

Reading with your child

Sharing a book with a child is fun! It's a time for closeness, laughing and talking together – and it can also give children a flying start in life and help them become lifelong readers.

Reading helps your child's wellbeing, develops imagination and has educational benefits too. Just a few minutes a day can have a big impact on children of all ages.

If you're not feeling confident about reading aloud or sharing books, don't worry – there's no right or wrong way to enjoy a story together. But if you'd like some tips, here are a few pointers to help you out.



It's never too early to start sharing books – they might not understand the words, but they will love cuddling up, hearing your voice, and looking at the pictures

- Talk to your bump. Your baby can hear sounds as early as 18 weeks and talking regularly to your bump will help them recognise your voice and be comforted listening to you even before they're born.
- Give black and white books a go when they're little. You might receive the [Bookstart Newborn pack](#), which includes black and white images for you to share. These are perfect in the early days when their eyes are still developing.
- In England and Wales, ask your health visitor or library about where you can pick up your free [Bookstart Baby pack](#). It includes books, tips and advice to help you get started.
- Join your local library. Libraries are full of great advice and recommendations, and you'll have a new supply of books to enjoy. Your library may also host Rhyme times and other sessions for little ones – you'll be able to have fun and meet other families, too.
- Get other family members involved. Story time is something that everyone can enjoy, and it's a great way to bond. For example, there are lots of [books about the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren](#) – maybe your little one would enjoy sharing one of those stories with their own nanny and granddad?

As your child gets a bit older



Sharing picture books can be a lot of fun – but don't worry if your child gets distracted or wanders off... that's perfectly normal! Don't worry if you don't have a lot of time in your busy day, either – just a few minutes can make a huge difference.

Try to read to your child every day. It's a special time to snuggle up and enjoy a story. Stories matter and children love re-reading them and pouring over the pictures. Try adding funny voices to bring characters to life.

Talk about books. This is a great way to make connections, develop understanding and make reading even more enjoyable. Start by discussing the front cover and talking about what it reveals and suggests the book could be about. Then talk about what you've been reading and share ideas. You could discuss something that happened that surprised you, or something new that you found out. You could talk about how the book makes you feel and whether it reminds you of anything.

Here are some more tips to help you enjoy story time together.

- Give children lots of opportunities to read different things in their own time - it doesn't just have to be books. There's fiction, non-fiction, poetry, comics, magazines, recipes and much more. Try leaving interesting reading material in different places around the home and see who picks it up.
- Ask your child to choose what they'd like to read. They'll feel more interested in the story if they've picked it out themselves. (And don't worry if they keep returning to the same story, either!)
- If you can, turn off the TV, radio and computer. It's easier for both of you to enjoy the story without any other distractions.
- Sit close together. You could encourage your child to hold the book themselves and turn the pages, too.
- Take a look at the pictures. You don't just have to read the words on the page. Maybe there's something funny in the pictures that you can giggle about together, or perhaps your child enjoys guessing what will happen next.
- Ask questions and talk about the book. Picture books can be a great way to talk through your child's fears and worries, or to help them deal with their emotions. Give them space to talk, and ask how they feel about the situations in the story.
- Have fun! There's no right or wrong way to share a story – as long as you and your child are having fun. Don't be afraid to act out situations or use funny voices... your little ones will love it!

Encouraging a love of reading



As children get older, with lots of other activities competing for their time, how can you encourage them to make time for reading?

Choose a favourite time to read together as a family and enjoy it. This might be everyone reading the same book together, reading different things at the same time, or getting your children to read to each other. This time

Here are some other ideas:

- Read yourself! It doesn't matter what it is – pick up a newspaper or magazine, take a look at a cookery book, read a computer manual, enjoy some poetry or dive into a romance or detective novel. And get your children to join in – if you're cooking, could they read the recipe? If you're watching TV, can they read out the listings?
- Give books as presents. And encourage your children and their friends to swap books with each other – it'll give them a chance to read new stories, and get them all talking about what they're reading.
- Visit the local library together. It's always fun choosing new books to read, and keep an eye out for special author events at the library or local bookshops – children love meeting their favourite authors. Jacqueline Wilson and Anthony Horowitz always have signing queues that are miles long!
- Encourage children to carry a book at all times. That way, they'll never be bored (this is something you can do, too!)
- Have a family bookshelf. If you can, have bookshelves in your children's bedrooms, too.
- Keep reading together. Just because your children are older, it doesn't mean you have to stop sharing stories – perhaps you could try the Harry Potter series or *A Series of Unfortunate Events*.
- Don't panic if your child reads the same book over and over again. Let's be honest - we've all done it!

Bring reading to life -You could try cooking a recipe you've read together. Would you recommend it to a friend? Alternatively, play a game where you pretend to be the characters in a book, or discuss an interesting article you've read.

Make reading active -Play games that involve making connections between pictures, objects and words, such as reading about an object and finding similar things in your home. You could organise treasure hunts related to what you're reading. Try creating your child's very own book by using photos from your day and adding captions.

Engage your child in reading in a way that suits them -You know your child best and you'll know the best times for your child to read. If they have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) then short, creative activities may be the way to get them most interested. If English is an additional language, encourage reading in a child's first language, as well as in English. What matters most is that they enjoy it.

[Parents and families | National Literacy Trust](#) – follow this link to get ideas, tips & videos on supporting your child in reading from 0-12 years.

