child a choice in what they are reading, you are making reading relevant to their lives.

If your child is reading about something that they enjoy and something that they were able to choose, they will automatically be more engaged.

Interest levels will skyrocket and reading will become more enjoyable and less of a chore, likely resulting in your child wanting to read more!

And if they want to read more, what do you think happens?

Their reading skills improve, and therefore their confidence gets a boost! Score!

Give your reader a voice and a choice and you will give them the keys to unlock their reading confidence!

### **Tip #6: Make Reading a Game!**

Who doesn't love games?

Games offer healthy competition, the potential to win at something, and the opportunity to engage in something interactive.

Generally, kids jump at the opportunity to play a game.

So, why not use games as a way to help your struggling reader gain confidence?

There are a variety of simple ways in which you can turn the act of reading into game...

...or use reading inspired games to help increase reading confidence (and fun)!

When reading with your child, ask them if they want to play a game while reading. Your child will probably look at you with wide-eyes at the suggestion! Most kids don't expect reading and games to go together.

Simply by suggesting a game, you have already peaked their interest in reading that day.

So, how do you combine games and reading?

For creative readers, you might let them brainstorm different ideas for reading

games in order to give them some control and let them flex their creative muscles! You might be surprised with what they come up with!

If you feel more comfortable taking control of what type of reading game you play, try suggesting some of the following:

- Each of you can take turns guessing what is going to happen next in the story based on the pictures - then discuss who was more accurate.
- Implement a word hunt where your reader has to shout out a pre-determined 'buzz' word (any adjectives or verbs or main character's name). If shouting is outside your zone, perhaps they have to touch their nose or clap their hands when they come across a 'buzz' word.
- Try finding little words inside bigger words or asking your child to replace one word on each page with a synonym or antonym.
- Ask your reader to read a page in the text to themselves. Then, let them act out what happened and you have to guess, or vice versa.

If playing games during actual reading time is too distracting or difficult for your child, try playing reading-inspired games instead! This is a very effective way to work on reading skills since half of the time, kids don't even realize that they are practicing reading-they are just having fun!

- Using a magnetic board and letters (or felt), and set up the board on one side of the room; place the letters on the other side of the room. You will shout out a letter, sound, or even a word that begins or ends with a certain letter, and they have to run to the board and grab the correct letter and bring it to you. Make this a competition by playing with more than one child and making it a race!
- Matching games take a small amount of prep and can be used for practicing rhyming or synonyms and antonyms. Make two lists of words that either rhyme, or are synonyms/antonyms. For younger readers you can even use words that start/end with the same letter. Cut out each word and mix them up on the floor. Ask your reader to match up the words based on whatever word theme you chose and then read out the results.

- Phonics Hopscotch is a fun and active way to practice letter and word sounds. Simply draw a hopscotch board with chalk and fill each box with a letter. As you call out different letter sounds or words starting or ending with a certain letter, your child hops to the correct box.

As if all of these fun games weren't enough to keep your reader engaged and having fun building reading confidence, there are also a multitude of pre-made games online that you can allow your child to play!

- [www.Pbskids.org](http://www.Pbskids.org) has a wide variety of different reading based games with characters that kids know and love.
- [www.roythezebra.com](http://www.roythezebra.com) offers different interactive reading games that focus on rhyming, word stops, capital letters, and much more.
- [www.suessville.com](http://www.suessville.com) brings Dr. Seuss books to life with fun and interactive games that kids can play after reading Dr. Seuss books online.
- [www.randomhousekids.com](http://www.randomhousekids.com) offers two reading games that focus on matching and drawing to bring a creative element to reading.
- [http://www.thepixiepit.co.uk/games\\_menu.htm](http://www.thepixiepit.co.uk/games_menu.htm) for slightly older kids, this website offers TONS of different word and letter games that help with a multitude of reading related skills.

We can all agree that no child wants to do something boring. Integrating various games into your reading routine will keep it fun and exciting for your little reader.

Remember, when kids are having fun, they are more apt to learn and succeed, thus building confidence. Make reading fun again with reading games!!

## **Tip #7: Do not overcorrect**

As parents, it is second nature to want to correct your child when they make a mistake. We do this out of love and wanting to help them learn and improve.

While we are aware that this comes from a place of compassion and a desire to help, to our struggling readers, these corrections can often feel like hurtful criticisms.

Try imagining that your child's confidence is a balloon. As young readers, their balloon almost completely empty. It is up to you to help them fill that balloon up as they learn to read.

If a child feels criticized, their balloon of confidence starts to quickly deflate. Or even pop.

So how can you help your child's accuracy without popping their confidence balloon?

It can be very difficult to know when it is appropriate to correct your child's mispronunciation or incorrect inflection during reading.

Try to remember that you are aiming to build confidence, not perfection.

As a general rule of thumb, for your child's first time reading through a text, do not interrupt them. Ever. Let them get through it, mistakes and all.

Before reading the text again, you can ask your child if there were any words that they did not know or any mistakes that they think they made. Discuss these mistakes and model the correct pronunciation for troublesome words.

You can even keep a list of troublesome words and cross them off once your child has mastered them!

Some readers find it useful to hear the text first, read out loud by a fluent reader, and then have the opportunity to read it themselves. This allows them to hear the text fluently and then to try and model accordingly with their own reading.



Although it may seem obvious to most parents, there are some things that you should never say to your reader.

Refraining from certain comments or corrections can be harder than you might think, as it can be a long and painful process to sit and listen to your child struggle and stumble through a text.

Try to avoid saying the following to your reader:

- “Come on, hurry up!” or “Whoa, slow down!” Fluency is a difficult skill to master and one that takes time and practice. The best way to help teach your child fluency is by modeling repeatedly and then allowing your child to read the same text over and over again. Be patient.
- “Stop. Reread that line correctly.” In general, you do not want to stop your reader the first time reading a text, especially if you are working on building confidence. Even if it is the second or third time reading a text, if the mistake did not interfere with the meaning, let it go and review it later rather than interrupting.
- “No, that says (correct word).” Again, if the mistake does not massively affect the meaning of the text, let your child practice decoding skills rather than relying on you.
- Do. Not. Laugh. Never laugh. This is probably the worst offense that you can commit while reading with your child. If your child laughs at their mistake, it is okay to laugh together, but never laugh at your child. This is a surefire way to cause shame and embarrassment.

As parents, it is so vital that our kids feel comfortable reading with us. They need to know that when they read with us, it is a safe and enjoyable environment.

When building confidence is the main objective, try to keep the corrections and comments to a minimum. Once you have a confident reader, you can work on improving accuracy, fluency, and pronunciation.

## **Tip #8: Become the author**

It is no secret that great readers often produce great writers, and vice versa. Reading and writing go hand in hand, both skills working together to improve the other.

Aside from the obvious fact that one must engage in reading in order to write, thus working on reading skills, creating a homemade book together can be really fun! And as we have discussed multiple times, making reading fun is a surefire way to build confidence.

Creating a homemade book with your child is not only fun, but it can help you bond and allow for your child to flex their creative muscles.

Furthermore, becoming the author of their own book lets them explore topics and subject matter that interests them, furthering engagement.

Encouraging the creation of their own books can benefit your child not only academically, but emotionally too!

- **Helps improve self-esteem:** The feeling of accomplishment that your child will reap once they complete their book, no matter how long or short, is immense. Writing a book is a huge accomplishment, and one that will allow them to feel proud of themselves simply for completing it.
- **Better concentration:** When kids are immersed in a task that they enjoy, their motivation and concentration gets a boost. Creating a book taps into critical thinking skills that will keep them engaged and concentrating for longer spans of time.
- **Emotional outlet:** Often kids do not know how to express many of the emotions that they experience. Writing is a perfect outlet for them to share and express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a safe way. Expressing these emotions inevitably builds a confidence.
- **Builds reading skills:** In order to author a book, kids have to rely on their knowledge of reading conventions such as creating a cover, illustrations, text, chapter titles, and back cover description. Also, often when kids are reading through their stories, they unknowingly edit and proofread their

work. All of these skills help to improve your child's reading skills, thus boosting reading confidence.

For very young children, perhaps actual handwriting is not a skill that they have developed yet. In these cases, you can have them verbally tell you a story while you do the manual writing of it.

Encouraging your child to create their own book also offers you another opportunity to practice your self-control skills. Try not to correct anything that your child writes. Allow this to be an activity that builds a positive attitude towards reading and writing for them, rather than perfecting spelling or punctuation.

If you are at a loss for where to begin with helping your child write their own book, or if stapling together colored paper and grabbing a handful of markers just doesn't seem official enough for your young author, there are lots of websites that offer assistance in creating an actual book:

- [www.mystorybook.com](http://www.mystorybook.com) offers a platform for kids to create an online book or even publish it to share with friends and family.
- [www.storyjumper.com](http://www.storyjumper.com) allows kids to create story books with an easy to use set of online tools and the option to print and publish.
- [www.scribblitt.com](http://www.scribblitt.com) is a launch pad for kids to get creative with brainstorming and creating their own story.
- [www.storybird.com](http://www.storybird.com) provides art and illustrations to inspire creativity so that kids can create their own book in minutes.

The moral of this story is, building reading confidence isn't just about reading books. Let your kids write their own story and watch their confidence and creativity soar!

## **Tip #9: Collaborate**

Collaboration is a big word that simply means working together.

You might be wondering, what does working together have to do with reading?

Most people think of reading, or improving reading skills and confidence, as a solitary or 2-person activity. And for some, this individualized scenario is ideal.

But for your social butterflies, allowing reading to be more interactive, more collaborative, might help get them more excited about reading.

Often collaboration is more highly effective with slightly older readers, late elementary school and middle school.

If you have a pre-teen, you are well-aware of the importance of socializing in their lives.

So, why not capitalize on this and let it help get them engaged in reading?

It is natural for pre-teens to seek acceptance from their peers and to have a desire to be part of the 'in-crowd.' An innovative way to build on this inherent nature to belong is by creating a book club!

Now, to some pre-teens, a book club may sound too nerdy or academic. So how can you get them excited about the idea instead of groaning and rolling their eyes?

Give them some incentive. Offer to provide drinks and snacks and make it a more social gathering type of environment.

Or, try offering to host a movie night where they can watch the movie version of the book discussed (if there is one).

Your pre-teen may be reluctant at first, but if you can convince them to give it a try, they will likely find many rewarding aspects of belonging to a book club.

One great benefit of books clubs is that they hold readers accountable. No one wants to show up at the book club having not read the text and feeling left out of the discussion.

Another benefit of book clubs is that they allow for deep comprehension. The discussions that ensue about the given book will help kids share ideas and interpretations, allowing them to gain experience with critical thinking and multiple perspectives.

You might consider being the 'leader' of the book club until your kids get the hang of it, or even providing a list of questions to discuss and then giving the kids some privacy to do so.

If you think that too much socialization may occur with a book club made up of your child's peers, consider doing a family book club.

If your immediate household doesn't have enough age-appropriate readers, reach out to extended family and hold book club nights over Skype or FaceTime.

Giving book club members roles and responsibilities can be a great way to make sure that every member participates and gets involved. This can be a big confidence booster when the child successfully completes their 'job' and contributes to the success of the book club.

Aside from book clubs, there are certainly other ways to offer an element of socialization and collaboration in terms of reading.

Try encouraging your child to read with a sibling or friend! Or ask your child to read to you and your friends when they are over!

Readers Theater can be another fun and exciting way to help bring reading to life for those expressive and outgoing children.

Participating in Readers Theater offers kids an authentic purpose for reading and lets them express and experience the text in a whole new way.

Don't be turned off of Readers Theater by thinking that you need elaborate props or costumes (unless you want to, of course), as the main purpose is to make reading more active and collaborative in order to build confidence and engagement.

For very social children, reading can feel solitary and lonely. Offering up collaborative opportunities to read can help your child reap all of the confidence-boosting rewards that socialization offers.

## **Tip # 10: Celebrate and Praise!**

Of all the tips that have been discussed, praising your struggling reader is by far the most important.

Praise your child's successes, no matter how big or small, and do so often. Offer praise for their efforts, their dedication, even praise their struggles.

Kids want to make their parents and teachers proud. It is inherently in their nature. When they feel as if they have accomplished this, it offers them an extreme confidence boost.

Think about your own job and how important it is to receive periodic praise or acknowledgement for your accomplishments. It not only makes you feel good, but motivates you to continue doing well, right?

For kids, learning to read is essentially part of their 'job' as students. If they feel as if they are failing at their 'job', or that their efforts are not being noticed, they will likely begin to feel discouraged and their confidence will start to deflate.

A key factor to keep in mind when praising your reader is the manner in which you do so.

When you say something like, "You read that perfectly, you are so smart," you are inadvertently planting a seed in their head that tells them they are only smart if they get something correct.

This can backfire by discouraging them when they make mistakes.

Or, they might start to feel that due to such excessive praise regarding their intelligence, they don't need to work as hard because they are already so smart.

Try offering praise for your child's efforts, perseverance, or improvements rather than their simply praising their level of intelligence. Praising efforts or specific accomplishments allows them to feel proud, but also encourages them to keep trying.

Praising their efforts or the strategies that they are using to read helps reinforce to your child what allowed them to be successful, teaching them to utilize these skills

the future.

It is so important to celebrate and praise all of your child's successes when it comes to reading in order to help build confidence.

However, not all praise is created equal. It is important to keep certain guidelines in mind when offering your reader praise:

- Offer praise that is based on actual accomplishments, not broad intelligence or being smart. "You worked really hard using your context clues to figure out that word."
- Encourage your reader regardless of what level they are at. If your child gets a "C" in reading, offer praise for that "C" (if you feel confident that your child tried their very best). If your child is reading 3 grade levels below where they should be, praise their perseverance and hard work without mentioning the level that they are at.
- Take an interest in what your child is reading or what you are reading with your child so that your praise is relevant. Being knowledgeable about what your child is reading or working on allows for open discussion and many opportunities to praise their accomplishments. This also shows that you care, which is a form of unspoken praise.
- Be as sincere as possible. Kids are extraordinarily intuitive and have the ability to sense false or empty praise when it is offered. This type of mindless praise is not only meaningless but it can actually be harmful in the sense that it will discount their efforts.

Acknowledging and praising your child's efforts, successes, and even failures are critical to building confident and motivated readers. Praise is one of the simplest ways that you can seriously impact your child's level of confidence with reading and guarantee their reading success!