

Reading with kids

Reading for pleasure has a very positive impact on educational performance. The UK government's Education Research Standards Team tells us, *"Evidence suggests that there is a positive relationship between reading frequency, reading enjoyment and attainment."*

As a parent this is great news - reading with your child can be a fun and simple way to support their education, whatever their age.

Top tips for reading with your child

Not all children love reading though - here are our top tips to help you if you have an unwilling reader on your hands.

- 1. Make reading part of daily life** – Children copy the adults in their lives so set an example by treating yourself to quick read when you get a quiet moment. It is worth looking at where the reading material is in your home. Can books be stored – or displayed – in places where your family relaxes? Bedtime is a traditional reading time, but if it doesn't work for you think about other slots. If you know you will have to wait while a sibling does a class or for an appointment, you could bring something to read.
- 2. It all counts** – Research shows that reading and attainment go hand-in-hand. So let them read what they enjoy. It doesn't have to be a novel. It doesn't have to be fiction. Cereal packets, joke books and Top Trumps all count for beginners. For more advanced readers, consider non-fiction, comics and graphic novels. Books that seem too young can be comforting; conversely, books that seem too old are fine, too. The novelty factor of an e-reader could jump-start an interest in reading, and teenagers might enjoy story-telling apps too.
- 3. Integrate Interests** – A book about football might entice someone who prefers pitches to pages – or a cartoon universe encyclopaedia could tempt a TV fan. Current affairs might appeal, too: [First News](#) bills itself as a weekly newspaper for young people. Or there's [Whizz Pop Bang](#), a magazine for junior scientists. It's worth researching favourite authors: some offer freebies like exclusive stories and sneak previews to online fans. [The Words for Life author interviews](#) are a good place to begin.
- 4. Reading nest** – Are there comfortable, distraction-free reading places in your house? The bother of moving from a cosy spot with good light might just encourage a child to stay put and keep turning pages. "We have this window seat on our landing that gets the afternoon sun and she lies there wrapped in the cat's blanket until it's too dark to see."
- 5. What a treat** – Second-hand book shops are stocked with affordable treats, so bring a new (to your child, anyway) book on holiday. Or buy a magazine on the journey. Subscriptions make easy gifts – and charities with children's branches often publish a

magazine – RNLI, for instance. Other magazines that might be of interest are [Phoenix](#) and [Aquila](#).

6. **Talk about it** – Discussing what you are reading will give you some fascinating insights. Questions like “Where did we get to?” and “What do you think happens next?” send a message that you care about your child’s opinions. Older children might be interested in what you are reading yourself – treasure these conversations, and follow up anything they recommend. It’s very satisfying to pass on your childhood favourites: even share your own copies – but be ready for some challenging questions about the values of previous generations.

“I actually quite enjoyed Divergent, and she didn’t even mind when I insisted on going to see the film with her and her friends.”

Reviewed: January 2018