

# Encouraging your child to enjoy reading: information for families

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The ability to read is a key skill for life – but so is enjoying reading for pleasure. As parents, we have a role to play to encourage children and young people to read for pleasure – it is also a useful balance to using electronic devices. Even if you don't read much yourself, there is a great deal you can do to encourage your child to read for pleasure – you might even rediscover a joy of reading yourself now you're older! This information sheet from Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) gives a few suggestions for encouraging reading for pleasure and how you can build time in your already busy lives.

Even 10 to 15 minutes a day is enough to spark a child's joy of reading and stories. Think about your daily routine and when would be a good time to read to and with your child – many parents find a bedtime story is an ideal time to spend quiet time reading together.

- **Sit with your child so that they can see the pictures** – ask them questions as you read, perhaps asking them to spot something in the picture.
- **Vary your voice as you read** – use different pitches or accents and don't worry about looking silly, your child will probably enjoy it even more if you do.
- **You don't have to always have a book** – story telling is just as much fun and helps your child develop their language. If you have stories and sagas from your own culture, tell a story about them.

## Swap roles

As your child grows older, you can take turns in reading to each other. This is helpful to practise

what they learn in school and can also boost confidence in speaking aloud, another key life skill.

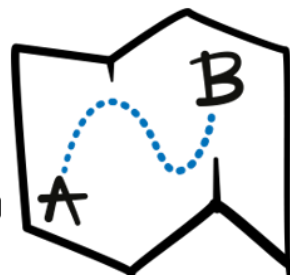
## Enjoy individual time with your child

Reading together can be a wonderful way to have some one-to-one time with your child and can become a time in each day when they know they have your full attention.

It can also help spark questions or discussions with your child about topics that interest them or things that are worrying them. As you are reading, ask your child questions, such as "why do you think they did that?" or "how would you feel if that happened to you?"

## Make reading part of everyday life

- **Have a selection of books** around the home so they are in each room – go to your local public library so you can borrow different ones. You could also check local charity shops for second hand books – you do not have to spend a lot. You could talk to other families to



swap books between you to offer plenty of choice.

- **Model the habit of reading** – if your children see you reading for pleasure, this is more likely to encourage them. It is important that they see reading as something fun and relaxing to do rather than a chore.
- **Encourage time away from screens** – try to introduce regular breaks away from the television, phone or tablet. This is better for children’s developing vision as well. Remember, when you are restricting your child’s screen time, don’t spend all your time on your phone.

## Deciding what to read

There are so many books published, it can be difficult to know what to read.

*Around 200,000 books are published each year in the UK, of which 10,000 are children’s books. That’s a lot of choice.*

- **Try some tried and tested children’s classic books** – think about what you remember from childhood, such as The Hungry Caterpillar or Thomas the Tank Engine. This way you can tell your child about what you remember about reading when you were younger.
- **Ask for advice** – the Children’s Librarian at your local public library will be an invaluable source of advice about suitable books for each age group and ability. They will also be up to date on latest trends and new books that have been published.
- **Browse your local bookshop** – have a look on the shelves to see what is available and at what price. Most bookshops arrange their children’s books by reading age so use this as a starter.
- **Ask for recommendations** – talk to friends and family about their favourite books. You could set up a ‘swap shop’ to lend each other books or have ‘hand me down’ ones, once their children have outgrown them.
- **Think about your child’s interests** – all children develop an interest in topics as they grow older, tractors or dinosaurs for instance. If your child is showing an interest in a particular subject, try to find children’s books that are relevant.
- **Don’t worry too much if your child only reads comics or magazines** – to some extent, it doesn’t matter what they read, so long as they do read. Think about how you could encourage them to increase the range of reading matter but don’t push it if they’re not keen.

## Further information and support

The Words for Life website (<http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/>) from the National Literacy Trust has lots of activities for all ages of children and young people.

The Book Trust has published a list of the top 100 children’s books, split by age group, at [www.booktrust.org.uk/books-and-reading/our-recommendations/100-best-books/](http://www.booktrust.org.uk/books-and-reading/our-recommendations/100-best-books/)

