**Building a Habit**

**Step 1 of Making Students Love to Read**

To build a habit of reading, you must model reading as well as assign reading.  What teachers do with their time tells students what is most important.

Reading Homework -- This must be done *outside of the school day, “HOMEwork”.*  However, to teach them how to record it, we do it in class the first day.

*Reading Homework is the easiest, but most important homework.*

It’s the only homework in elementary school that actually *increases knowledge* instead of reinforcing skills.  Repeat this mantra throughout the year to remind your students why it is so important.

* Assign Reading Homework nightly. It’s assigned every night Monday through Thursday ALL YEAR, *whether mentioned in class or not.* This means it must be checked weekly to reinforce the importance.  Actions speak louder than words.
  + Assign by ***pages***, not minutes.  In elementary, I started at 5 pages per night, then increased by five pages each month until reaching 20 pages, then left it at 20.  In 6th, I start with 10 pages per night and progress to 20. How much of Silent Reading time do students spend with a book in front of them without actually reading?
  + They may read whatever they like.  “It appears that students who are allowed to choose their own reading materials are more motivated to read, expend more effort, and gain better understanding of the text.” (Gambrell, 1996, Guthrie et al., 2007; Schiefele, 1991; Spaulding, 1992)
  + They may read to a sibling.  They can follow along while an adult reads.  If they read comics, please read twice as many pages.   They can read magazines, or online.
  + ***Following along in the book while listening to an audiobook is not cheating, it is practicing.***
  + ***Discourage reading aloud to a parent*** -- that isn’t much fun, and it is a different reading skill than they will need as citizens.
  + Minimize writing for recording homework.  In planner, at the bottom of each daily column they record (but if they misplace their planner, I accept it written on paper, or *even typed up on a phone).*
    - title
    - beginning page and ending page (so you can see they are reading the right amount)
    - a **short** sentence about something they read or what happened in the story
  + ***Grading.  You must check it consistently at the beginning of each week.***  This reinforces how important it is.  If they have done the four nights (outside of school time), I give them a 4 or 80%.  If they want a 5 or 100% there are a couple ways to do this
    - read at least twice as much as the assigned number of pages every day, OR
    - read at least 2 of the three weekend days.  On the weekends, only title and page # are needed.
    - What if they read, but didn’t write it down?  Write it down now, estimating pages, they earn a 3 out of 5 (D-) instead of 0.  It’s about reading.

**Daily Silent Reading**, books of their choice.

* This is READING time, not look for a book time, or look around the room time.  In elementary grades, have them set the book they were planning to read on their desk before leaving for recess.
* Discuss what reading looks like (looking at your book) “Reading Posture”
* *Model the importance by reading during this time also* -- This is a great time to increase your knowledge of children’s literature.  Students want to read what you’re reading. Your time is not better spent grading papers or other non-reading.
* If you don’t read too, what does it tell them?  Make a big deal about you want to read now too, but if they need help with a word, bring it up to you.
* Some classes need to start with only 10 or 15 minutes of truly silent reading, you be the judge of how long.  Increase through the school year.
* Scan the class while you’re reading to make sure everyone is *looking at their books*.
* Repeat, “Look at your book,” as often as necessary.  Or, “Look like you are reading, please.”
* I allow reading on phones and pads, but it does depend on the student.  It’s so tempting to switch to playing a game.  Sometimes I sit in a student desk instead of sitting at the front of the room.
* Almost every class will have one or two students who just can’t stay looking at their books.  I find that having them sit next to me while they read every day for a while helps them.
* Sigh disappointedly when it’s time to stop.

**Read aloud daily.**  After lunch is the best time.

* Again, you are showing how important reading is by doing it yourself.
* [Riding the Devi](http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/riding-the-devil-robin-radlauer-cramer/1120611231?ean=9780692317785)l is an excellent read aloud.  It really builds community, and there are four Readers’ Theaters to go with it on the [Riding Readers](http://ridingreaders.weebly.com/) website
* Have extra copies of your read aloud. Each day have five or more students follow along while you read (rotating through the class).  Circulate around the classroom while you read, so you can point out where you are if a student gets lost.  Never chastise for getting lost, just keep showing where you are.  Depending on your student population, not many need a lot of help.  Even your RSP kids can do it.

Omero was a pretend reader and RSP student in fourth grade. He looped with me. In fifth grade he no longer needed me to keep showing him where he was. When I remarked on his reading ability regarding this, he said, “You read slower this year.”

* The extra copies provide a relaxed way for students to gain more practice at reading in an less stressful way.
* Reading great books aloud builds community in your classroom.  This is extra helpful in middle school where students can easily feel lost.
* Students love being read to.  Review “what happened yesterday” to make sure kids are not tuning out.
* You can incorporate read alouds that enhance your content instruction in Social Studies and Science.
* In Middle School or Junior High, do your class novel as a read aloud, or at least start it as one.  Students will be more engaged.
* Only read books you have already read and ***love***.
* You can also get an audiobook to read aloud.  Don’t rely on this completely, but audiobooks are done so well and model excellent voices, and pacing. If possible, do some other activities along with your read aloud.
  + Readers’ Theater
  + Illustrate something you visualized during the book.
  + As a class, research something related to the story:  Civil War, Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam War, the Great Depression, Alcatraz Island, autism, Americans with Disabilities Act, find other books by the same author that they can read independently.
  + Many good children’s books have been made into movies.  Watch the movie and discuss what got left out
  + have students make a Movie Trailer for the book
* Read only books you love.  If you don’t like a book, don’t read it aloud.

**Regular visits to the school library.  If you are close enough to a Public Library to walk there, go once a month.**

**Keep a Monthly Book Log**

This can be confusing because students are already writing down what they read for homework.  But a Monthly Book Log is supposed to include EVERYTHING they read in the month.

* If they start a book, but don’t finish it, write it on the book log and write down *how many pages of the book they read.*
* If they read a magazine or newspaper regularly, make an estimate of about how many pages they read in a month.
* If they read anything related to their religion with their family, include that.
* If they read a chapter in a textbook, include how many pages they read.
* Time for Kids, or other classroom periodicals
* Graphic Novels -- Count as 60 pages (recommendation)
* Picture books, divide by 2
* Great Illustrated Classics, divide by 2
* EVERYTHING.
* Grade the Book Log. Shouldn’t students’ reading grade reflect how much they read?   For example in 6th grade:
  + Less than 300 pgs. D
  + 300 -- 400 C
  + 400 -- 600 B
  + 600 -- 1000 A
  + 1000 + A+
  + As they go above 1000 pages, I record up to 120% so they can earn extra credit by reading voraciously.
* At the end of the month, collect, give a new one.  Make a chart on the board.  Put a small post-it with the # of pages they read on their graded book log. Make a graph with the sticky notes.  Students are usually pleasantly surprised by how much they read.

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| Less than 300 | 400 - 600 | 600 - 800 | 800 - 1000 | 1000 - 1500 | 1500 - 2000 | 2000 + |

Adapt to fit your class.