



## Encouraging Your Child's Reading for Pleasure



As children progress with their reading as they go through junior school, it is as important as ever to keep encouraging good reading habits. They may associate reading with school work or think it's not cool, so it is important to encourage reading for pleasure. Read together and read aloud for as long as you can – no-one is ever too old to be read to (as the popularity of audio books for adults proves!).

Your support in encouraging your child to read is incredibly important: *'Parental engagement with a child's literacy development is a key contribute to their success. Once children are able to read for themselves, it can be tempting to think that your work in supporting their reading is done, but it is important to keep encouraging your child to read whatever their age. Children and young people who are encouraged to read by their parents achieve higher reading levels at school. We also know that children who see their parents reading think more positively about reading than those who don't, so parents and older family members can be powerful reading role models.'* (1)



### Benefits of reading for pleasure

Reading regularly and reading aloud to/with your child provides them with many benefits, including (but not limited to):

- a rich vocabulary
- logical thinking
- communication and listening skills
- promotes the importance of reading, showing that it can be a pleasurable activity and will hopefully turn them into lifelong readers
- positive impact on children's well-being
- imagination
- empathy
- increase in attention span
- develop experience and knowledge of the outside world and real issues
- fluency - as you model reading, they learn from you
- reading helps with other school subjects



### Read yourself

You are your child's role model so let them see you reading. Children will see that you value reading, whether it be books, newspapers, magazines, comics, graphic novels, cookery books or DIY manuals.



### Use a library

We would definitely recommend going to our local public library and using our school library. You can join Herts Libraries online as well as in person – check their website for what proof of ID you need to bring to join. There, you can access books, magazines, newspapers, ebooks, audiobooks and more. There are also plenty of books, comics and drawing resources to be found on our school library webpages.



- Public libraries are free to join and offer a wide range of resources and services. At North Watford library, for example, children can access books for all ages, picture books, graphic novels, Braille, dual language, talking books, ebooks, audiobooks, online reference services to help with homework, computers and they regularly host excellent activities and clubs. There is no cost in borrowing and if

you don't like a books you've borrowed, you can just return it and haven't wasted any money! If your child is not a member, why not take them along to join?

- Our school library is a fantastic facility for our children to explore a whole range of resources. We have the latest bestselling fiction and have something to suit everyone's needs. Try to ensure they borrow a book from our library and make time to read with them or get them to read for even 10 minutes a day.



## Books at home

Having books in the home is associated with both reading for enjoyment and confidence.

- *Pupils in England who report having more books at home also report much higher levels of confidence and enjoyment in reading. Of those with 10 or fewer books in their homes, 42% report that they do not like reading, compared to just 12% of pupils who have more than 200 books in their home. Only a third of pupils with 10 or fewer books at home report being confident readers, compared to 73% of pupils who have more than 200 books. (2)*
- Try to have books around the home. Borrow paper copy books for free from the local public library and our school library, buy cheap good condition secondhand ones from charity shops (New Hope Trust on Queens Road and Peace Hospice on Bushey Mill Lane have them very cheap), swap with friends and family.
- The more children are surrounded by books, the more likely they are to see it as a positive activity.



## Book Choice

We use the word 'book' but ultimately reading covers so many resources, not just printed books

– audiobooks, comics, magazine, books, graphic novels, picture books, newspapers, ebooks and other online resources. Even cereal packets, recipes, instructions and street names are reading!

### Let them choose

- Let your child choose what they want to read for pleasure – it promotes independence and they are more likely to read if it's their choice rather than something that's been foisted on them. By all means suggest titles, especially if they feel a bit stuck on what to read next but ultimately, let them choose. In research from the National Literacy Trust survey, when asked what would motivate them to read more, '*being able to choose what I want to read*' appears consistently as a top answer. (3)

### Repetition

- Some children like to read the same book again – that's fine; many of us return to old favourites we enjoyed. They may want to read something that is perhaps below or above their reading ability. Again, that's fine. Sometimes after a challenging read, they might want something a little less taxing.



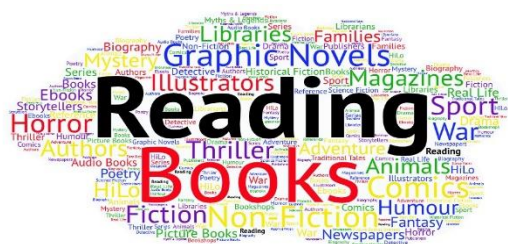
### Challenging reading

- On the other hand, many children like the idea of challenging themselves by reading a slightly more complex book, maybe because they like the cover or the blurb or someone has recommended it. As long as they're not struggling with too many words, are understanding a good proportion of what they've read and the content is age appropriate, there's no reason to stop them from reading their chosen text.
- In this case, it's good to chat about the book with them, as it can help them with their understanding of elements in the text that they might not have grasped. Show them how to use a dictionary and encourage them

to jot down some words they don't know so they can check for meaning. It shouldn't interrupt the flow of their reading though.

### Recommendations

- When selecting what to read, there are many excellent online resources (including printable booklists) that will provide you with inspiration. These can be found on the library webpages – Children/ Library. There are also great literacy organisations that offer support, guidance and resources for both you and your child – these again are listed on our library webpages.
- Ask friends, family, your teachers, Mrs Parr our school librarian, our local public library for their recommendations (most of these can also be reached online for advice).



### Real people's stories

- Many children enjoy reading about people in real life. Sports fans may enjoy reading biographies of footballers, cyclists or cricketers. Music fans may enjoy reading lyrics and biographies too.

### Non-fiction

- Some children just aren't interested in fiction. Luckily there are lots of exciting non-fiction books out there. Find out what their current interests are and use that information to hook them into a book. It could be Minecraft, how to play chess, footballer's biographies, make and do books, gymnastics, books on sharks.



### Ebooks

- Children (and adults!) love their gadgets, whether it's a phone, tablet, X-box,

Playstation or Switch. Reading a paper copy book is a great way to get children moving away from their gadgets for a while and it won't run out of batteries!



- However, electronic devices also play an important part in reading and are a good alternative when you can't access the paper copy of a book or if you are travelling and don't want to take lots of heavy paper books with you.
- Some children will read more willingly if it's on a tablet or ebook device (like Kindle). Dyslexic children and others who have difficulties reading might prefer ebooks as they can change the colour and size of the background/font; some devices will even read aloud to them.



### Audiobooks

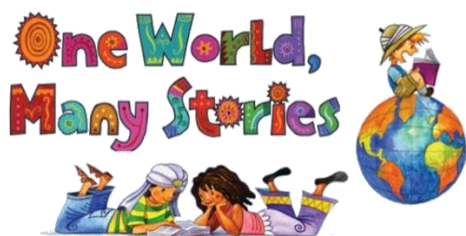
Audiobooks are an excellent alternative to printed books, especially for reluctant or struggling readers. New research shows that audiobooks can be used to support children's learning. **(4)**

There are many advantages to listening to audiobooks:

- It means children can access stories that may be beyond their reading level, making the story accessible to all.
- They will also hear them being told in a range of exciting voices and accents.
- Children will understand expressions and nuances not always clear from printed books.
- Children can listen to the story on their own as the whole family can join and listen in, anywhere – in the car, the kitchen, at bedtime.

- They can improve children's reading skills and enjoyment of reading
- Listening to audiobooks supports children's emotional intelligence and wellbeing
- They can improve children's reading comprehension
- Where parents might not be confident readers themselves, audiobooks offer the opportunity for families to still share stories
- Listening to audiobooks in our digital age has never been easier – use a tablet, smartphone, laptop.

Join Herts Libraries online and listen to audiobooks for free. There are also other sources listed in a separate page.



## Dual languages

There are so many positives to being bilingual. At school, we are trying to build a small collection of dual language books (books in English and another language) that reflect our school community and support our Spanish learning. In the meantime, why not check Herts Libraries as they have excellent collections of children's dual language books to borrow?

There are some useful questions and answers about bilingualism on:

- [https://cdn.literacytrust.org.uk/media/documents/2017\\_07\\_07\\_free\\_ELY\\_resource\\_-\\_Bilingualism\\_FAQ\\_for\\_parents.pdf](https://cdn.literacytrust.org.uk/media/documents/2017_07_07_free_ELY_resource_-_Bilingualism_FAQ_for_parents.pdf)  
What about bilingualism? Parents' frequently asked questions. National Literacy Trust.
- <http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/bilingualism-frequently-asked-questions>  
Words for Life (part of The National Literacy Trust).



## Try different formats

As mentioned before, reading doesn't come in just paper copies of books. There are comics, magazines, children's newspapers, audiobooks, films of books, reading apps, ebooks, graphic novels and more.

- Lots of authors, illustrators and publishers provide excellent resources for free online, whether from websites, social media or apps.
- Have a look at plenty of fantastic links on our library webpages – go to *Children/Library/Online Reading, Books, Comics & Drawing*.



## Let them obsess!

Many children just need to find that special author, series or genre that will spark their interest. Very popular in our school are Minecraft, footballer's biographies series, David Walliams, Tom Gates, cook books and books about cricket. We also have a wonderful comic called The Phoenix Comic which is read very enthusiastically by our children.



## Read for purpose

Many children enjoy fiction whilst others prefer reading for purpose. Budding chefs might enjoy reading recipes from magazines and cookbooks. Film fans might enjoy a book linked to a film or TV programme that's just come out. Read instructions to make something together (how about our Usborne series of make and do books?) or learn a new skill – it could be anything from knitting to coding!





## Create a reading journey

Link their reading on a favourite topic or area of interest up with other activities. For example, if your child is a football fan, along with great fiction and non-fiction available, read match reports in newspapers, find player stats and other information their team's website, read football skills books and footballer's biographies (for children!), make a scrapbook about their team, create a poster about their team/players, make a team flag.



## Chat about reading

This is so important. It shows you are interested in what they have to say and that you value your time together. Talking about books will give you an idea of how much they understand of what they're reading.

Ask them about their book (or comic) but don't bombard them with 101 questions otherwise it will turn them off! Just a few gentle questions – 'Oh, I've heard about that book, what's happened in it so far?'; 'what do you think of it so far?'; 'do you prefer the book or the film - why's that?' and so on.



## Not confident yourself?

Many parents are happy to read with/to their child, putting on voices and acting out. That's great but there are also many who don't feel confident in reading with or to their child. However, help is at hand!

- **Listen** to audiobooks – have someone else do all the silly voices for you! Some narrators are born storytellers – thinking here of Stephen Fry reading the Harry Potter series.
- Are there older **siblings** or other family member who can read to/with your child?
- You child can **watch** stories and books – examples are Jackanory Junior and authors reading their books on YouTube. Many books have also been made into films.
- **Listen** to or **watch** the books together – even when they're at the upper end of junior school and might think they're too old, even

as a 10 year old, they'll enjoy sitting down with you, a bowl of popcorn and a good story read aloud or watch.

- For more links to audiobooks and online books, go to our school website, *Children/Library/Online Reading*



## References

- (1) Christina Clark (2016) *Children and Young People's Reading in 2015: Findings from the National Literacy Trust's Annual Survey* [https://cdn.literacytrust.org.uk/media/documents/2015\\_01\\_01\\_free\\_research\\_-\\_young\\_peoples\\_reading\\_final.pdf\\_dCLScPc.pdf](https://cdn.literacytrust.org.uk/media/documents/2015_01_01_free_research_-_young_peoples_reading_final.pdf_dCLScPc.pdf)
- (2) McGrane et al. (2017) *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS): National Report for England* [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/664562/PIRLS\\_2016\\_National\\_Report\\_for\\_England-\\_BRANDED.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664562/PIRLS_2016_National_Report_for_England-_BRANDED.pdf)
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## Some additional facts on the importance of reading for pleasure

### Poor literacy skills can mean...

*'Lacking vital literacy skills holds a person back at every stage of their life. As a child they won't be able to succeed at school, as a young adult they will be locked out of the job market, and as a parent they won't be able to support their own child's learning. This intergenerational cycle makes social mobility and a fairer society more difficult.*

*People with low literacy skills may not be able to read a book or newspaper, understand road signs or price labels, make sense of a bus or train timetable, fill out a form, read instructions on medicines or use the internet.'* (1)

<https://literacytrust.org.uk/information/what-is-literacy/> The National Literacy Trust website

### Reading helps other school subjects

Helping children to become enthusiastic readers can also help them in other school subjects. Research found that *'children who read for pleasure made more progress in maths, vocabulary and spelling between the ages of 10 and 16 than those who rarely read'*. (2)

<https://cls.ucl.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/CLS-WP-2013-10-.pdf>  
Dr Alice Sullivan and Matt Brown (2013) *Social inequalities in cognitive scores at age 16: The role of reading*, CLS Working Paper 2013/10



### 10 minutes a day...

Reading for pleasure is the single biggest indicator of a child's future success, more so than their family circumstances, their parents' educational background or income. What's more, research shows that parents reading with their child for as little as 10 minutes a day can make a significant difference to the child's

achievement levels and shared reading has the single biggest impact on a child's independent reading habits.

<http://fmcm.co.uk/news/2019/3/7/new-report-shows-decline-in-childrens-reading-for-pleasure-and-daily-reading-habits>

[https://cdn.literacytrust.org.uk/media/documents/Reading\\_trends\\_in\\_2019\\_-\\_Final.pdf](https://cdn.literacytrust.org.uk/media/documents/Reading_trends_in_2019_-_Final.pdf)

Christina Clark and Anne Teravainen-Goff (2020) *Children and Young People's Reading in 2019: Findings from our Annual Literacy Survey*. National Literacy Trust



### Reading progress

Young people who enjoy reading very much are three times as likely to read above the level expected for their age as young people who do not enjoy reading at all (30.1% vs. 8.1%).

Based on reading skills data for 712 pupils aged 11 to 14, young people who read daily in their free time are twice as likely to read above the level expected for their age than children who don't read daily (37.6% vs 14.2%)

[https://cdn.literacytrust.org.uk/media/documents/Reading\\_trends\\_in\\_2019\\_-\\_Final.pdf](https://cdn.literacytrust.org.uk/media/documents/Reading_trends_in_2019_-_Final.pdf)

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<https://readingagency.org.uk/about/impact/002-reading-facts-1/#fn6>

Proven facts on the power of reading

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*What about bilingualism? Parents' frequently asked questions*. The National Literacy Trust.

<http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/bilingualism-frequently-asked-questions>

Words for Life (part of The National Literacy Trust).

The *National Literacy Trust* and *Words for Life* offer a wealth of helpful advice for parents and children who need help with literacy. You can find information about their campaigns and projects, as well as research and advice on The National Literacy Trust website. There is also lots of useful information on their Words for Life website, segmented by age range to help parents find the most relevant advice.

