

Interest Inventory Worksheet

Discovering What Lights Your Child's Reading Spark

■ PURPOSE OF THIS WORKSHEET

This worksheet helps you:

- Observe your child's authentic interests systematically
- Identify patterns in what naturally draws their attention
- Find 'book-worthy' topics that transform reading time
- Move from guessing to *knowing* what books will work

How to use it:

- Choose a 10–15 min window during free activity
- Observe without directing
- Record what you notice in each category
- Look for patterns, then use them to select books

You're looking for what THEY love, not what you wish they loved!

OBSERVATION #1

Play Themes

Date: _____

Time: _____

Duration: _____

What is your child doing during free play?

What are they pretending? (Doctor? Explorer? Builder? Teacher? Animal? Superhero?)

What characters do they become repeatedly?

What scenarios do they create? (Restaurant? School? Hospital? Adventure? Battle?)

What props or toys do they gravitate toward?

- Building materials (blocks, Lego)
- Art supplies
- Dolls / action figures
- Vehicles (cars, trains, planes)
- Animals (stuffed or plastic)

- Dress-up clothes
- Play food / kitchen items
- Tools
- Sports equipment
- Other: _____

What themes are showing up in their play?

- Caring / nurturing (taking care of others)
- Building / creating (making things)
- Adventure / exploration (going places)
- Power / strength (fighting, competing)

- Teaching / helping (showing others)
- Organizing / sorting (putting things in order)
- Performing (singing, dancing, acting)
- Other: _____

OBSERVATION #2

Questions They Ask

Over the past week, what questions has your child asked unprompted?

Write down actual questions you remember:

What themes do you see in their questions?

- How things work (science, mechanics)
- Nature (animals, plants, weather)
- Space (planets, stars, astronauts)
- History (what happened before, old times)
- People (feelings, relationships, why)

- Fairness (rules, right/wrong, justice)
- Fantasy (magic, impossible things)
- Life's big questions (death, birth)
- Other: _____
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The question they ask MOST often is about: _____

OBSERVATION #3

Screen Time Choices

TV Shows / Movies:

YouTube / Videos:

Games / Apps:

What patterns do you see?

- Educational content (how-to, learning)
- Comedy / humor (funny, silly content)
- Adventure / action (exciting plots, heroes)
- Animals / nature (wildlife, pets)
- Building / creating (Minecraft, crafting)

- Sports / competition
- Music / performing
- Cooking / food
- Science / experiments
- Story-based (narratives, characters)

The type of content they return to most often: _____

OBSERVATION #4

Collections & Treasures

What does your child collect, save, or treasure?

- Rocks / shells / natural items
- Cards (sports, Pokémon, etc.)
- Art they've created
- Objects from nature (sticks, feathers, leaves)

- Toys of a specific type: _____
- Books about: _____
- Special trinkets / small objects
- Other: _____

What's in their 'special place' or treasure box?

Why do they say these items are special? (if you've asked)

What this tells you about their interests:

OBSERVATION #5

Repeated Topics

What topics does your child bring up again and again in conversation?

Over the past week / month, they've talked about:

Topic: _____

How many times? _____

Topic: _____

How many times? _____

Topic: _____

How many times? _____

Topic: _____

How many times? _____

Themes that keep appearing:

- A specific person (friend, celebrity, family member)
- A specific event (upcoming trip, past experience)
- A specific topic (space, animals, construction...)

- A specific feeling / concern (fairness, fear, excitement)
- A specific goal / dream (what they want to be, do, have)
- Other: _____

The topic they talk about MOST:

■ PATTERN ANALYSIS

Looking Across All Observations:

■■■ Interest #1:

Appeared in:

- Play
- Questions
- Screen Time
- Collections
- Conversation Topics

■■ Interest #2:

Appeared in:

- Play
- Questions
- Screen Time
- Collections
- Conversation Topics

■ Interest #3:

Appeared in:

- Play
- Questions
- Screen Time
- Collections
- Conversation Topics

What was most surprising or unexpected?

Which interests were STRONGEST? (Most intense, consistent, emotional investment)

★★★ Top Interest:

★★ Strong Interest:

★ Growing Interest:

■ FROM INTERESTS TO BOOKS

Interest #1:

Possible book topics to explore:

Book types that might work:

- Fiction story featuring this topic
- Non-fiction 'all about' book
- Character who does/loves this topic
- Series related to this topic
- How-to or activity book

Interest #2:

Possible book topics to explore:

Book types that might work:

- Fiction story featuring this topic
- Non-fiction 'all about' book
- Character who does/loves this topic
- Series related to this topic
- How-to or activity book

Interest #3:

Possible book topics to explore:

Book types that might work:

- Fiction story featuring this topic
- Non-fiction 'all about' book
- Character who does/loves this topic
- Series related to this topic
- How-to or activity book

MY ACTION PLAN

<p>STEP 1 Find ONE book related to Interest #1 Where I'll look: <input type="checkbox"/> Library <input type="checkbox"/> Bookstore <input type="checkbox"/> Online <i>Who will help me find it:</i> _____</p>	<p>STEP 2 Read it with my child and observe engagement <i>Date to read:</i> _____ Their response: <input type="checkbox"/> Loved it! <input type="checkbox"/> Liked it <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral</p>	<p>STEP 3 Based on their response, decide next steps <input type="checkbox"/> Find MORE books on this topic — it worked! <input type="checkbox"/> ASK librarian <input type="checkbox"/> Try a different angle on this topic <input type="checkbox"/> Move to Interest #2 or #3 <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral</p>
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HELPFUL REMINDERS

- ✓ Interests change — this is healthy! Update this inventory every 2–3 months
- ✓ Some interests are deep and lasting; others are phases — both are valid
- ✓ Your child's interests ≠ your interests. Honor what THEY love
- ✓ "Low-quality" interests (fart jokes, silly characters) still count!
- ✓ Look beyond 'educational' topics — motivation matters more than topic quality
- ✓ Trust that reading about ANY topic builds reading skills

If you're struggling to identify interests:

- They might be younger (under 3) and still exploring
- They might have MANY interests and you need more observation time
- They might be in a transition phase between interests
- Keep observing! Patterns will emerge.

RE-INVENTORY SCHEDULE

Interests evolve! Plan to redo this inventory:

- Every 2–3 months
- When current books stop working
- At new developmental phases (new school year, birthday...)
- When you notice shifts in play or conversation

Next inventory date: _____

NOTES & OBSERVATIONS

Space for additional thoughts, observations, or patterns you notice:

You're doing important work!

By taking time to truly SEE what lights your child up, you're honouring who they are, building connection through shared interests, setting up reading for success, and creating intrinsic motivation.

Every observation brings you closer to books that will transform reading from obligation to joy.

Keep watching. Keep noticing. Keep being curious about who your child is becoming. That's the heart of motivation.

