

How to Build Professional Home Library for Teenagers?

(guide for novice parents and pedagogues)

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Disclaimer

THE AUTHOR OF THIS DOCUMENT IS NEITHER PROFESSIONAL MEDICAL WORKER, NOR PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST, NOR PROFESSIONAL ANTHROPOLOGIST, NOR PROFESSIONAL PEDAGOGUE, NOR PROFESSIONAL LAWYER, NOR PRACTICING PARENT, NOR PROFESSIONAL ELECTRICIAN. ALL PUBLISHED INFORMATION IS BASED ON AUTHOR'S EXPERIENCE OF READING SEVERAL HUNDREDS LITERARY MATERIALS FOR DIFFERENT PURPOSES SINCE CHILDHOOD.

Introduction

This guide is based on literary self-studies performed by me in teenage and adult years (which included reading several hundreds literary materials), and partially related to several other similar guides/articles written by me during the latest several years. You should consider all information published here as very biased. The topic of necessity and usefulness of professional home library for teenagers is outside of this guide; please, check professional pedagogical literature to explore it. Part of provided information is based on my self-learning experience obtained in USSR/Russia of 1980's and 1990's; repeating such experience in the modern world may be illegal in some countries!

Definition

The term *professional home library for teenagers* used in this guide describes library that fits the following criteria:

- it either contains materials that cover 2-3 (possibly interconnected) professional topics completely up to doctorate level, or provides limited amount of professional materials (about 2-10 items per field, but closer to 10 than to 2) that allow entering (on different levels) about 10 professional fields;
- about 50% of materials should be on popular level to provide smooth entrance to professional topics.

As a result of documented limits, the total amount of materials in the library is expected to be about *several hundreds* items.

Content

- If you have not deep personal/professional/business connections in some specialized fields of science or industry, if you don't know such fields well by yourself, and if you cannot assist your kid in some other ways to be employed in these fields later, then you should not concentrate your library at some specific topics, it is better to cover wide range of topics in such case. And obviously, you cannot know how interests of your kid will turn in several years after starting active reading.
- At least 20% of purchased literary materials must be extensively illustrated, and at least 20% more should have some illustrations plus illustrated covers (both estimates are based just on my personal preferences).
- At least 30% of purchased literary materials should be in paper format, and these paper materials should include not only introductory/popular level content but content of doctorate level too in equal proportion in relation to all library materials (it is again estimate based just on my personal preferences).
- The library should include about 5-10 full collections of works of some authors with about 5-20 books in each, and/or about 5-10 series of books with about 5-20 books in each series written by different authors that completely cover some topics. It may be just my personal preference, but it is supposed that presence of such collections and/or series may train your kid to dive deeply into specialized topics. With the same purpose of training to dive deeply, you may purchase for your library large novels, large collections of stories, large eposes, and scientific monographs.
- Globalization trends make life unpredictable, that's why having materials that cover multiple exotic regions may be more correct strategy in the perspective for 20+ years. Also, you should know that some countries had (and may have) overwhelming influence on development of literature history incomparable with sizes of their territory and population.

Materials which are crucial for understanding some scientific fields may exist in English only.

- It is worth to buy materials on techniques of reading to train your kid to read efficiently.
- Scientific research materials may be published as monographs and as collections of publications; some of such collections are built very well to provide comprehensive review of complex topics without necessity to dive deeply.
- It is supposed that placing purchased literature in home library in random order is better for educational purposes than structuring it in according to some standard classification.

Further I would like to provide some notes about purchasing literature on particular subjects. I suppose it will allow you to understand better what may be really needed for self-educating kid.

Fiction: in the process of purchasing fiction literature, you should consider such aspects as

- a) cultural affiliation (which includes not only your own culture, but also cultures desired by you for your kid and cultures that you want your kid to distance from),
- b) archaism level of used language,
- c) behavior models of characters with levels of extremity of these models,
- d) levels of eroticism and emotionality in description of sexual relationships,
- e) psychological and sociological deepness of text,
- f) whether text is written from first person;

to give you approximate estimates of number of behavior models that you may want to be covered your home library I can mention that in my teenage years upon reading about 200 authors and titles (with about one third of them belonging to “Popular Science and Science” category) I extracted from this literature about 30 models of 11 types, such as *writer, boy exploring the world, explorer of wild nature, wanderer, wildman, young man exploring the world, artist, antisocial person, thinker, ecologist, entrepreneur*; it is supposed that kid may interpret some of provided behavior models as instructions/recommendations for life path and others as prohibitions, but the internal kid’s logic determining what is instruction/recommendation and what is prohibition is unclear to me, please talk to professional psychologists to understand it, however you should know that not every psychologist is qualified enough to provide pedagogic consultations for a homeschooled kid having access to professional library.

Mathematics and natural sciences: it is worth to include into the library not only tutorials that describe different laws and calculations, but also materials that demonstrate in details the history of research underlying discovery of each law (with mathematical/experimental/observational details of research but not only historical ones); guides on statistics are obligatory for reading to understand the most part of scientific literature.

Social sciences: scientific materials on anthropological and social topics are very easy for reading in fact because they contain minimum of mathematics, may contain many photos, and generally, are

written in rather clear language; so, even high school student may absorb them without any issue; if you purchase a lot of classic, ancient/medieval, and historical literary materials then it is good idea to counterweight them with scientific researches of modern social life.

General engineering: due to global redistribution of labor, engineering topics may have very negative flare from the point of view of typical modern teenager; if you want to attract your kid to engineering, then maybe you should include into the library engineering-level materials for construction of yachts, geology of gems, and production of other luxury objects, or something about really high-tech fields like military/medical robots, space technologies, genetic engineering.

Software development: the library materials should highlight not only the procedure of developing clean new code, but also fixing and supporting large amounts of old “dirty” code.

Biology: to attract your kid to this field and at the same time direct her/him to the right direction you may purchase literature on the topics of virology, genetics, parasitology, veterinary of “exotic” animals, so-called “popular microzoology” (in contrast to widespread materials about such animals like lions or chimpanzees), general ecology, wildlife filmmaking and photography; separate materials about some of regions from Global 200 list (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_200) may be purchased.

Geography: differences between legal and financial systems of countries and geopolitical blocks should be explained; describing gaps between official laws and practical application of laws may be crucial to understanding the differences.

Economics: literary materials should cover such topics as general vision of current economic academic thought with representing all research movements on equal basis (but not mainstream economics only that may be too disconnected from real life sometimes), explanation of all current economical phenomena as just temporal in historical context, explanation of underlying reasons of all current economical trends with all their benefits and drawbacks, explanation of changing sense of all “basic parts of life” (because understanding of such terms as *work*, *money*, *cost*, *taxation* etc may vary significantly between different countries), explanation of local economic opportunities and roles of your community/region/country in the global economic system, explanation of economic crimes to avoid becoming either victim or criminal accidentally, methodologies of economic forecast, microenterprise management, family budget management; I give so much attention to economics because it is the only subject you cannot “run away” to anywhere.

History: real history with louses, child prostitution, city streets filled with feces, 12-hour workday etc should be covered in literature, but not just history of the largest battles and biographies of famous scientists.

Sports: safety and correct technique of basic training like running and weightlifting should be explained very well.

Law: considering that many homeschooled and partially homeschooled teenagers may decide to work as freelancers or microentrepreneurs in adult life, it is worth to include in the library materials on contract law and copyright law.

Mass culture: materials breaking mass culture myths without diving into conspiracy may be very useful.

Family life: describing family topics in anthropological, historical, and genetic contexts may be more useful sometimes than in psychological and sexological contexts.

Education: considering that your kid may practice self-education really actively, he/she may become interested not only in topics covered by books but in the process of education itself; that's why purchasing professional literature covering topics of pedagogy, educational methodologies, and child psychology may have sense; literature covering topic of educational migration and explaining how modern academic world is built may be useful too.

Reading

- In early childhood it is worth to practice group reading with family members or playmates.
- Pay special attention to lighting conditions, chairs used for reading, ebook/display models, and sizes of fonts in the books. Do not use tablets for reading at all; desktop computers should be used for reading short online materials only; all other materials should be read either in paper or in e-ink devices. Consultation with professional medical worker is desired.
- Train your kid to practice sportive breaks at least each several hours while reading. Sportive equipment needed for keeping kid's health in the process of long-term deep reading may include the following: treadmill with regulated incline, set of dumbbell pairs ranging from 5 up to 30 kg per each dumbbell (depending on kid's age and physical abilities), pull-up bar, push-up bars, mini-basketball playground with a ball, bench with regulated incline, set of mats, and probably, punching bag. Obviously, if you have not money or apartment/house space for all this, basic training with body weight may be enough too. Consultation with professional medical worker and sportive trainer is desired.
- Reading in nature is recommended. Also, it is recommended to purchase for kid some small pets like hamsters, parrots, aquarium fish (it is especially important if you have not easy access to nature all year round).
- You should expect that your kid may invent her/his own techniques/practices of reading and may have strict preferences to some environments for reading.
- The amount of time required to extract and absorb complex ideas from literary materials may vary from several hours up to several days of continuous reading; the amount of time required to immerse into large topics may vary from several weeks up to several months of continuous reading with several hours of reading per day. So, you should not disturb your kid in such periods, if you want reading to be really useful.
- Some kids may start reading or browsing professional literature as early as about getting 7 years old or so (it is note based on my personal experience).
- The fact that kid is very interested in reading zoological, artistic, erotic and similar literature may just signal about lack of connection to nature or lack of socialization, no more.

- Writing essays in different styles upon reading large portions of literature and/or participating in discussions about this literature with other teenagers may bring some benefits, as I guess. But I never did it by myself seriously except following school requirements which were very relaxed in Russia of 1980's and 1990's. Please, check professional pedagogical literature to find more information on this topic.

Risks

- It may happen that by 18 years old (or another noticeable day), your kid who has read the most part of purchased literature will decide that he/she has no interest anymore in any of topics that were read, and needs to go another way in life, much more prosaic and routine or much more extreme and dangerous than you expected.
- Your kid may become less socialized than you expected and will gradually join some community of “alternatively thinking” people.
- In the periods of deep concentration on reading that may last for months, your kid may become too vulnerable to different standard dangers, or vice versa, may turn to be too dangerous for other people if he/she has higher physical abilities, if he/she drives car/bike regularly, or if you keep firearm or large/fight dog at home.
- Also, these periods of deep concentration may be considered as symptom of some disease by school psychologists or medical workers and cause unnecessary medical intervention. To avoid this, you should have the same attitude to active reading as to active sportive training: relaxation in nature, comfortable sex, high quality nutrition are equally needed for both. Maybe, changing school or practicing full homeschooling will be desired.
- Your kid will find travel, hitchhiking, mountaineering and similar blogs and guides by herself/himself in any case; to avoid unpleasant surprises, it would be better if you would compile subscriptions/collections of such materials by yourself, and discuss each of these materials with the kid in details. The same may be told about revolutionary literature, literature about exotic/extreme religious movements etc, your kid may find all this by herself/himself easily. I'm not sure whether you should be afraid of this, in USSR all this revolutionary literature was included into standard school program (since getting 7 years old in some or another format) and was openly available in district child libraries, but probably it did not affect minds of the most part of readers at all. In any case, you may want to think about how to redirect all these possibly dangerous interests from practical curiosity into pure analytical one.
- And finally, upon reading a lot of literature your kid may decide to become writer (please, read real biographies of famous writers to understand all possible consequences) or try to practice some activities described in literature with non-adequate or outdated theoretical and practical training (not only travel/sportive activities but everything else too). *“If you like to eat bread, it does not mean that you can bake it”*, as I was told at one Internet message board; it may be good to explain this wisdom to your kid too before active reading will be

started. Also, you should explain that some life paths and behavior models described in literature may be significantly outdated by modern standards, and should be absorbed very carefully even if read material has been written just 5-10 years ago (writer could retell 500-year old story in modern environment, as it is done sometimes).

Technical safety

- To protect yourself and your kid against being physically harmed by falling books, it is more safe to keep large amounts of literature in cabinets/lockers than on wall shelves; even cabinets/lockers may need to be attached to walls by large screws or in another similar way. It is especially important, if you have little kids or large dogs at home, or if you live in seismically active region. Cabinets/lockers must be of the height that does not require your kid to climb on chairs for reaching upper sections.
- Asking professional electrician to check all devices and wiring at home is good idea, some devices/sockets may be attached to central wiring with mixing wires made of different sorts of metal which could cause overheating and fire. Using surge protectors everywhere where possible is good idea too. There are several models of fire extinguishers, you may ask a professional consultant in a store to choose the best one for your environment and your kid.
- I met exploding bulbs several times in my life. Such exploding bulbs may harm your kid and/or be cause of fire; you may need to choose carefully models of lamps that do not allow pieces of glass from exploding bulb to be thrown out of lamp.
- Also, consultation with a professional librarian may be needed if you live in humid climate or in a region where ants/termites are widespread. Special procedures may need to be applied to protect paper part of library from being destroyed by mold and insects. I think, it is not needed to mention that insecticides may be dangerous for kids.

Navigation for inexperienced parents

The following informal list of topics is taken from my self-studies and it is definitely not exhaustive, it is provided just as example of how home library may be structured and as a reminder for inexperienced parents that some types of literature exist (because they may be absent in local book store and even difficult to find online). The topics are sorted in random order. Structuring is performed not from the point of view of librarian, but from the points of view of pedagogue, parent, and teenage reader. I suppose that such approach will provide better navigation in literary world to compile library for your kid.

Please, check the list on the following page.

Large fiction literature about humans

(modern and classic periods cover 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries)

Modern and classic novels and large poems
Modern and classic collections of stories
Ancient and medieval novels, eposes (in prosaic and in poetic forms), and large poems
Ancient and medieval myths, stories, and fairy tales (in prosaic and in poetic forms)

Short poetry

Pathetic and propagandist
Romantic
Ancient and medieval

Popular literature

Adventure novels
Crime novels
Love novels
Autobiographies/biographies of personalities
Conspiracy materials
Cryptozoological materials
Sportive guides
Pet breeding/caring guides
Psychology
Parenting
Medicine
Military materials
Business and finances
Law
Religion
Popular science online newsfeeds

Linguistic literature

Grammar guides
Dictionaries and conversation books
General linguistic materials
Stories/articles in foreign languages

Revolutionary literature

(I grew up in USSR, there was a lot of such stuff everywhere :))

Fiction revolutionary literature
Historical revolutionary literature
Autobiographies/biographies of personalities
All listed above but about scientists

Magazines

World news
Science news
Teenage culture
Sports

Professional and scientific literature formats

Introductory materials
Monographs
Collections of research publications
Guides
All listed above but with autobiographic elements
Scientific and industrial online newsfeeds
Technical documentation
Open access repositories of all listed above
Professional blogs with communication options
Online audio/video courses

Travel diaries, blogs, and guides

Standard tourism
Hitchhiking
Mountaineering
Zoology
Anthropology
Medicine
Sea travels
All listed above but outdated or historical

Encyclopedias

General
Artistic
Ethnographic
Zoological
Technological

Theatrical and cinematographic literature

(modern and classic periods cover 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries)

Modern and classic plays
Ancient and medieval plays
Screenplays
Directing and producing guides
Documentation for computer graphics tools

Science fiction and similar literature

Technological
Biological
Anthropological
Adventure
Fantasy

Erotic and sexological literature

Artistic
Ethnographic
Scientific
Humorous
Modern, medieval, ancient, and fantasy
Sportive
About sexual minorities