

The 10-Minute Reading Habit

A simple, practical guide to making reading happen, without the battle.

A Starter Kit for Busy Families

From the team at Tricky Brains

Reading with your kids shouldn't feel like a chore

But for a lot of families, it does.

The battle to get started. The negotiation over the book. The child who suddenly needs water the moment you say "time to read."

If that sounds familiar, you're in good company.

Most families don't struggle with reading because they're not trying hard enough. They struggle because reading has become one more thing to squeeze into an already full day.

This guide isn't about doing more. It's about doing less, but doing it consistently.

Ten minutes. That's the whole plan.

Short reading sessions done regularly build stronger readers than long sessions done occasionally. It's not about the length of the session. It's about showing up.

When reading ends before anyone gets tired or frustrated, children start to think of it as something enjoyable rather than something demanding. That shift is everything.

By the end of this guide, you'll have a simple routine you can start tonight.

Step 1: Find your anchor

Don't try to create a new reading slot from scratch. Instead, look for a moment that's already in your day and attach reading to that.

This works because you're not asking your brain (or your child's brain) to do something entirely new. You're adding to something that already happens.

Choose one thing your child does every single day without fail. That's your anchor. Reading happens directly before or directly after it. Not "around that time", directly before, or directly after.

The anchor is what starts the routine. The more boring and reliable it is, the better.

Some anchors that work well:

- After-school snack time; consistent, calm, a natural pause before the afternoon kicks off
- After dinner while the table is being cleared
- The 10 minutes before bed once everyone has settled
- Weekend mornings before the day picks up speed
- In the waiting room, the car, anywhere with a natural pause

Write it down here:

Our reading time: _____

It happens after: _____

Not sure where to start? Try after-school snack time for one week. Just one week, then see what happens.

Step 2: Keep it simple

Once you have your window, here's all you need to do inside it. Just three steps.

1

They pick the book

Any book. The silly one. The one you've already read 40 times.

Giving them the choice removes the first argument. Kids are far more likely to engage with something they picked themselves.

2

Read together for 10 minutes

You read to them, they read to you, or you take turns page by page. Don't stop to correct every mistake. The experience matters more than the performance.

When the timer goes off, stop, even mid-page. Leaving them wanting more is a win.

3

Then just... stop

No comprehension questions. No summary. No "what did you learn?" Just say "good read" and move on.

You're building the habit of reading, not running a book club.

Try reading aloud, even with older kids

When you read aloud to your child, even when they're perfectly capable of reading themselves, it does something that silent reading can't. It shows them what a fluent reader sounds like, keeps it social, and takes the pressure off. Many children who resist reading to adults still love being read to.

Step 3: What to do when it goes sideways

Some nights will be easy. Some nights won't. That's completely normal, and it doesn't mean the habit isn't working.

Here's what to say when it gets hard:

"I don't want to read."

Try: "We're just doing 10 minutes. You pick the book."

Then open the book and start. Don't negotiate, just begin. Most resistance disappears once you're into the story.

"This book is boring."

Try: "Let's read two more pages and then we'll decide."

Two pages is usually enough for the story to hook them. And if it's not? Let them switch. A different book beats no reading at all!

The session falls apart completely.

Let it go. Don't make it a bigger moment than it needs to be.

One bad night doesn't undo a good week. Close the book, move on, and try again tomorrow.

A gentle reminder

Families who build strong reading habits aren't superhuman.

They just kept going when it got messy. Consistent and imperfect beats occasional and perfect every single time.

Our reading routine

Fill this in and stick it somewhere you'll both see it. The fridge works. So does the back of the bathroom door.

Our Reading Routine	
When we read	It happens after (e.g. dinner, bedtime)
Where we read	
Who picks the book	The child, always!
How long	10 minutes
What we do after	Nothing. We just close the book 😊

From the team at Tricky Brains

Helping children build confident, curious minds.