

APPRECIATING WHAT, WHERE AND HOW BOYS READ

BY HILLARY TUBIN



Unfortunately for many boys, what gets in their way of reading for pleasure are very well-intentioned adults who try to steer them in the “right” direction.

That’s why the greatest gift we can give boys is appreciation of their reading preferences!

WHAT BOYS LIKE TO READ

It isn’t easy to let go of what you consider “appropriate” when it comes to what your son prefers reading.

It’s all about where you focus your attention. If you only focus on the book, all you’ll see is the book. If you only focus on the boy, all you’ll see is the boy. Instead, when your full attention centers on how engaged boys are with reading the material of their choice, nothing else will matter.

Try not to roll your eyes or interfere when they are hunkered down to read book series like:

Captain Underpants, Time Warp Trio, Goosebumps, A Series of Unfortunate Events, Artemis Fowl, Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Diary of a Wimpy Kid, 39 Clues and Harry Potter.



Along with series, boys also love: books with pictures, comic books, graphic novels, humorous books, lots of plot and action (fantasy), male protagonists and informational text.

Remember—boys will read the same book over and over and over again.

Boys are not so complicated; their reading needs are actually quite simple. And when boys believe that their preferences are appreciated, you can bet that they will read.

WHERE BOYS LIKE TO READ

Choice matters for boys. Not just what they read, but also where they read. Below are ways boys prefer to read when they’re reading for pleasure:



- ▶ Lying on the floor (on stomach or back)
- ▶ Sprawling in a beanbag chair or on pillows
- ▶ Leaning against a wall
- ▶ Outside
- ▶ Under something (a desk, a table, a chair, a pillow, a coat, a blanket)
- ▶ In a small space
- ▶ With a pet
- ▶ Using a flashlight
- ▶ In their bed
- ▶ ????????

What’s missing on this list?

- ▶ Sitting at a desk or table in a chair

For boys, this position equals pain, not pleasure, and is a reminder of foundational, standardized and mandatory reading in school.

For pleasure reading to take hold in your home, it’s important your son doesn’t sit at a desk, unless he chose that spot. Encouraging him to find a reading spot where he feels comfortable for 30 minutes is key. The crazier their location or position, the more engaged with reading they became.

It can be tricky to appreciate how your son prefers to read and it will take time for you to adjust to their preferences.



HOW BOYS READ

Boys carry the misconception that “real” reading only happens when they read fiction paperback and hardcover books, anything else is not worthy or considered reading.

This belief is very limiting for them when it comes to developing their reading habit and it’s important to help your son understand what else is available for him to read.

Below are other forms/media your son can and should read:

- ▶ Newspapers (hardcopy)
- ▶ Magazines (hardcopy)
- ▶ Leaning against a wall
- ▶ (Kindles and Nooks or iPads that are distraction free, i.e. they have no access to the internet, apps, games or music)
- ▶ Audiobooks (yes, listening to books on tape is a viable choice)
- ▶ Printed from the computer (articles and blogs found prior to reading time, printed onto paper to read during reading time)
- ▶ Short stories or anthologies around a topic
- ▶ Comic books or graphic novels



Reading for Pleasure

If your son struggles with reading, he still must be reading for pleasure every day, too. Research finds that this is a critical piece that must be in place for struggling readers or they will keep struggling.

Audiobooks work great, and Kindle also has a text-to-speech option available for many of their books. If your son can listen and read at the same time, that’s the best option.

READING ALOUD

Reading aloud to your son is another great option, even if he’s 14 years old.

This is not the time for him to read out loud to you or for you to ask him questions; it’s meant to be a comfortable, safe and pleasurable time for your son. Many times, I only needed to read the first few pages or first chapter aloud to get boys started.

Some parents found that when they read mandatory reading material aloud to their son, he actually engaged more, did better with the subject, and eventually was able to read it on his own.



An Unusual But Effective Method

Another option is a bit antiquated, but it works magic, especially if there isn’t always time to read aloud to your son when the two of you are together:

Read what they chose into a tape recorder or the voice memo on your cell phone. Then they can listen back and read along to it at a later time. Many struggling readers can become independent readers this way.

CONCLUSION

When you become comfortable with other forms of reading materials, you’ll be able to give him permission and support to expand his definition of “real” reading.

Remember, it’s not about what boys are reading, where they read or how they read, it’s about their degree of engagement.

Appreciating your son’s reading preferences puts him on the path to success because it allows him to develop the daily reading habit. Comic books, graphic novels, magazines, newspapers and nonfiction texts will help him grow into the best version of himself, not the opposite.

Here’s to boys reading!

