

Without Turning It Into School

Seven things that go wrong at the kitchen table, and what to say instead. None of this requires you to have read the book.

They answer in one word.

Ask *what made you say that?* Then stop talking. Count to ten in your head. The second answer is almost always the real one.

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Nobody finished the chapter.

Read it aloud yourself. Reading to a ten-year-old is not a step backwards, and it is the single most reliable fix on this page.

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They say it's boring.

Believe them. Then ask what would have to happen to make it not boring. That answer tells you what they actually want from a book.

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You haven't read it.

Say so. *I haven't read this one – tell me what happened.* A child explaining a plot to a genuinely curious adult is doing real work, and they can hear the difference between curiosity and a test.

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They give you the answer they think you want.

Disagree with them on purpose, gently, and let them defend it. Being mildly argued with is how a reader finds out they have an opinion.

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It has turned into a quiz.

Stop asking questions and say what *you* thought. A conversation needs two people with opinions in it.

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They loved it and can't say why.

That is fine, and it is not a failure. Ask which part they would read again. Start there next time.

If a conversation ends after ninety seconds, that was a conversation. The goal was never a paragraph.