

## Desperate to keep kids off screens? They won't be able to put these books down

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USA TODAY  
JUNE 27, 2025

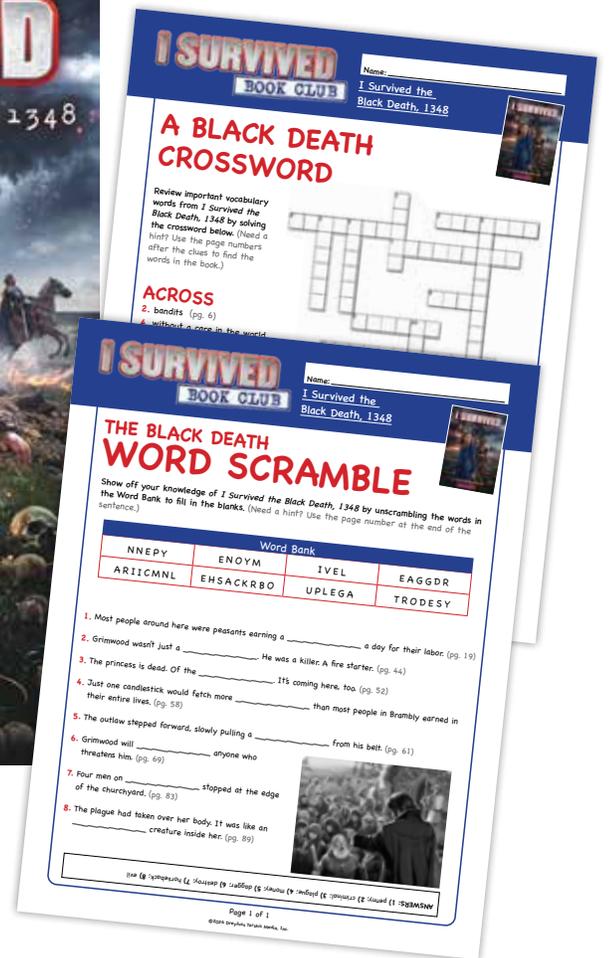
It's a summer day and it's too hot to play outside. Your child is glued to a screen, content to spend their day with air-conditioning and digital media.

Sound familiar? It's the time of year when many parents are waging a war against technology – while it's fun to have an inside lazy day now and then, these can add up quickly without school. And with fall on the horizon, the summer slide is a looming threat to school-aged children.

This phenomenon happens when kids lose some of the learning they achieved in the past school year. While studies are mixed on the impact and prevalence of summer learning loss, literacy rates for children are now at an all-time low. Forty percent of fourth graders have “below basic” reading skills.



Free downloadable teaching resources are available for all I Survived titles from author Lauren Tarshis's website.



### How to get your kids to read this summer

Treating summer reading like homework is a good way to deflate any joy in reading, which is already declining among students. Even among adults, the temptation to scroll often overtakes the desire to read.

Here are five tips to try with your household this summer, plus reading suggestions for books that'll keep kids engaged.

## 1. Make it a family activity

Kids take cues from their parents. If you show them how important and fun reading is in your life, they'll likely model that behavior.

Parents can start by making reading a topic of conversation. Share what you're reading and let them tell you about their books. Make reading together a family challenge this summer, says Lauren Tarshis, author of bestselling kids' series "I Survived" and Scholastic's senior VP and editor at large.

"We're all going to put down our phones from this time to this time and we're going to read," she suggests saying. "Let's go to the library together. Here's an independent bookstore, let's go there. Let's make that an excursion."

## 2. Find a book they'll love

It's important to find a book that'll make your kid excited to pick up another, so look for one that taps into their hobbies or latest obsessions.

Bookelicious, an online site for kids' reading, was founded by Lea Anne Borders to connect kids with books that match their unique interests. On Bookelicious, young readers design an avatar "bookmoji" with costumes, pets and accessories. These customizations help Bookelicious match them with books they might enjoy: It can recommend one about sports for a kid who dresses their bookmoji in a jersey.

"Motivation and engagement are fueled by the access to high-interest, personally relevant books and ability to exercise some choice around those," Borders says. "We're trying to serve up those books that are really, really interesting and fun and exciting to kids and then help them make their own choices, because that means they're more likely to read their books."

Every kid is different. Audiobooks, graphic novels

or even digital reading may be the best form of reading for your child. Audiobooks and e-reading are on the rise in schools and public libraries around the country, according to Steve Potash, the CEO of digital library distributor OverDrive.

## 3. Add an incentive or challenge

Summer reading challenges, whether at your local library, online or homemade, can be a great way to keep reading exciting. Here are some we recommend:

- **Barnes & Noble Summer Reading Challenge:** Fill out journal, get a free book in July and August
- **Books a Million Summer Reading Adventure:** Fill out logbook, get a free Dog Man prize
- **Scholastic Summer Reading Badges:** Color in badges after completing reading goals
- **Bookelicious Summer Reading Challenge Checklist:** Complete 10 activities, receive \$25

You can gamify summer reading on your own, too, like a reward of screen time for every finished book or number of pages, a new book at the bookstore or a trip to a local ice cream shop.

## 4. Tie it to a fun summer activity

Not every kid loves reading, and that's OK, says Tarshis. The author of dozens of children's books, Tarshis started writing "I Survived" because she couldn't get her son to read. Tarshis had her own "significant" challenges reading as a kid. Learning disabilities can also pose a challenge.

There are more ways to get kids reading this summer than just handing them a book. Even magazine reading or online research is a good way to get kids using their brains. Going to an amusement park this summer? Tarshis suggests assigning them to read reviews: "What are the three best roller coasters? What do we have to bring?" she offers. "Do not use

ChatGPT; I'll know if you did."

Going on a trip? Have your kid learn about the local wildlife or historical sites. Do you have a movie-buff family? Read up on the Vikings when you watch "How to Train Your Dragon" or aliens before seeing "Elio." If your family is brave enough for a "Jaws" 50th anniversary rewatch, have your kids read about sharks.

## **5. Start a reading community or book club**

Reading may be a solitary activity, but it's best when done in community. Join a silent book club, start a parent-child book club with neighbors or move your playdate to the library on a rainy day. Reading together can help build excitement, gather new recommendations and help your family feel part of something bigger.