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CLAYTON LIBRARY PROVIDES TOOLS FOR RESIDENTS TO READ MORE IN 2026

CLAYTON, NC – Reading can open new doors, expand understanding, strengthen the mind, and provide a peaceful break from a busy day. Setting a reading goal for 2026 is a positive idea at any age and can be a fun way to learn, relax, and connect with others in the community. Many people who make time for books find new enjoyment and personal growth through the habit of reading.

Still, busy schedules and daily demands can make reading feel out of reach. According to a YouGov poll shared by *Book Riot*, 40 percent of Americans did not read a single book in 2025, even when print books, eBooks, and audiobooks were included. Among those who did read, the median number of books completed was two, showing that even small reading goals can make a meaningful impact.

"Reading helps people learn new ideas, reduce stress, and stay curious at every stage of life," said Hocutt-Ellington Memorial Library Circulation Supervisor Kate Tompkins-Gross. "It does not have to look the same for everyone, and the library is here to help people discover what works best for them."

The library offers many tools to help residents stay on track with reading goals in 2026. Every Johnston County resident can obtain a free library card, which provides full access to all print and digital collections. Library cards can be requested online, providing an immediate digital card number that grants access to nearly 150,000 items in our digital collection. Residents can then visit the library to pick up their physical card.

Staff have created a genre guide that organizes books by category and theme, making it easier for readers to explore new authors and types of stories. The guide offers suggestions for all ages and reading levels and can help residents discover books they may not have considered before. It is available online at hocutt-ellingtonmemorial.libguides.com/adultfiction.

For readers who want more tailored suggestions, librarians are available to provide personalized recommendations based on individual interests, favorite authors, or preferred genres.

If accountability helps readers stick with their goals, joining a book club can be a fun way to stay motivated. The library offers book clubs, including Monday Night Book Club and Senior Book Club, providing opportunities to discuss books, share perspectives, and connect with other readers. View the calendar for specifics at www.townofclaytonnc.org/calendar.

Listening to books is another way to build strong reading habits. Audiobooks are available through Libby, which can be used on most smart devices.

"Audiobooks are reading too," said Tompkins-Gross. "Listening helps strengthen comprehension and allows people to enjoy books while doing other tasks, like cleaning or cooking. It makes reading more flexible and easier to fit into daily life."

Finally, to help readers stay on track, the library is hosting a Cozy Reading Challenge through the end of February. Participants can sign up at hocuttellington.beanstack.com and complete a bingo card for a chance to win a gift basket. Activities like this can help readers stay motivated and make steady progress, one book at a time.

Reading can be a goal, a habit, and a joy. To discover more library resources that make reading easier and more rewarding in 2026, visit claytonlibrarync.org.

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Photo 1: Hocutt-Ellington Memorial Library Card

Photo 2: File Photo of Book Club Gathering

Photo 3: Most Popular Audiobook Page on Libby

Photos 4 & 5: Cozy Reading Challenge Prompts and Prize