

# Benefits of Having Books in the Home and How to Create a Home Library



1. "For years, educators have thought the strongest predictor of attaining high levels of education was having parents who were highly educated. But, strikingly, this massive study showed that the difference between being raised in a bookless home compared to being raised in a home with a book library has as great an effect on the level of education a child will attain as having parents who are barely literate compared to having parents who have a university education.

Both factors, having a book library or having university-educated parents, propel a child 3.2 years further in education, on average. Evans said, "Even a little bit goes a long way," in terms of the number of books in a home. Having as few as 20 books in the home still has a significant impact on propelling a child to a higher level of education, and the more books you add, the greater the benefit. 'You get a lot of 'bang for your book',' she said. "It's quite a good return-on-investment in a time of scarce resources."

2. "Regardless of how many books the family already has, each addition to a home library helps the children get a little farther in school," they report. "But the gains are not equally great across the entire range. Having books in the home has a greater impact on children from the least-educated families. It is at the bottom, where books are rare, that each additional book matters most."
3. Our study questioned over 17,000 young people and revealed a strong link between young people's reading ability and their access to books at home: 80% of children who read above the expected level for their age had books of their own; this figure drops to 58% for children reading below their expected level. The report also found that young people who did not

own their own books were nearly twice as likely to agree with negative statements about reading.

4. How to create a home library for your kids:

- a. A home library doesn't take up much space—a corner of your child's room is perfect. You just need a bookcase, books, and some thought. Try these suggestions for creating a reading area that not only offers reading material but also invites your child to think about what she's read and to exercise her own imagination and creativity.
- b. Choose the right spot. Design an inviting space where books are kept and read. Put out soft pillows or a beanbag chair so your child can snuggle up with a favorite story. Make sure there's good lighting.
- c. Put books within reach. Use low, sturdy shelves so your child can safely select the books on her own. You'll need to show her how to put them away with the spine facing out!
- d. Repair rips. Use clear library tape to reinforce bindings and mend tears.
- e. Have regular rotations. Change the books on display so your child is encouraged to try new stories as well as cherished favorites.
- f. Respond to your child's interests. Offer books, magazines, and current catalogs about the topics your child is most fascinated with. Her teacher or the local librarian can help you find books about particular subjects.
- g. Swap books. Set up a book-lending system with other parents. Kids can share their favorite stories with friends-and discover new ones.
- h. Extend the experience. Encourage your child to retell and think about the stories by providing a flannel board and cutouts, character puppets, and art materials for making story-inspired creations.
- i. Make your own books. Keep markers, pencils, crayons, and paper nearby. Encourage your child to dictate, write, or draw her own books and design bookmarks. Adding her creations to your library will be a great source of pride!

5. Build your home library with inexpensive children's books. You can purchase used or inexpensive books through many websites.

6. Borrow from the library

You can also obtain books through your local library. You and your children can easily obtain library cards for free.

Here is a checklist of items you will generally need to apply for a library card:

1. The first step is to fill out a library card application (available at your local library or sometimes available on your local library's Web site. Some libraries, such as the New York Public Library offer online library card registration.)

2. Second you will need the following documents to apply for a library card for yourself:

Current and valid ID with photo, name and local address  
OR

Two pieces of current identification, one must include your name and address. These may include personal check; current telephone, gas, electric or cable bill; mail with a current postmark (within 30 days); or Voter's Registration card (no post box numbers will be accepted).

To apply for a library card for your child:

Children under the age of 14 generally need a parent's signature to complete the application process. (They will also need to present an ID with photo, name and address.)

People without a permanent address may show proof of residence with a letter certifying their resident status from the social service agency where he or she receives mail. (No post office box numbers will be accepted.)