

## Need to Recharge? Bring Back the Books!

How do you keep your school days fresh and exciting when the newness of September is only a distant memory? After several months, monotony can set in, along with discouragement and boredom. Every day can become a struggle to keep your kids motivated. You know the feeling. If they would just fill in the prescribed number of blanks in each workbook, then the stress would be over for both of you...at least until tomorrow. Let's face it. When you get in a curriculum rut, progress is slow and labor-intensive. In order to breathe new life into your days, you need to get back to the basics.

After our kids learn to read, we tend to cross reading off our list of the three R's and consider it a finished project. Then we move on to workbooks to teach them how to spell, how to formulate complete sentences, how to recognize proper sentence structure, and so on, and this is where we miss the boat. Workbooks have their place, but only after our students can see and experience these concepts for themselves. Reading a good book can effortlessly review key language arts concepts and so much more. Reading can also develop logic and reasoning skills, illustrate morals and values, and expand the knowledge and life experiences of our students all at the same time. And best of all, reading is fun. It's entertainment on a printed page. When you think about it, the simple truth is that reading should be foundational for each school day.

Do we really understand the value of a story well-told? Jesus has been called the greatest teacher who ever lived, drawing crowds by the thousands before the days of easy transportation, comfortable auditoriums, or fast food. Yet even as a master communicator, Jesus still used stories to teach important truths. He knew that stories communicate concepts in a way that we understand them more fully and remember them more effectively. Shouldn't we be using stories to teach our own kids? Sometimes a story promotes good values like honesty or respect or teaches simple truths. Other times a book can give an amazing amount of knowledge in science or history and spark a lifelong passion to know more.

I used to think that every book on the children's shelf was appropriate for children, but unfortunately that is not always the case. After reviewing hundreds of titles, I have found that you have to be careful, especially on the Young Adult shelf. And even if the content is appropriate, you still need to be sure that you are taking advantage of every reading minute. It is worth putting a little extra time and effort into making good selections.

How do you find good books? Choose books from trusted authors, publishers, or suppliers. Look at the selections recommended by your favorite curriculum providers, ask your librarian, or ask your friends or fellow homeschoolers about some of their favorite books. Consider pre-reading a book before you assign it or reading it out loud with your children. And if you are looking for a particular topic, visit [www.abookintime.com](http://www.abookintime.com) for a superb history booklist or search the web under "library booklist" to find titles recommended by public libraries across the country on a variety of themes.

Begin each day with a specific amount of time allotted for reading, depending on the age and ability of your student. If you meet some initial resistance, require just a short amount of time at first and gradually increase these sessions as your child learns to love books. Or you could assign a specific number of chapters and not worry about the clock at all. On the other end of the spectrum, if your child finds it hard to put a book down, schedule your reading time at the end of the school day and use it as an incentive for finishing everything else.

It has been said that behind every great leader is an avid reader. Take advantage of your homeschooling opportunity to influence your children above and beyond basic academics. Introduce them to the world of good books, and start them on a journey to success.

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Carol Henderson loves to read and is the author of [www.aBookInTime.com](http://www.aBookInTime.com). She has been homeschooling for 15 years in the Charlottesville, Virginia, area.