



A Parent's Guide to Nonfiction

“The more that you read, the more things you will know.
The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.”

-Dr. Seuss

Reading informational text unlocks the world for children. It allows them to make discoveries about our past, our present, and our future. They can learn about leaders who came before them and today’s scientific discoveries. They can find reflections of what they know to be true, and learn about places where they’ve never been. Most of all, kids can answer big questions and ask even more. As Calo (2011) wrote, “informational texts can ignite students' innate curiosities about the world around them”¹.

It’s so important for us to make nonfiction a part of children’s lives at school and at home. In this guide, you can find information to support you in bringing nonfiction books into your home, as well as ways for you to support your children in nonfiction reading.

Why is it important for my child to read nonfiction books?

For many students, nonfiction books allow them to dig deep into interesting topics. While reading nonfiction, students build background knowledge, or what educators call “schema,” in a variety of subjects. This sets children up for success in school.

As they grow, children will need to read more and more informational texts. From content classes in elementary school to courses in college, students will read and learn from nonfiction. As adults, the majority of the reading they do will be informational text.² When children read nonfiction in their elementary school years, they are practicing the skills they will need as learners later on.

Reading nonfiction also gives students a real reason for reading. Nonfiction can answer questions children have about the world. It can also deepen their interest in a topic and drive them to pursue further research. When students let their curiosity drive them, their reading becomes more purposeful.

“[By reading nonfiction, children will] build background knowledge, increase their confidence, and discover authors and topics that feed further reading. When our students read more, the world is open to them as an endless source of learning and inspiration.” - Donalyn Miller³



Tips for Talking to Your Child About Nonfiction Reading

1. Show your children that you are excited about their reading! Nonfiction reading is fun, and if your children see that you are excited, they will be excited, too.
2. Before reading, ask your children what they already know about the topic. This will help them activate their background knowledge and ask questions before they start reading.
3. After your children read, ask them if they have any new questions about the topic. Coming up with more questions is part of the research process.
4. Help your children make connections between their reading and the world. Their reading may connect to events on the news or things they are learning in school.
5. Just talk about it! Chatting with you about what they read helps children process their thinking and communicate their understanding.

How can my child and I incorporate nonfiction reading into our daily lives?

Informational texts are all around us! You and your child have so many opportunities to learn more about interesting topics. If you are reading the paper, have your child flip through and tell you what they can learn from the pictures. If you're using a cookbook, have your child help you read the recipes. If you are traveling, read maps and travel guides with your child so your child can help you plan the trip.

In addition, you can make reading a part of your family's routine. If you are picking up a nonfiction book, your children have a role model for their own reading.

Where can I go to find nonfiction book recommendations for my child?

Many people have heard of the Caldecott and Newbury awards, but are unaware of awards for quality nonfiction children's literature. Two annual awards are the Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Medal (<http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/sibertmedal>) and the NCTE Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children (<http://www.ncte.org/awards/orbispictus>). Both awards celebrate excellence in nonfiction for young readers.

Additionally, there are many websites that frequently share new nonfiction titles.

- Nonfiction Monday (<https://nonfictionmonday.wordpress.com/>)
- Nerdy Book Club (see their 2016 Nerdie award winners for nonfiction at <https://nerdybookclub.wordpress.com/2016/12/27/the-2016-nerdies-nonfiction-picture-book-winners-announced-by-karen-terlecky/>)
- The Horn Book (<http://www.hbook.com/welcome-to-family-reading/>)

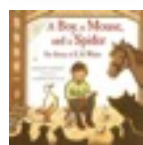
One of the best places to visit for children's nonfiction recommendations is your local library! You can find your local library online at <http://find-your-public-library.dp.la/>.

Where can I learn more about nonfiction for children?

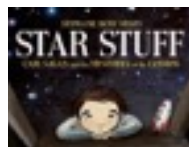
Here are some additional resources for supporting your child in reading nonfiction:

- Reading Rockets: <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/how-read-nonfiction-text>
- 10 Tips: https://www.scholastic.com/discovermore/readers/pdf/DiscoverMore_Tips.pdf
- Nonfiction Reading Kids Love: <http://www.scholastic.com/parents/resources/article/reading-activities/nonfiction-reading-kids-love>
- The Nonfiction Revolution: <https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/non-fiction-why-its-important/>

Nonfiction Picture Books to Captivate Young Readers



A Boy, A Mouse, and a Spider: The Story of E.B. White
by Barbara Herkert



Star Stuff: Carl Sagan and the Mysteries of the Cosmos
by Andrea Loney



Solving the Puzzle Under the Sea: Marie Tharp Maps the Ocean Floor
by Robert Burleigh



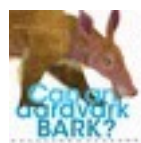
Her Right Foot
by Dave Eggers



Island: A Story of the Galapagos
by Jason Chin



She Persisted
by Chelsea Clinton



Can an Aardvark Bark?
by Melissa Stewart



Giant Squid
by Candace Fleming



Take a Picture of Me, James Van Der Zee!
by Andrea Loney



Prehistoric Actual Size
by Steve Jenkins



Maya Lin: Artist-Architect of Light and Lines
by Jeanne Walker Harvey

¹Calo, K.M. (2011). Incorporating informational texts in the primary grades: A research-based rationale, practical strategies, and two teachers' experiences. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 39(4), 291-295.

²Smith, M.C. (2000). The real-world reading practices of adults. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 32(1), 25-52.

³Miller, D. (2013). The dazzling world of nonfiction. *Educational Leadership*, 71(3), 22-27.

Questions or comments? Feel free to contact me at missmageesreads@gmail.com.