



The importance of reading for pleasure

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.

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. 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...)

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 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>

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!

Thank you for reading!!

