

# Boys will be boys. Boys will be brilliant!

Breaking through barriers to boys' achievement S Greenaway 2015

## Why are boys behind?

Guardian 2014

GCSE results: biggest gap in 11 years between boys and girls A\*-C pass rate

Despite boys getting a higher share of A\* grades they continue to fall behind across the board.

- Lack of independence prior to starting school.
- Less developed linguistically than girls.
  - Girls currently start school at a significant advantage in their use of language.
  - Girls outperform boys in all literacy-based tests from FS to KS3 English.
- The largest gender gaps at GCSE are in language based subjects.
- Boys who are not encouraged to talk through their ideas have difficulty putting pen to paper.
- Boys who are rarely given the opportunity to verbalise their feelings about something that they have learned through a process of review and reflection cannot become effective learners.
- Boys who are not encouraged to talk and express their feelings often resort to other means.
- These boys often become the kind of men who cannot subsequently express their feelings in adulthood.

## What can we do to help?

What do we know about boys and their reading?

- Boys are less likely to talk about what they are reading so try to find ways to chat informally about a news story, magazine, book or film...
- Boys spend less time reading so don't be too harsh if it seems too little! Even five minutes a day can make all the difference.
- Boys choose different books to girls and tend to go more for humour, science fiction, action, even horror!
- Boys' interest in a topic really does seem to make a difference to their understanding so it really is worth choosing books that match their interests and hobbies.

With these facts in mind, MOTIVATION and ATTENTION-GRABBING CONTENT have to be the top priorities if you want to get your son to read - and stick with it.

- Boys should be read to by both male and female role models (and they shouldn't stop the moment he can read for himself!).
- Board games
- Play imaginatively with toys and put on silly voices, encouraging him to do the same.
- If they watch TV/film discuss it with them and make sure you watch it together.
- Limit leisure time in front of screens.
- Make meal times social occasions to discuss his day.

Try these **top tips** from Gary Wilson, expert on raising boys' achievement, to encourage independence in general and reading in particular - and loving both!

### 1. Praise

Boys need lots of praise. Often they see themselves as getting attention for all the wrong reasons. So, give your son lots of approval for all the right reasons! A good rule of thumb is to try to say three positive things to every negative.

- When giving praise, try to be specific about what it is your son has done to earn the praise.

### 2. Talk

If you want to help your son to do better, it's important to get him talking (and listening!) right from the start. You can help in several ways:

- Show an interest in what your son is doing (even if the subject doesn't interest you!) and ask questions about it.
- Talk with him, rather than at him.
- It's important to be patient: listen with interest, keep the conversation going, ask questions and don't leap in with an answer.  
Easier said than done!

### 3. Be independent

To help your son to be independent from an early age, you could encourage him to:

- get himself dressed in the morning,
- make a list of everything he needs for school that day,
- make his own decisions about a few things in the week's routine.

### 4. You can do it!

Boys often feel that mistakes equal failure. A boy's response is to say that he 'can't do it'. To help your son feel that he CAN do it, give him lots of encouragement when he does something well. It's also important to remember that mistakes don't equal failure; it's just the way we learn.

### 5. Read, read, read!

It's really important to show boys that reading is an 'ok' thing for men to do. So, granddads, dads, brothers, uncles... you need to get reading too!

Reading together is important for boys of all ages as it helps them realise that it's not only a skill for life, but also good fun too.

- Read with expression.
- Talk about the characters, plot and pictures along the way.
- Ask him to guess what might happen next.

### 6. Reading isn't just about books!

Encourage your son to read when you are out and about together. Try reading labels, signs, posters, instructions... the list is endless.

Words are everywhere, so read them!

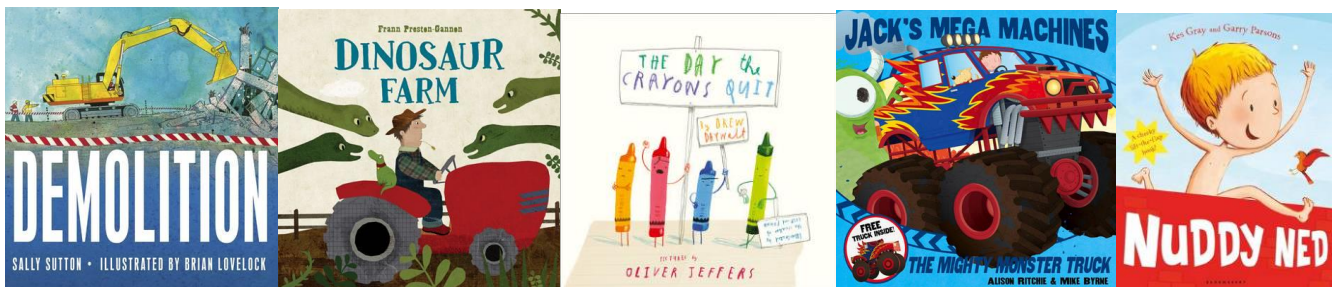
### For even more brilliant ideas:

**Raising Boys' Achievement: A pocket Pal** by Gary Wilson (ISBN 978-1-85539-349-3)

**Breaking Through Barriers to Boys' Achievement and developing a caring masculinity** by Gary Wilson (ISBN 978-1-85539-211-3)

**Help your Boys Succeed: The Essential Guide for Parents** by Gary Wilson (ISBN 978-1-85539-449-0)

Watch Gary Wilson's Top Tips <http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/Question/Index/4>



See our 'Great books for boys' recommendations link on the school website (Curriculum, reading).