

Promoting Reading for Pleasure at Home

Schools are having a big push on encouraging children's reading. We want all children to see the benefits of reading but we also want it to be something that they choose to do because they love it! There is strong evidence linking reading for pleasure and educational outcomes but the benefits of reading for pleasure go beyond this and stretch throughout a person's life. Reading increases our understanding of our own identity, improves empathy and gives us an insight into the world view of others.

At parent meetings, many parents ask us 'how can we encourage reading at home?' So we have put together this information to support you and your child's reading journey.

Reading role models

As parents we read all the time, but not necessarily books. We read the news, whether on social media, apps or in print. We read magazines that match our interests. We read instructions and manuals. Children often don't often see us doing this, or are unaware that we are actually reading.



We need to make sure that the children see that we are reading and why we are doing it. Many children see their parent on their phone and just assume that they are playing a game as that is what they would use the phone for. Not understanding that we may be reading. Similarly with kindles, children may think it is just a tablet.

Often our reading comes under two headings;

-Reading to inform

-Reading for pleasure

Reading to inform is where we are reading to find out something. Whether this is the news, weather or more information that will help us in our day to day lives.

Reading for pleasure is what we choose to read because we want to. Funny stories, anecdotes, fiction books. Although many people read to inform themselves because they enjoy it – so really most of this is for pleasure too!

Take the time to tell your children what you are reading and why you are reading it. Where possible it is great for them to actually see you reading, whether it is a book or a magazine. This then normalises the behaviour in the house and children will see it as an option of something to do – rather than a chore or something they have to do in school!

Bedtime stories

This seems an easy solution but latest figures from The Book Trust suggest that only 28% of primary school aged children get a bedtime story every night. Often this is because of time restraints but the benefits are huge. Reading to your child for just 10 minutes a day/night can improve their vocabulary, encourage them to read independently and can also improve parent/child relationships. This is not just a KS1 issue. Older children love a bedtime story too (even if they won't always admit it!)

Bedtime stories can be a picture book, comic, poetry, non-fiction or a chapter book. Whatever you and your child want to read. If you don't already do this, give it a go. I'm confident that it will quickly become an unmissable part of your day! (Extra tip – Do the voices! You can have a good giggle together at your brilliant/miserable attempts at doing various accents...) If you don't feel confident with your own storytelling abilities, there is always CBeebies bedtime story – but I'd advise this as a family activity rather than the children on their own, then you can all talk about the story afterwards.



Book talk

Sometimes, children will just want to sit and listen to a book because they are so engrossed in the story. This is completely fine, there is no need to quiz them after every chapter that you read. But sometimes informal book talk can be a fantastic way to discuss what has been read. Making connections between the story and real life or another story is a great idea. 'Ooh, that character reminds me a bit of granny because ...' 'Can you remember when we got lost in the woods and had to carefully follow the muddy trail...' Talking about a book with your child can make them see things that they might not have spotted or connections that they might not have made previously.

Picture books lend themselves well to informal book talk because children want to explore and discuss the pictures, which often tell us so much more than the words.

Here are some tips for book talk at home.

- **Make links connections.** Do the characters/settings remind you of anyone/anywhere? Have you been in a similar situation? Have you learnt about this from TV/School?
- **Make predictions.** Can you guess what the story is about? What will happen next?
- **Discuss/ introduce vocabulary.** If there is a tricky word, can you explain what it means? Use other words to describe a character, words that a child of their age may not be familiar with (they might then try to use it in their writing)
- **Discuss emotions.** How does the story make you feel? Some children find it hard to articulate their feelings, so if it is modelled for them by adults it can help them understand their own feelings.

Here are three videos of a teacher sharing stories with his own children and having informal book talk along the way.

The Queen's Handbag – Steve Anthony <https://youtu.be/oBbwUW5QuDI>

Old Hat – Emily Gravett <https://youtu.be/g90qekYlq3U>

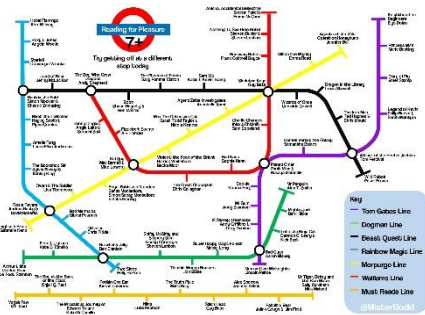
Hotel Flamingo – Alex Milway (chapter book) <https://youtu.be/CrERzbvoupY>

Allow their choices

Now this one is a tricky one... It is easy to be snobby about a certain author/genre and feel that your child can read much harder texts. But if we belittle their choices, they may feel that their choices are unworthy. Some children may find comfort in re-reading a book, either one that has been read to them, or that they have previously read themselves. There is nothing

wrong with this at all. As adults we re-watch films many times and notice new things with each viewing, the same applies with books.

Comics and graphic novels are valid reading materials and shouldn't be looked down upon, the same goes for the popular authors like Walliams and Kinney (Diary of a Wimpy Kid). The best analogy for this, is to imagine that books are like food... The comfort reads are not nutritional but we still love them (just in moderation). Harder richer texts are delicious, but too many can make us feel a little overwhelmed and yearning for something easier to digest! It is all about balance! If your child is 'stuck' on a particular author or genre ask your child's teacher for recommendations. Alternatively here are two resources that may be of use.



Reading tube map

<https://misterbodd.wordpress.com/2020/05/12/reading-for-pleasure-tube-maps-mkii-2020/>

There is a tube map for each key stage. KS1, Lower KS2 & Upper KS2. The map offers suggestions of other books to read that are similar to favourite authors and even offer jumps between lines to expand their reading range.

Reading Roads

<https://misterbodd.wordpress.com/2019/11/03/reading-roads/>

There is a road for each genre of books. At the top of the road are the easier books that are suitable for KS1 children to hear or newer independent readers. The middle of the road is great for LKS2 readers and onwards but the last book is more for 11+ readers (due to content rather than reading ability). It is fine for children to go up and down a road, they should not be discouraged if they want to try an earlier book.



In addition audiobooks offer a great option to reluctant readers. They are still getting to hear the great story and be introduced to some fantastic new vocabulary that they may not be exposed to. Fingers crossed this will show them that books can be fun and will encourage them to pick one up next time.

Summary

Reading is great – Reading for pleasure is greater! Sharing stories at home is a fantastic way to encourage children to read for pleasure! We hope that some of these tips will help your family's reading journey. Reading doesn't have to be expensive either. Local libraries have a great children's selection with lots of new exciting books! They even offer audiobooks and eBooks online (<https://www.borrowbox.com/>)