

# What do BOYS need when it comes to Reading?

When it comes to early literacy in elementary school, boys are lagging behind girls. Here are some key points that you will want to understand about what little boys need (*and some little girls too!*) when it comes to reading.

Go to <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/brochure/mereread/mereread.pdf> for a very thorough booklet about boys and reading throughout the elementary and high school grades. This is an EXCELLENT booklet.



## Humour

- ▶ Boys like books that make them laugh and that appeal to their sense of **mischief**;
- ▶ Be silly with your **body language** and **facial expressions** when reading books;
- ▶ Be silly with **sounds** (you know how much they love bathroom humour!);
- ▶ Be silly with your voice when reading books (make your voice LOUD/Quiet, FAST/slow, etc...);
- ▶ Make up silly rhyming words (like cat, mat, **blat**, **grat**, etc...);
- ▶ Change the words for Nursery Rhymes (e.g., Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of "**french fries**" -or- "**pancakes**", etc...) and let them make up their own silly version;
- ▶ Read Nursery Rhyme books that are silly like **Mary Had a Little Jam** by Bruce Lansky, Meadowbrook Press, ©2004;
- ▶ Read and let them read lots of **comic books** and **joke books**;
- ▶ Read and let them read **David Pilkey** books (author of the *Captain Underpants* series, and 'The **Dumb Bunnies**' series), and other humorous and absurd authors;
- ▶ You can't beat Robert Munsch for kid's humour!



## Curiosity

- ▶ Read books that have a mystery (like **Franklin's Big Search and Solve Flap Book** by Paulette Bourgeois, Kids Can Press, ©2005, or "I Spy" books);
- ▶ Read books with clues under the flaps;
- ▶ Read books with 'words' under the flaps;
- ▶ Make up a scavenger hunt on little pieces of paper (e.g., Look under the \_\_\_\_\_. Look behind the \_\_\_\_\_.)
- ▶ Ask good questions when reading aloud ("What do you think is going to happen next?")
- ▶ When older, this curiosity turns into a love of **science fiction** or **fantasy**.



## Non-Fiction

Boys like books that are non-fiction like:

- ▶ Books that reflect their image of themselves - what they aspire to be and to do;
- ▶ Books about the body;
- ▶ Books about animals (farm animals, dinosaurs, jungle animals, etc...);
- ▶ Books that have short paragraphs that can be complete all on their own (e.g., **magazines**, or facts from the "Ripley's Believe it or Not" books, or "Guinness Book of World Records, etc...");
- ▶ Comic books;
- ▶ Boys do like fiction, but they prefer fiction that focuses on **action** more than on **emotions**.



## Action

- ▶ Read books and **TELL STORIES ORALLY** that make it easy to do actions for. For example:
  - In "**The Little Red Hen**": pretend to cut & thresh the wheat, grind it into flour, carry the flour bags home, bake the bread, eat it, etc...
  - In "**The Gingerbread Man**": pretend to roll out the dough, use a cookie cutter, add raisins for the eyes, run by slapping their hands on their thighs, **etc...**
  - In "**Will You Carry Me**" (by Heleen van Rossum, Kane/Miller Book Publishers ©2005), they can pretend to jump, fly, swim, etc... (these make excellent circle time books)
  - In "**Goldilocks & The Three Bears**": pretend to walk by slapping hands on thighs, knock on the door, eat the porridge, fall off the chair, walk up the stairs, snore, etc...
- ▶ When learning how to segment words into syllables or individual sounds, have them hop into hoops, drop pennies into cups, have them run from one side of a wall to another, throw bean bags into the hoop that contains the first sound of the object named, etc...;
- ▶ When learning the alphabet, play "I Hear with My Little Ear, the very first sound in (car)" and then say that **SOUND**, not the letter name, and then **make an action for that sound**, (see alphabet action sounds in the "What is Early Literacy?" booklet;
- ▶ Print sounds:
  - in the air or on the carpet;
  - on a friend's back;
  - in chocolate pudding or sand at the bottom of a plastic container;
  - in foam soap or shaving cream on the bathtub wall;
  - on a steamed up mirror after a shower;
  - on a frosty window or on a dirty car;

- ▶ Help them begin to act out stories from familiar events or storybooks (once they get started, they will take over) and role model correct grammar and longer and more imaginative sentences while pretending.



## Competition

- ▶ Make anything to do with learning to read a **game** (play *Alphabet Memory/Concentration*, *Alphabet Snap*, play syllable and sound games like *Hop the Hoops*, play rhyming-matching games);
- ▶ It doesn't have to be a competition with others; it could be with themselves;
- ▶ Give stickers for books read (casually, for the fun of it) and celebrate when they have gathered many stickers;

## Boys also prefer:

- ▶ **Newspapers, magazines, comic books, baseball cards, and instruction manuals!**
- ▶ Interestingly, when they read these materials, many boys do not consider themselves to be reading at all, precisely because these materials are not valued as much as story books at school/home.
- ▶ Boys need to **visualize** and like **visuals** whenever possible. Add **props** to storytelling; let them act out the story.
- ▶ And finally, boys love books in a **series**, such as the *Captain Underpants*, *Harry Potter* or *Lemony Snicket (A Series of Unfortunate Events)* series, which seem to provide boys with a sense of **comfort** and **familiarity**;



READ *to* him, *with* him, and whatever his heart desires!

Remember to **get face-to-face** to see where they are looking and what interests them the most. Then follow their lead and teach them new words and skills using **what interests *them* (not you)**.