

**fueleducation**<sup>®</sup>

The Cosmic Reader's

# Ignite Reading Playbook

4 challenges to engage students and increase reading

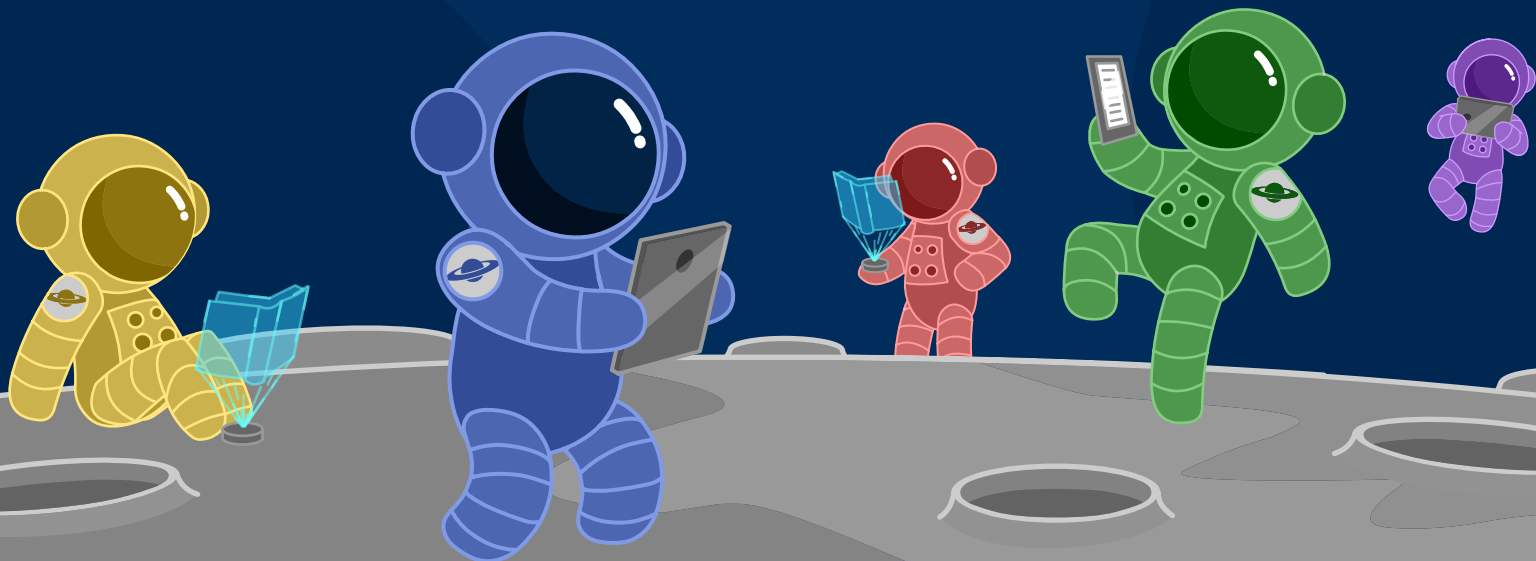
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AND  
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## Get Students Reading More!

Students get better at reading by reading! The more students read, the more they comprehend, which leads to higher academic achievement. Reading promotes vocabulary acquisition, improves writing skills, develops student autonomy, and helps students see the world through different eyes.

Students' time and attention is often given to other activities, which makes it more important than ever to encourage and motivate students to spend a lot of time reading. This playbook provides step-by-step instructions and support materials for four different reading challenges, along with many more quick and easy ways to promote and reward reading in your classroom, school or district. While the reading challenges have been designed for brick-and-mortar schools, many of the ideas can be adapted for use in virtual classrooms.

### Let's get started...

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# Everyone Loves a Contest!

## How healthy competition motivates students to read

Competition can be positive motivation for students to learn. Games, contests and challenges encourage students to push themselves, help them explore new areas of study and generate excitement about learning. When it comes to reading, competition can provide an incentive for reluctant readers to start reading more, for struggling readers to keep working hard and for high-achieving students to take on new challenges.

Today's digital learners are much less engaged by traditional lecture and tutoring-based approaches to teaching. They have grown up with game-based learning where each stage of mastery is set as a goal and is measured and rewarded in some fashion.<sup>1</sup> In addition to motivating student learning, competition "has shown increased efficiency and improved self-awareness in class activities when students were in a competitive environment."<sup>2</sup>

Contests and challenges can be structured in many ways to involve teams, individuals competing with other individuals, and challenges that set personal goals for each student to achieve. Whatever the framework, the purpose is to encourage learning and to create a classroom or school culture that values and rewards academic achievement – not winners and losers but anyone who is working hard to improve their skills and learn.



When using competition to encourage reading make sure that the activity is structured to promote:

- The learning or growth goal, not just the prize
- Success for all participants
- Learning and reading as fun<sup>3</sup>

Take a look at the four reading challenges outlined in the following pages. We've provided step-by-step instructions for conducting all of them, but there are lots of ways for you to add your own creativity. Share these reading challenge ideas with your teaching team or PLC and brainstorm ways to make them work best for your students.

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1. Gee, James Paul. *What Video Games Have to Teach Us about Learning and Literacy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

2. Worm BS, Buch SV. [Does competition work as a motivating factor in e-learning?](#) A randomized controlled trial. *PLoS ONE*. 2014; 9(1):e85434.

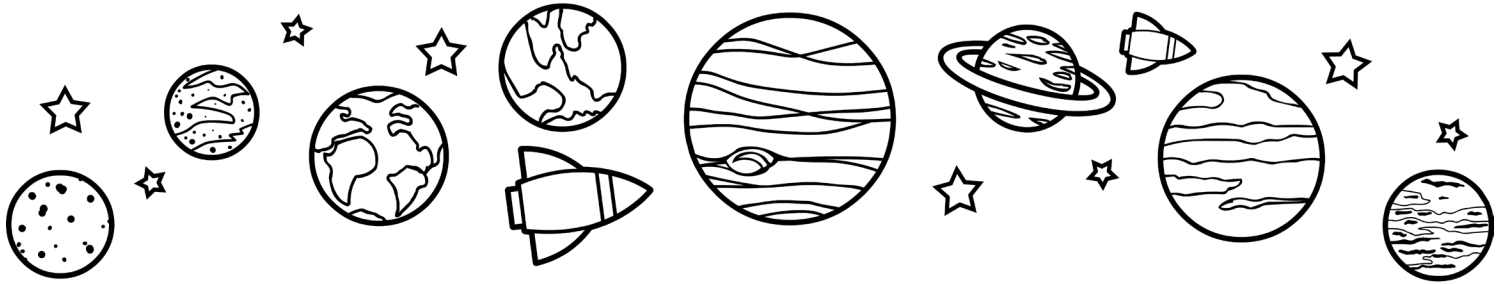
3. Shindler J. [Transformative Classroom Management, Positive Strategies to Engage All Students and Promote a Psychology of Success](#). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass; 2010.



# Read Across the Galaxy Challenge

## Read from Planet to Planet!

Time is the most important factor for developing stronger readers. This is an individual reading challenge for students that can also be used as a cross-curricular lesson about the solar system. Students will make their way from planet to planet by reading for a certain number of minutes while on each planet. As they read their way through the galaxy, the number of minutes they must read to move to the next planet increases.

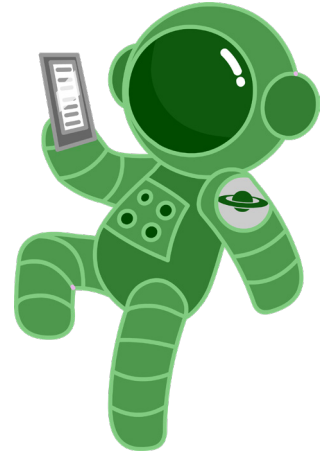


### Getting Started

1. [Download all the bulletin board pieces.](#)
2. **Print the solar system bulletin board pieces.** There is a sun and each of the eight planets.
3. **Print a spaceship for each student and write a student name on each one.** Or, give each student a spaceship and let them write their names and decorate them.
4. **Create your Read Across the Galaxy bulletin board.** Have students put their spaceships on or around the sun.
5. **Print a Mercury reading log for each student.** Get ahead by printing each of the planet's reading logs for each student so you're ready to hand out the new logs as students progress through the galaxy. ([Download all the logs](#))
6. **Select your prize.** When a student has read all the way to Neptune, they can receive a Star Reader certificate ([Download the certificate](#)) and a prize, if you choose. A free book is a great prize if you're able to get donations or use book fair points. Free homework passes or extra recess time are good rewards, too. If you want to challenge the whole class to reach Neptune, you could use a pizza or ice cream party as an incentive.
7. **Get your students started on their reading adventure!** Give every student a Mercury reading log and explain how the challenge works. We've also provided a letter you can send home to families to let them know about Read Across the Galaxy and enlist their help in getting students to spend more time reading. ([Download the letter](#))

## Read Across the Galaxy Directions

1. Students must read, or be read to, for 60 minutes, to get from the sun to Mercury. Have students record what they've read and for how long on their Mercury reading logs.
2. Once students have read for 60 minutes they will turn the log into you. Once you have verified their reading time, the student can move his or her spaceship from the sun to Mercury. Then give the student the Venus reading log.
3. Each time a student completes a reading log, they get to move their spaceship to the next planet.
4. When a student has completed the Neptune reading log, they receive a Star Reader certificate and a prize. ([Download the certificate](#))



## Lesson Extension

To make this challenge a cross-curricular learning experience, have students learn about the solar system.

Ideas...

1. Require students to read a book about the planet that corresponds with their reading log planet.
2. Assign groups of students to each of the eight planets and ask them to research their planet and create a poster or digital display about what they learn.
3. Before starting the reading challenge, have students research all eight planets. You could assign groups of students to each planet or let students choose a planet they're interested in. Ask each student to come up with a unique fact about their planet. Write the facts on slips of paper and then put the slips of paper into envelopes, baskets or bowls – one for each planet. As students read to each planet, have them select a slip of paper from the correct planet bowl and read it aloud to the class.

## Download All the Printables for this Challenge

[Download Printables](#)



# Nonfiction Trivia Contest

## Explore the Universe

Common Core, College and Career Readiness and other standards put an emphasis on nonfiction reading, writing and citing evidence. Standardized tests also include more informational text prompts. Helping students develop research, informational reading, and critical thinking skills is critical, but getting them to read nonfiction books outside of the curriculum can be a challenge. This reading contest is a fun way to increase nonfiction reading and help students build their research skills.

School librarian Shannon Ryan developed this contest idea for her students and used it to increase nonfiction circulation at Lake Carolina Elementary Upper Campus in Columbia, SC.

### The contest in a nutshell

A question is posed to students that requires them to read a nonfiction book in order to find the answer. Students are required to answer the question and cite their source, including the page number where the answer was found. This ensures that students don't just use search engines to find the answer.

School librarian Shannon Ryan runs her nonfiction trivia contest weekly, giving a new question to students at the start of each week. Depending on the grade you teach, you may want to run contests every other week or monthly. The frequency will depend on how quickly you think students can complete the research.

To accommodate different reading levels in your class or school, you can create questions that could be answered from multiple books at different reading levels. This strategy works particularly well for questions about famous and historical figures, animals or historic events. Or you can vary the reading level of the book selected for each question you ask. With this model, every student may not be able to participate in the contest each week.

### Getting started

**1. Create your trivia questions.** Questions can be on any topic. You can coordinate questions around themes in the curriculum, special events, holidays, or biographies. Check out this sample question:

*In a biography about the famous author Lois Lowry, she is quoted as saying, "Anything that makes you think" \_\_\_\_\_?" is the start of a story." What 2 words should be in the blank in the quote?*

Here are a few tips for creating questions from Shannon:

- Read the entire book. Write a question from information near the end of the book
- Create questions using keywords found in the glossary or index
- Be sure to write down the page number where the answer to the question is found.

## Sample questions to get you started

Build on school librarian Shannon Ryan's success and use questions she created for her contest. These questions are appropriate for grades 3-5 and are based on books found in the Big Universe digital library.

[Open Google Sheet](#)

**2. Set up your entry system.** Students will need a way to submit their answers to your trivia questions. You can provide students with an answer sheet to record their answers on. ([Download the answer sheet template](#)) Have students either turn in their answer sheets to you or have them drop the sheets into sealed box (like a ballot box).

You could also go paperless and create a Google Form for students to submit their answers. Whether you use a paper or online form, make sure you collect the following information:

1. Student's first and last name
2. The answer
3. Title of the book
4. Author of the book
5. Page number where the answer was found

Shannon has these tips for creating your Google Form.

- All questions should be short answer
- Allow more than one response per student so that you can use the same Google Form for each trivia question
- Use the linked \_\_\_\_\_ to review responses

**3. Select your prizes.** Decide how many winners you'll have per trivia question. Shannon selects two winners for each round of her contest. Prizes can be small, such as pencils, erasers, bookmarks, or a toy. No-cost ideas include giving the winners a "front of the line" pass at lunch, a badge to wear or a "no homework pass" to skip one day's homework.

In addition to identifying the winners of each round of the contest, you could keep track of how many questions individual students get correct. Once they get 10 or 25 questions right, you could award a prize and/or Certificate of Achievement. ([Download the certificate](#))



## Day-to-day operations

1. If you're doing a school-wide contest, post the trivia question to your school or library web site and bulletin boards in the school library and hallway. Have the question read during your morning announcements or school news show. If this is a classroom contest, read the question to students and also post it to a bulletin board. You also can write it on your chalkboard or whiteboard. Be sure to let students know the cut-off date of the contest.
2. Collect students' answers either through a Google Form or paper answer sheets.
3. After the entry deadline, review the submitted answers and identify students with the correct answers.
4. Select your winners. Put all of the answers sheets with the correct answers in a bowl or basket. If you used a Google Form to collect the answers, highlight the students with the correct answers on the Google Sheet. Then print the spreadsheet and cut the highlighted rows into strips that you can put into a bowl or basket.
5. You can select the winners yourself or you can involve students in the selection. For example, you could have the student or students who won the previous trivia contest draw names from the current batch of correct answers. Shannon has her school's morning show crew draw two names from the bucket and announce the winners' names during the morning show program.

## Download All the Printables for this Challenge

[Download Printables](#)





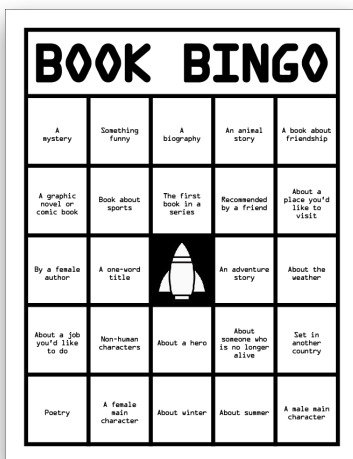
# Book Bingo Challenge

## Choose the Stars

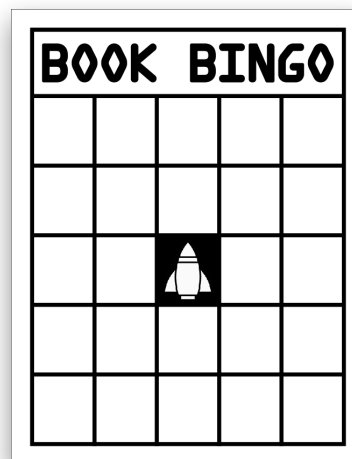
Even the most proficient readers often end up gravitating to their favorite genre or topic. Book Bingo is a way to help high-achieving readers broaden their horizons while helping reluctant and struggling readers find books that pique their interests and motivate them to read.

### Getting Started

1. **Print a Book Bingo card for each student.** We've provided both pre-filled and blank templates. Use the blank template for your own ideas or have your students choose their own categories.



[Download the Bingo Card Template](#)



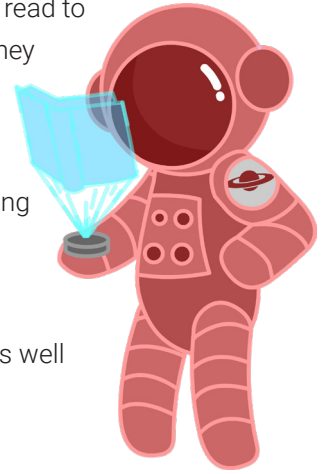
[Download the Blank Bingo Card Template](#)

2. **Select your prizes.** When a student reads enough books to get a bingo, they win a prize. Individual bingo prizes can be small, such as a pencil, eraser or sticker. Think of bigger prizes for when a student has read a book for every square on their card. A free homework pass, first out to recess, ice cream at lunch, or a free book are all great rewards for being a star reader!

3. **Get your students reading.** Pass out a Book Bingo card to each student and explain how the challenge works. You may want to review each category with students and provide sample book titles. This will be most helpful for struggling readers and will get them on the right path. If you're using Big Universe for this challenge, you could add books to students' bookshelves that match their reading level. Don't assign books for every category, though. Encouraging students to explore and choose their own books is part of this challenge.

## Book Bingo Directions

1. Each time a student reads a book in one of the categories, they'll write the title of the book in that space. When a student has read enough books to get a bingo, they'll turn the card into you to receive their prize.
2. If you're using Big Universe for this challenge you could limit the books students can read to those with quizzes. This is an easy way to verify that students have read the books they list on their bingo cards.
3. If you want students to be able to read any book available in Big Universe, or if you're using another eBook library or hard copy books, you can turn Book Bingo into a reading and writing challenge by asking students to write a short summary of each book they read.
4. Once students have read a book for every category, they'll receive your grand prize, as well as a Star Reader certificate. ([Download the certificate](#))



## Download All the Printables for this Challenge

[Download Printables](#)



# Million Minute Reading Challenge

## Aim for the Stars

This is an ambitious reading challenge that involves your whole school community. One thing we love about this challenge is that by recording minutes rather than pages or books read, all students can experience success. This focus on time spent reading makes it possible for English language learners and struggling readers to contribute to the challenge just as much as those students reading at higher levels.

### The challenge in a nutshell:

Students are challenged to work together to read for ONE MILLION minutes. You may decide to run the challenge for the entire school year or for a shorter period of time, depending on factors such as grade levels and the number of students in your school. If the challenge is met, then every student in the school receives a certificate along with a school-wide pizza party, arts and crafts day, or other special reward. You can also give awards to the class and to the top five individual students who read the most minutes.

### Getting started:

- 1. Recruit members for your Million Minute Reading Challenge committee.** Select two or more teachers to help you run the contest. You could also recruit a parent or two by coordinating with your PTA or PTO organization. Family involvement is an important component of this challenge.
- 2. Designate a “Timekeeper” for the challenge.** This person is in charge of tallying the minutes read each week and updating students, staff and families of their progress. You may also want someone who is responsible for getting, either through donation or direct purchase, the prizes. Other roles could include organizing ongoing activities to keep students excited about, working on the challenge, and organizing the celebration when the challenge ends.
- 3. As a committee, decide how long the challenge will run.** If you are a large school or middle or high school, you may want to increase the number of goal minutes from one million to five million or even more.
- 4. Decide on your prizes.**

#### School-wide Prize

In addition to a certificate of achievement for every student, what will your school-wide prize be? You could give each student a small prize package (pencil, stickers, candy, etc.). Larger prizes could be donated by local businesses. Assign committee members to brainstorm some ideas. Then contact and arrange pickup of prizes. A free movie pass or coupon for a free scoop of ice cream would both be big hits with students. A coupon for a discount on a book from a local bookstore would be even better.

A pizza party, in-school movie and popcorn, or an arts and crafts day are also fun school-wide ways to celebrate students' hard work and achievement.

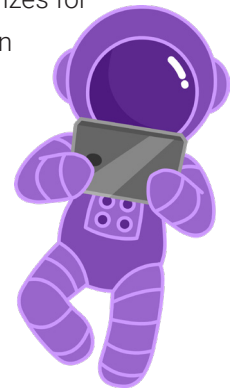
### Classroom Prize

If you'd like to recognize the classroom that read the most minutes, brainstorm an extra prize for the students in that class. It could be something as simple and silly as the whole class getting to wear their PJs or funny hats for a day, for example.

### Top Readers Prize

Determine how you would like to recognize the three, five or ten students who read the most minutes and what additional prize they will each receive. In place of or in addition to individual prizes for these students, you can print each of their photos and display them on a hallway bulletin board that celebrates them as Power Readers.

**5. Decide whether you will reveal prizes before or after the challenge.** You can add a little excitement to the challenge by displaying a wrapped box and telling students the box won't be unwrapped and the prize revealed until they meet the challenge. This creates a fun buzz as students try to guess what's inside the box. However, sharing with students what they could win is also a good incentive.



## Launch the challenge:

Million Minute Challenge is a BIG deal. Here are a few ideas to generate excitement and start the event strong!

1. Kick the challenge off with a school assembly. Explain the reading challenge, then get your students excited about participating. Get a little goofy and have teachers do a cheerleading routine, sing an inspiring song like "We Are the Champions," or do a call and response with students.
2. Hand out and encourage students and teachers to wear the Million Minute Reading Challenge stickers. ([Download the sticker template](#) and print it out on Avery #18257, #6870, or #8257 sticker sheets.)
3. Display the secret prize box in a prominent location in the school. Make sure to upload pictures to your school's website. If you are revealing the prizes at the start of the challenge, announce or show them off at the school assembly.
4. Use the letter template to communicate with families about this exciting challenge. The letter provides tips for parents and caregivers to support their children throughout the challenge and also encourages them to join in the challenge by setting a family goal for minutes read. For younger students, you can count minutes that were spent being read to, either by a parent or teacher, in their weekly reading minute tally. ([Download the letter](#))

## Day-to-day operations:

Keeping track of the minutes read is the most important part of the challenge.

1. Provide students with a weekly reading log. ([Download the template](#))
2. Have students turn in their reading logs to their teachers each Friday.
3. Teachers will tally their class's minutes and turn them into the official challenge timekeeper. Teachers should also keep track of individual student minutes if part of your challenge will be to acknowledge the students who read the most minutes.
4. The timekeeper will be responsible for sharing each week's progress with the school. The timekeeper can do this during morning announcements, on the school web site, on your school's social media feeds, or on a bulletin board. [Download these bulletin board pieces to get started.](#)

## Activities to keep the momentum going:

The Million Minute Challenge will most likely take many months to accomplish, so it's important to keep reminding students about it and encouraging them to keep reading toward the goal. Here are a few ideas to try.

### 1. Weekly Star Readers

For many students, a goal that is many months away seems insurmountable. Create more immediate goals by announcing the student or students who read the most minutes each week. Post their pictures on a bulletin board and share their achievement during morning announcements or on a school news program. You could even give students a special badge to wear for the entire week to show off their accomplishment.

### 2. Read-ins

Get your whole school to read together to achieve their goal. On a monthly or quarterly basis, host school-wide read-ins. These could be held after school, in the evenings or even on the weekends. Ask students to bring pillows, bean bag chairs or even sleeping bags so they have cozy places to read. Provide a few snacks and then start reading! Invite families to join their children during the read-ins and count their minutes toward the reading goal.

### 3. Book clubs

Much like the read-ins, book clubs can make reading a social activity and also provides structure for students on which books to read and by when. You could create several book clubs around specific themes – for example, adventure stories, animal stories, fairy tales, science – or group students with similar reading levels together and have each student choose a book for the group to read and then discuss.

#### 4. Book Buddies

Help build students' reading skills by pairing students of differing reading levels together. Have them each select a book on a similar topic (or can assign books at the appropriate reading level) and then share what they learned and liked best about the book with their buddy.

#### 5. Share the Love

What are your students' favorite books? Invite a student or group of students to share their book recommendations periodically during morning announcements or on your school website. You could combine reading and writing by asking students to write reviews of their favorite books, printing them out, and making them available in the school library. Create a space in your library where the favorite books of the week or month are showcased. Include a picture of the student and his or her name on the book cover.

### Celebrating your students' success:

Once you've reached the million minute mark it's time to celebrate!

1. Hold a school-wide assembly. Decorate with balloons and confetti, play music and have each student come on stage to receive their Certificate of Achievement. ([Download the Certificate of Achievement](#))
2. If you choose, you can also hand out certificates and prizes to those students who read the most minutes. ([Download the Star Reader Certificate](#))
3. Send an announcement to your local newspaper about what your students have accomplished. Invite a reporter to come to the celebration assembly.
4. Share the excitement with families – and keep their focus on the importance of reading – by sending a letter of congratulations home. ([Download the letter](#))

### Download All the Printables for this Challenge

[Download Printables](#)

## Other Ideas to Motivate Your Students to Read

### Let Your Creativity Shine

Getting students to talk about and share what they're reading adds excitement around reading and increases student engagement. Here are a few fun ideas to get students into the spirit of reading and enhance your classroom or school culture of reading.

### Get Caught Reading Photo Display

Ask students to take pictures of themselves in funny or odd places where they read. It could be the tree house in their backyard, in the backseat of the car, at a landmark while on a family road trip, or even just in their favorite chair at home. Post the pictures to a bulletin board or website. Encourage students to take a book with them wherever they go, because pretty much anywhere you are is a good place to read!

### Oh, the Places You'll Go

Books take us to amazing places around the world, across the universe and in our imaginations. Have students draw pictures of their favorite places in the books they read and label them with the book's title and author. Maybe it's Hogwarts from Harry Potter or Neverland from Peter Pan. Or it could be inside a volcano, a fort from the western frontier, or the surface of Mars. Display the drawings on a bulletin board or the walls of your classroom. Encourage students to check out each other's drawings for recommendations from their peers on good books to read.

### We Read, Too. Can You Guess Who?

Seeing the adults around them read helps students develop good reading habits of their own. Have all the teachers, the principal and staff choose their favorite book. Then, take a picture of each person holding their favorite book over their face. Post the pictures on a bulletin board in the school hallway or library. Students will have lots of fun trying to pick out who's reading what. Leave the display up a few weeks, then add labels with people's names on them to the photos so students can see if they guessed right.

### Read to Me

Students love to receive special attention from a teacher, the principal or librarian — and they love to get out of class! Choose a student each week to go to the principal's office, library or just a special corner in your classroom to read to that person. Create a banner that says "I Read to the Principal" (or the librarian or your name). Have students who have read sign their names to the banner.

## Reading Wall of Fame

Goals and recognition are both strong motivators for students. At the beginning of the school year, print out and post the Reading Wall of Fame charts around your classroom. When students have read to a milestone, have them write their name on the appropriate chart. You may choose to give a prize or certificate at each milestone or just at particularly significant milestones 50 and 100.

If you're using Big Universe eBook library, there is no need for students to keep a reading log. You can easily look on your dashboard or run a report to determine how many eBooks students have read.

[Download the Reading Wall of Fame Charts](#)

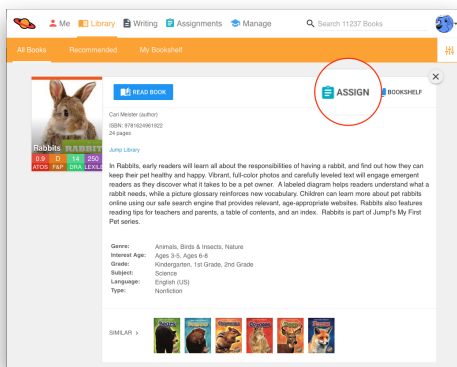


# Using Big Universe to Increase Reading

## Launch Cosmic Readers

All of the challenges and contests outlined in this playbook are designed to increase student reading and to help all students become strong readers. Big Universe is dedicated to inspiring a love of reading in students. Our digital literacy solution provides more than 13,000 leveled eBooks. You and your students will discover nonfiction and fiction books on every topic, for every reading level, including Spanish language texts.

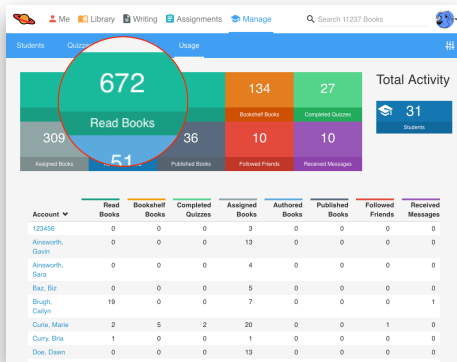
Here are a few ways Big Universe makes facilitating reading contests, challenges and other student engagement strategies easier.



### Assign books to students' bookshelves

Search for books by level, subject, topic, and even language and assign them to students' Big Universe accounts. You can assign the same book to every student, or you can assign different books to each student based on their reading level. If you notice that a student isn't reading very many books or appears to be struggling with the books they're selecting themselves, assigning them books can help get them on track.

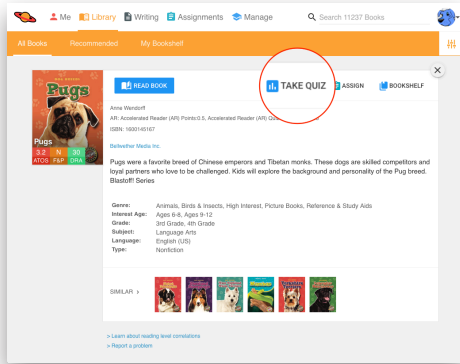
Students can also add books to their own bookshelves, which encourages exploration and discovery, both of which build self-efficacy.



### Gauge how much students are reading

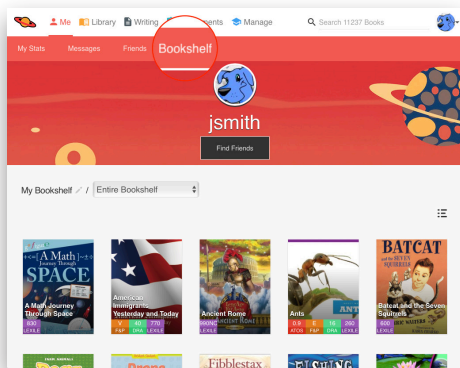
Stop tallying mountains of reading logs to determine how many books students have read. Big Universe automatically tracks how many books each student has read. Take a quick glance on the Big Universe dashboard or run detailed reports.

Big Universe also has a writing tool, which you can use for student response to what they're reading or to have them write books of their own. You can see how many books students have authored and published on the Reports dashboard, too.



### Measure reading comprehension

Many of the eBooks in the Big Universe library have corresponding quizzes that help ensure students are not just reading but are also comprehending what they're reading. This is an important part of any reading challenge. You don't want students to fly through books only to rack up points. You want them to understand what they've read.



### Build a community of readers

When it comes to reading, peer pressure is a good thing! Students can follow one another's bookshelves and see what their friends are reading. You can also share students' bookshelves with their families to encourage reading at home, too.

Students can customize their bookshelves with fun images and avatars so they'll always love logging into Big Universe.

# Big Universe

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