Reading for Pleasure Parent Guide

How you can help your child



The Benefits of Reading

Studies show that reading supports many different areas of education and everyday life. Alongside the clear benefits for reading comprehension and academic progress, it also helps to improve:

✓ Vocabulary development
✓ Understanding of grammar
✓ Spelling ability
✓ Writing skills and achievement
✓ Attitudes towards reading and writing
✓ Knowledge and awareness of the world and other people
✓ Success in other subjects, including mathematics
✓ Empathy and understanding of emotions
✓ The development of our sense of self and personal identity

Research shows that reading helps to reduce stress and improve mental wellbeing. We also know the numerous benefits of a good night's sleep, which can be significantly helped by a reduction in screen-time. Therefore, a calm bedtime routine which includes reading can help with relaxing before bed.

The 'Cycle of Positive Influence'

National Literacy Trust research into the interrelationships between reading enjoyment, attitudes, behaviour and attainment suggests that the current thinking could be considered as a 'cycle of positive influence'.

1. Students take part in an activity such as reading/ story telling.



2. If this experience was a positive one, then they may be motivated through factors such as enjoyment or connection with the other person involved.

3. Students are then more likely to develop positive attitudes towards reading.

4. This then needs to be positively reinforced for the cycle to continue and for the student to remain positive.

7 Top Tips to Support Reading at Home

Shared reading is a great way to develop children's language and communication and to boost their reading skills. Regular reading routines can offer lots of opportunities for learning during school closures.

1 Concentrate on reading quality (it isn't all about reading lots!)



Don't worry too much about the 'what' and 'how' of reading each day. Books are great—but leaflets, comics, recipes and instructions on a webpage can all be great too. Following a recipe to make some cupcakes is valuable reading. Be on the lookout for reading, wherever it is!

2 Ask your child lots of questions



All reading matters. Shared reading is about 'reading with', not just 'reading to' (even for older children). So, ask lots of 'Wh' questions, such as Who? What? When? Where? Why? Try them when talking about books: for example, 'what do you think Harry is feeling?'

3 Ask your child to make predictions about what they have read



If it is a book, look at the front cover—or the last chapter—and talk about what might happen next. Look for clues in the book and be a reading detective! For example, 'can you see the bear on the front cover? Where do you think he will go?'

4 Ask your child to summarise what they have read



When you've finished reading, talk about what happened. Acting out the things that happened in the story or describing the big idea of a chapter is really fun and maximises learning. For example, 'can you remember all the things that happened on the bear hunt?'

5 Ask your child to write about what they have read



Write, or draw pictures, from anything you've read! Big writing and pictures are even more fun. For example, use an old roll of wallpaper to make a treasure map with clues from the stories you've read together.

6 Read and discuss reading with friends or family



Make books a part of the family. Encourage your child to share them with a relative or friend, over a video call. Laugh about them when you are making meals together. For example, 'I hope the tiger doesn't come to tea today!'

7 Maintain the motivation to read



Talk about the joy of reading whenever you can. Your child is on an amazing journey to becoming a reader. Put them in the driving seat and have fun on the way! For example, 'choose your favourite story for bedtime tonight.'

Source: EEF

Finding Reading Materials for Your Child

If your child finds reading challenging, they may struggle to access books and texts that would normally interest them or relate to topics suitable for their age. This can make it harder for them to enjoy reading.

Research from the National Literacy Trust shows that students who begin to enjoy reading more often say that having a wider choice of high-quality reading materials is a key reason for this change.

Because of this, it is important to help children discover a variety of reading options that might interest them. Seeing a range of possibilities allows them to explore and choose what appeals to them most. Reading material could include:

- Fiction or non-fiction books
- Magazines / newspapers
- Websites
- Plays
- Biographies
- Graphic novels / comics

The exact format is less important than encouraging them to read in ways that work for them. Recent studies also suggest that **audiobooks** can help spark interest in reading and demonstrate fluent reading, so they may be a good option if your child is hesitant to pick up a traditional book.

Where to find reading materials...

• **School and local libraries** provide free access to a wide range of books and often offer audiobooks that children can borrow.
• **Bookshops / reading websites** allow children to explore different titles and get recommendations. Many feature reviews highlighting popular / latest picks.
• **Audiobooks** can be purchased or streamed through apps such as Audible or Spotify. Free audiobooks may also be available as podcasts, and some libraries lend them on CD.

Tips for choosing what to read...

Remember that **the most important thing is helping your child enjoy reading.** This could be a novel, a short story collection, a graphic novel, or even articles and magazines they enjoy online.

Look for **texts connected to topics or hobbies they are interested in / learning about.**

If they liked a book previously, suggest **trying another title by the same author.**

Spend time together browsing shelves in libraries or bookshops, asking staff for suggestions, or reading reviews online.

When choosing a book, **try reading the blurb** on the back and a page from the beginning **to see if it captures their interest.**

Keep your child's reading level in mind so the vocabulary is accessible.

It may help to **talk with their teacher to get advice** or listen to them read in a supportive way before selecting books.

Look on websites such as Book Doctor | National Book Tokens or Reading for Pleasure on BooksForTopics or Our book recommendations | BookTrust or What Should I Read Next? Book recommendations from readers like you to get up-to-date book recommendations, reviews and news of latest releases.

The Importance of Listening to Texts

Listening to stories together as a family is a fun and meaningful activity, and it does not need to stop when children move into Key Stage 2. Many parents stop reading aloud once their child can read independently. However, when this happens, children may miss out on the special connection that comes from sharing a story with someone else, and reading can begin to feel less enjoyable.

Listening to stories also allows children to experience books that contain more advanced vocabulary and ideas than they might be able to read on their own. When an adult reads aloud, it gives them the chance to explore richer and more complex texts that may be far more engaging than books written strictly for their reading level. They also get to hear

reading being modelled to them and they can develop their understanding of fluency, prosody and meaning.

Taking time to read aloud and enjoy stories together can also provide a welcome break from the usual daily routine. It creates a relaxed moment to connect, often leading to conversations, shared laughter, and memorable moments that families can enjoy together.

Ways to Introduce Reading Aloud at Home

- **Make it part of your family routine** – this might be at bedtime or while you are cooking the tea! Maybe you get to school early and have 10 minutes to enjoy a book together. It doesn't matter when, it's just important to start (and be consistent).

- **Make it fun.** Find books you and your child love! There are books for everyone!

- **Use travel time.** When driving to school, the shops, or other activities, try playing an audiobook. Reading aloud does not always have to be done by a parent. Audiobooks can work well for families with busy schedules, longer journeys, or for parents who may not feel confident reading aloud themselves.

- **Share a story after dinner.** You might choose to read a novel together as a family, or listen to an audiobook in the evening. Children can relax and do something creative at the same time, such as drawing, painting, building models, or even helping with small household tasks like washing up.

- **Be a reading role model!** Let your child see you reading books, newspapers or articles. When children observe adults reading for enjoyment or information, they are more likely to value reading themselves.

- **Keep reading materials accessible.** Have books, magazines, or other reading materials available at home. Visiting libraries or bookshops together can also help children discover new things they might like to read.

- **Offer encouragement and praise.** Celebrate your child's efforts and progress, even the small achievements. Positive encouragement helps build confidence and motivation.

- **Make reading relaxing.** Create a comfortable place to read, such as a quiet corner with good lighting. Reading should feel calm and enjoyable rather than like a chore.

Questions to Ask When Reading with Your Child

Here are some examples of questions that you can ask your child while they are reading at home.

Before Reading

Make Predictions

Before starting a text, encourage your child to make predictions. These guesses could be based on the book cover, title, headline, or what has already happened in a story.

✓ What does the cover make you think the story might be about?
✓ What do you think might happen next?
✓ What ideas does the headline give you about the article?
✓ What do you think you might learn from this text?

Talk About Prior Knowledge and Experiences

Discussing what your child already knows about a topic can help them understand the text better and make connections with their own experiences. For example, if you are reading about dinosaurs, you could ask what they already know—even if it is from films or TV shows.

✓ What do you already know about…?
✓ Can you remember when we previously read, watched, or visited something about this topic?

During or After Reading

While reading, you may come across unfamiliar words or ideas. Pause occasionally to make sure your child understands what is happening and to talk through any tricky parts.What do you think this word or phrase means?
✓ If we are unsure, how could we find out?
✓ What do you think the writer is trying to suggest here?

✓ Which information do you think is most important? Why?
✓ Do you think the writer means … or …? What makes you think that?

Encourage Deeper Thinking

Talk about why the writer may have described characters, events, or settings in a particular way. You do not need to have all the answers—the goal is to explore ideas together and help your child think more deeply about the text.

Questions that start with *"I wonder…"* can encourage open discussion.

✓ That's an interesting idea. What makes you think that?
✓ I wonder why the writer chose that word. What does it make you think or feel?
✓ Why do you think the character or setting has been described in this way?
✓ What do you think the purpose of this article or speech is? How can you tell?
✓ Why might this detail be important?
✓ In what ways are … and … similar or different?

Summarising Key Ideas

Summarising what has been read is one of the most useful steps. It helps check understanding and reinforces important ideas. Try doing this at different points during the reading rather than only at the end.

✓ What are the three most important points in the text?
✓ What is the most interesting thing you learned? Why?
✓ Which five words best represent the text?
✓ Does the tone or topic change from the beginning to the end?
✓ What new information have you learned?
✓ Were your earlier predictions correct? Why or why not?

Further support:

https://wordsforlife.org.uk/ - by the National Literacy Trust. A UK-based independent charity working with schools and communities to give disadvantaged children the literacy skills to succeed in life.

https://www.booktrust.org.uk/how-we-help/parents-families/ - the UK's largest children's reading charity with a history that stretches back over 100 years.

https://readingagency.org.uk/ - a UK charity that inspires social and personal change through the proven power of reading and share the transformative benefits of reading for happy, healthy and thriving lives.

https://collins.co.uk/pages/barrington-stoke - an award-winning publisher that makes books for reluctant, dyslexic, disenchanted and under-confident readers.

https://schoolreadinglist.co.uk/ - a database of booklists for children and young adults that can be filtered by year group and genre

https://librivox.org/ - free public domain audiobooks – great for exposure to the classics!

https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/category/audiobooks - free audiobooks from the BBC.

https://www.positive.news/ - an online newspaper geared towards young adults who are interested in global events and real-world issues.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zcv8dp3 - Overview of key reading skills and the structures of non-fiction texts.