Here's the key idea: Give kids the books they want to read. If the books are good ones—cool ones, funny ones, fat ones, skinny ones—our kids will thank us. Maybe for the rest of their lives.

SECRETS TO GETTING KIDS TO LOVE READING

James Patterson

I remember where I had my epiphany about getting kids reading and loving it. It was a book signing in northern Michigan. A couple came up to me with their eleven-year-old daughter and thanked me because my books had gotten her hooked on reading. Then the parents started to cry.

Right then I truly understood how emotional it is for parents when their kids aren’t reading. And when my son, Jack, started reading, I understood this urgency in a whole new way.

Since then I’ve had thousands of similar conversations about reading with kids and their parents. You’ve had them, too. It happens in bookstores and libraries, via letters and e-mails, sometimes when I’m just walking along the street, blue-skying about new stories to write.

So how do you avoid this thing we’re calling “readicide”? Here goes.

1 **THE FIRST TIP:** The absolute best way to get most kids reading is to give them books they’re going to love. Honest, it’s that simple.

Here’s a scary fact: millions of kids in America have never read a book they liked. Not one book. That’s sad.

2 **THE SECOND TIP:** It’s our job to help parents and teachers find the books that our children will love.

3 **THE THIRD TIP:** Listen, really listen when the kids talk to you. They know what they like and what they don’t like. They’ll tell you as long as they believe you hear them.

Okay, so how do we go about identifying these terrific books that our kids are going to devour?

That’s a place where I can help. I’ve started a website ReadKiddoRead <ReadKiddoRead.com>. A couple hundred selections are listed at the site—all books that will turn kids on to reading. The books are divided up like this: illustrated books (for ages up to six), transitional books (for ages six and up), pageturners (for ages eight and up), and books that are more difficult, but worth the extra effort (for ages ten and up).

But we all know you’re already the experts. Problem is, you don’t have the time to create lists for every parent or teacher who needs suggestions. Think of my site as a place to refer them—an answer for those who need some guidance in finding the right books (because they do).
Parents may find encouragement in what my wife Sue and I did with our son, Jack. We went out and found a dozen books we knew he would probably love. The first summer, he groaned a little. The next summer, he started picking up books on his own. And the following summer, he was absolutely addicted. We started this when Jack was eight. He's thirteen now, loves books, and is a very strong reader.

Here are a few more ideas to suggest to parents and teachers.

One mom on ReadKiddoRead said she lets her kids keep the light on at night, as long as they're reading.

A father suggested that it's important that the whole family read together. Different books, different interests, but it's important for kids to see us reading. A lot of movies are made from books—so why not read those books together, either before or after you see the movie.

One librarian told me that she puts just as much energy into talking to kids about their favorite new bestseller as she does their reports on the books in the literary canon. Any passion for reading is rewarded.

Here's the key idea: Give kids the books they want to read. If the books are good ones—cool ones, funny ones, fat ones, skinny ones—our kids will thank us. Maybe for the rest of their lives.

Here are some excellent picks from 2010 (see sidebar).

### Great Advanced Reads

- **Dark Days of Hamburger Halpin** by Josh Berk
  - Will and Devon are both geeky and unpopular. Things change when they dive into a murder mystery (Knopf Books).

- **The Lost Hero** (The Heroes of Olympus Book 1) by Rick Riordan
  - Uh oh. Percy Jackson is back to steal my son's heart again... (Hyperion Books).

- **Incarceron** by Catherine Fisher
  - Describes a very cool but terrifying prison that Finn, an inmate, plans to break out of, while Claudia, daughter of the warden, plans to break into (Firebird).

### Great Page Turners

- **Justin Case: School, Drool, And Other Daily Disasters** by Rachel Vail and Matthew Cordell
  - Justin’s a worrier. His diary of third grade is not to be missed (Feiwel & Friends).

- **The Ugly Truth** (Diary Of A Wimpy Kid series) by Jeff Kinney
  - Jack and I love Wimpy Kid, though Jack thought they made Greg into too much of a jerk in the movie version (Amulet Books).

- **Mummies!...** by Christopher Sloan
  - Boys really do love nonfiction, and this one has the gross factor going for it too (National Geographic Children’s Books).

- **The Strange Case Of Origami Yoda** by Tom Angleberger
  - Origami Yoda magic, young Jedi do like. Read this, you must! (Amulet Books).

### Great Transitional Books

- **Interrupting Chicken** by David Ezra Stein
  - This chicken won't let his dad finish a story. Turns out he's a budding author himself (Candlewick Press).

- **Miss Brooks Loves Books! (and I don’t)** by Barbara Bottner
  - Missy's school librarian reads books to her class and dresses up as book characters, while Missy has a hard time finding one she likes. Can you relate? (Knopf Books).

- **Bink and Gollie** by Kate DiCamillo and Alison McGhee
  - These two girls are very strange. Charming, but strange (Candlewick Press).

### School! Adventures at the Harvey N. Trouble Elementary School

- **School! Adventures at the Harvey N. Trouble Elementary School** by Kate McMullan
  - Kids love the puns throughout this book, and you will, too (Feiwel & Friends).