



Why reading with children is important

Children need stories to grow and to learn and to explore the world – and to have fun! Having lots of different books in their lives will give them new words, new ideas and new friends in the form of characters who inspire them. As children get older, reading will support their thinking skills, build their memory and attention spans, and boost their creativity in lots of wonderful ways.

Reading together when your child is in primary school is a way to bond over your favourite stories and to stay connected as children get older and family life gets busier. Sometimes parents and carers stop reading aloud to older children as soon as they can read on their own, but a child is never too old to enjoy being read to! This is especially true if your child finds reading difficult. If you are comfortable reading aloud, your child will benefit from stories being a fun part of their lives, separate from the process of learning to read or reading for school. Reading out loud together can help children feel more confident about their reading skills and stimulate their curiosity about the world. It can also help them in their friendships by developing their empathy skills. When we read, we get a chance to walk around in someone else's shoes – we can follow different characters through their lives, think about how they feel and what they do, and learn about all kinds of families and communities.

How reading with children can be fun!

Reading together and taking the time to talk about books can be a wonderful way for you to stay connected as your child gets older and spends more time at school, with friends or pursuing their hobbies. If you read what they read, your chats about their favourite stories will open a door into their imaginations and into the way they see the world around them. This will be really important as your child starts to read longer books that focus on characters and feature more complicated or challenging storylines.

There are so many ways that you can make reading a part of your child's life:

- Share a story every day! This can be a chapter read together before bed, or a poem over breakfast, or a couple of fun facts from an information book in the car. Remember that reading can happen anywhere and everywhere, so long as you have a book in your bag or an audiobook ready to play.
- Be creative when you're reading out loud. Give every character a different voice (and maybe a different facial expression) and really get into the spirit of the story. There's no such thing as being too silly, especially if you're reading a funny book. You're building up wonderful memories of fun and joyful times spent reading – and making each other laugh!
- Take it in turns to choose the book. This gives you a chance to tell your child about the books you loved at their age and for your child to explore different stories, as they figure out the kinds of books they like. Children will be even more excited to read together if they've chosen the book.
- If your child loves reading comics and graphic novels, lean into this. Graphic novels draw you right into the world of the story, through the mixture of words and pictures, and can often be the key to helping a child see themselves as a reader. There are lots of different graphic novels for older children, too, so it's an interest they can keep developing.
- Books with short chapters can be a great way to kickstart a reading habit. Short chapters often mean lots of cliffhangers, and reading an exciting chapter book together allows you to talk to your child about where the story is going and what the characters might do. Together, you could read one paragraph or one page, and, once they can read, your child could read the next. Taking it in turns is a wonderful way to get stuck into a good book, and it builds confidence for everyone, too. If they are reluctant, try not to put them under pressure – it's beneficial to read aloud to a child for as long as they'll let you.





- Be led by your child's interests. If they're into sports, they have so much to choose from when it comes to non-fiction, from biographies about their favourite players, to histories of the different sports they love, through to chapter books with characters who also love that sport. It's the same for all kinds of topics and interests, from history to dinosaurs, the solar system to animals, fantasy to poetry. All children can be readers if they can find the right book for them.
- One of the best and most fun things you can do is to talk about the book you're reading. Share your opinions – who liked it, who didn't? What was your favourite part or your favourite character? This shows your child that reading can be something you share with other people. When your child is reading by themselves, you can ask them to tell you about the different books they choose. This lets your older child tell you more about what they like and what they don't like to read. Talking about books and reading lets your child know that you think it's important and that you're interested in their opinions and ideas.
- As children become more independent in their reading, you can support them to build their confidence and really see themselves as a reader. If they have a reading notebook or journal, they can write down any thoughts they have about the book they're reading, whether that's a line or a quote they like, or questions they have that you can help them with. If something confuses or upsets them, keeping a record of it and talking it through with you can help them understand new ideas, feelings or situations.
- You can also encourage them to start building up their own personal dictionary. If they read a word they don't understand, they can write it down, along with the sentence they found it in. Then, together, you can look it up in a dictionary or online, figure out the meaning, and see if that makes the original sentence easier to understand. This way, they'll build up a list of words with examples of how to use them. Making an association between a new word and a story or a character can often make that word easier to remember.





How we can help

Our website, www.childrensbooksireland.ie, has lots of book reviews and activity packs.

Click 'Our Recommendations' and you can search through our reviews by age and by genre or theme (picturebook, graphic novel, fantasy, science fiction, sport, etc.). You can also check out our reading guides and themed reading lists, which bring together books about themes like growing up or protecting our planet. We have guides for Pride, for books in Irish and for books by Irish authors and illustrators – all free to read and download.

Click 'Resources and Ideas' and you can find activity packs, including the Any Book Book Club, with great ideas to make reading fun at home. Here, you can also find your local library, making it even easier to become a member and start your reading journey.

Children's Books Ireland Book Clinics are a great way to get personalised recommendations from our expert Book Doctors. These free drop-in events take place all over the island – click 'News & events' on the website to find a Book Clinic near you. All families are welcome to the Book Clinic, regardless of ability, need or barriers to reading. Every child leaves the Book Clinic with their own individual Book Prescription and a copy of a Children's Books Ireland reading guide.

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