



Learning at
home

CELEBRATING READING!

Changing behavior is hard and requires lots of support. This month you will learn techniques to motivate and support your children to become avid readers who value reading and engage in positive reading habits.

THE MOTIVATION EQUATION

The motivation equation behaves like a multiplication problem. There are two factors, expectancy and value. Like multiplication problems, both factors need to be positive to produce a positive result. If one is negative, the product will be diminished motivation. Try the activities this month to build both factors of the motivation equation and watch your children become avid readers!

Expectancy
“I can do it!”

X

Value
“I want to
do it!”

=

Motivation
“Let’s do it!”

Consider how this equation motivates your children to play video games. When we are stuck and feel like we cannot win a game, the game provides supports. Sometimes we get hints. Sometimes a character from the game will give us a supply we need. The supports are always there, so we know the game will not let us fail. This builds **expectancy**. I know there is a way to win and I believe I can do it. After all, if we cannot win, we will quit playing and a critical goal in game design is to keep us playing.

Games also have lots of rewards that create **value**. We can buy clothes for our character if we achieve a certain rank or level. We can join guilds or teams of players that make the games more social. These aspects of gaming help to increase the value we have for the game and motivate us to keep trying and keep playing. Games often have celebrations as well to build value. Sometimes they offer a short video or congratulatory message when you pass a level. Sometimes you win a prize. These elements of gaming are not by accident. They are designed based on the motivation equation. If we can apply the same principles to reading (or eating more vegetables), we can use the motivation equation to engage our children in reading.



Making the Most of
Reading at Home

Motivating a reluctant reader

BUILDING EXPECTANCY

Expectancy
“I can do it!”

Expectancy just means, “I expect to do well.” It is our sense of confidence that we know how to achieve the desired goal, and it is critical for motivation. For example, I value beautiful gardens and regularly take garden tours to admire them. My lived experience, however, is that I kill all plants. Because I have failed repeatedly, I settle for a rather unimaginative landscape in my yard. I am not motivated to learn to garden and achieve my vision of a beautiful garden in my own yard, because it seems too hard. My return on investment for my time and effort will be low. Children who struggle with reading often disengage because they have a low sense of expectancy. They don’t believe they can be good readers, so the effort seems futile. To motivate them, you need to find ways to build that sense of confidence, so they will believe they can do it.

Foundation for building expectancy

<p>Just do it.</p> <p>Practice makes perfect is the key here. When we challenge ourselves to do something and we complete it, we learn that we CAN do it. Find any way possible to help your child gain the confidence to try.</p>	<p>Be positive and recognize the smallest effort.</p> <p>Focus on what your children <i>can</i> do. If they know three letters, celebrate that. Don’t overwhelm or add to the negative thoughts they probably have in their own heads about their reading skills. Phrase all feedback positively and focus on every new achievement or skill.</p>	<p>Model it.</p> <p>Watching others do a task can help us vicariously experience it. We think, “if others can do it, so can I.” Read with your child and stop to point our letters and sight words to them. If you have more than one child, have one child read to the other and point out sounds, letters or words.</p>	<p>Engage friends.</p> <p>If your children hang out with other children who read, they will see reading as playing. Encouraging reading in a peer network can be a very powerful way to build expectancy. If all my friends can do this, then so can I.</p>
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Making the Most of
Reading at Home

Encouraging a love of reading

BUILDING VALUE

Value
“I want to do it!”

Even if we know we can do something and have high expectancy, we may not be motivated to engage because we don't value the activity. For example, I know *how* to run, but I hate running. I remember when my second child took much longer to walk and I worried. Then I realized he could walk, but he didn't need to because his older sister brought him everything he wanted. Walking was not valuable. Children can lack motivation to read, because they do not see the value in reading.

Research shows that people need external rewards when they are starting a new behavior. After the behavior becomes a habit, those rewards are no longer necessary, because the reward becomes intrinsic. We do the behavior because we see that it is fun, useful or makes us feel good or proud. In order to promote the value of reading, we often need to start with extrinsic rewards and work to build the intrinsic value. Initially, children find the value in the rewards and not necessarily in the activity, but when they see how reading is making you proud, making them more independent and helping them get positive feedback from their teachers at school, they will engage without extrinsic rewards.

Using rewards to build value

Extrinsic rewards	Intrinsic rewards
<p>Set up a point system where your child earns various amounts of points for completing tasks related to reading. The point itself is an extrinsic reward.</p> <p>Set up prizes for earning a certain numbers of points. For example, when your children reach 5 points, allow them extra time to play before bed or allow them to pick out a small object from a prize box.</p> <p>As an added option, create a list of high value prizes for larger point totals. For example, 50 points may be worth a trip to the zoo or a movie. Help your child see that saving their points for the larger prize is an option they may want to try instead of cashing them in for a smaller toy or prize. This teaches children to delay gratification, a key attribute of successful people.</p>	<p>Intrinsic rewards are internal. They are the positive thoughts and feelings people have because they are accomplishing a goal. To help your child build intrinsic rewards, use positive feedback. Ask them to brag about one thing they are proud of in relation to reading and celebrate their success with them. Hang reading quizzes or activities they do on the refrigerator and make a point to brag about them when family or company is around. This positive attention makes children associate reading with pride. Help them process how they were successful. Say, “I am so proud of you for learning these new words. Tell me how you did it.” This feedback is specific, focuses on the attainment of a goal (learning new words) and asks children to process how they learned, so they can repeat the behavior the next time they want to learn additional words.</p>



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Motivating a reluctant reader

BUILDING EXPECTANCY & VALUE

5 ideas to build expectancy and value

1	READING TIC TAC TOE: Revisit the reading Tic Tac Toe (from the October parent activities) and play the reading games with your children. There are a number of ideas you can do on the road, while making dinner or as a family activity to help your children build letter and sound recognition, sight words and comprehension. These games don't come with the same type of pressure academic reading lessons have, so your children will focus on the game and the prizes instead of worrying about failing at the skill. Over time, the skills will emerge through the games.
2	MAKE READING A ROUTINE: Set aside 10 minutes each day where all activity in the house stops and everyone reads. This shows your child that reading is what adults do when they have a free moment, thus highlighting it is a valuable activity. If you are rewarding your child for other behaviors (cleaning their rooms, finishing their vegetables, etc.) make a new book the reward and give it to them during this time. The child will associate reading time with the excitement of getting a reward.
3	CREATE "MICRO" READING SESSIONS: If I have low expectancy, it is risky to try a behavior I am not confident I can do. I might resist sitting with you to read an entire book, because it will seem too daunting. Instead of setting long periods of time to read together, create short "micro" reading sessions. Ask your children to identify letters or sight words throughout the day. Give them a 10 second challenge where they point to every letter or sight word they can find and track the points. Sustained "micro" reading is less threatening, but also skill building. It will build skills so your children will be less threatened and more confident when they are reading books.
4	3-2-1 - TELL ME WHAT YOU CAN DO: Building expectancy requires a lot of positive enforcement and reframing. Instead of focusing on what they can't do, you can help your children learn to focus on what they can do. Each day during dinner or before bed, ask your child to list their three favorite letters or words they recognize easily. Then ask them to name 2 of their favorite toys, games or characters. Select a letter from their titles or names and make those two letters the challenge for the next day. If they are pre-readers, focus on letter finding. If they are early readers, see how many words they can find that contain the letters. Together, you will be spending the following day with a focus on just two letters, which is less overwhelming. Finally, ask your child to name one reading skill or new word or letter they are proud of themselves for learning or doing and give them positive feedback for learning it.
5	PLAY TIME IS READING TIME: If children believe their peer group enjoys reading, they will want to join the fun. When you invite children over for a play date, carve out 10 or 15 minutes to read a book to the group. Create a challenge for the group to find all the letters of the alphabet and the first team or child to win gets to pick out their snack first. Maybe set up a word hunt and have the kids hunt for objects around your house. You can be the house where fun games are played and the kids won't even realize you are building their reading skills. They will just enjoy playing.