

Keeping the learning going @ home: how to make the most out of reading time



[Katherine Donnelly](#)

April 06 2020 06:14 AM



During the extended closure of schools, one of the simplest, and most rewarding, things that parents can do with their children is to read with them or encourage them to take up a book. Apart from the way stories feed children's imagination, reading brings well-documented educational benefits.

Here, the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) kindly shares some pointers to help parents help their children make the most of their time reading.

The PDST is a Department of Education and Skills support service and this is the first in a series of articles, specially written for Independent.ie, to support parents and children while schools remain shut.

*

*“So Matilda’s strong young mind continued to grow, nurtured by the voices of all those authors who had sent their books out into the world like ships on the sea. These books gave Matilda a hopeful and comforting message: You are not alone.” - **Roald Dahl***

In these challenging times, reading can provide a welcome distraction from everything that's happening in the world around us. Reading together as a family has many benefits, including fostering a love of literature in children. Reading aloud is an activity that can easily be integrated into new daily routines that are emerging in your household and can involve adults reading to children, children reading aloud or a combination of both.

The sharing of a good story is an excellent end in itself but these simple activities can extend children's thinking and ensure they make the most of

time spent reading! Be careful not to overdo the following suggestions as you don't want to turn an enjoyable book into a workbook.

For younger readers:

- Ask your child to show you where to start reading - if they're not sure, gently guide their attention to the text at the top left hand side of the page.
- Tell your child about the full stop and what it means - occasionally give them the job of showing you where to stop for breath (understanding punctuation is one of the basic concepts about print that will support later success).
- Give your child the job of page turner as this helps develop simple motor skills and confidence in book handling.

For all readers:

- Let your child choose the story they want to read or have read to them. Providing choice is a great way to keep your child interested and engaged in reading. It can also be a nice experience to share your favourite books from childhood.
- Have a chat about the cover and the blurb on the back. Share your ideas and thoughts and make predictions with your child using clues from the cover including the title and the illustrations.
- Read with expression: use different voices for the various characters or share the characters between yourself and your child/children. A dramatic reading can be a fun way to read a book as a family.
- Pause and discuss the pictures, the characters, the unfolding story line; but don't slow down so much that the flow of the story is interrupted.
- Read for an audience: Encourage children to read to younger siblings or record your child reading a familiar story to send as a video to a friend or relative (this is a nice one to send on to grandparents who may be missing their grandchildren).
- Ask open-ended questions; questions to which there is no right or wrong answer, but which stimulate thinking, talk and discussion. "I wonder" questions can be thought-provoking.
- When reading a simple story in English, encourage your child to share any words they know in the story as Gaeilge (or in another language that they may speak).

- Encourage your child to make connections with the book. They may be able to connect the story to some aspect of their own life or another book.
- Encourage your child to think about the characters, their feelings, why they might have acted the way they did and any changes they would make to the story. By practicing this aloud, you are cultivating your child's imagination.
- Art is a great way for children to engage with their reading. Children can draw pictures of their favourite characters or part of a story.
- With younger or developing readers, one good read deserves another. Re-reading a book/story several times develops fluency and faster processing of words. Think of it like practicing a piece of music.

Here are some online resources where you can access quality children's literature:

- Getepic.com
- Oxford Owl E-book Library
- E-books from World Book Online
- Audiobooks from Audible
- Storylineonline.net
- Libraries Ireland Online Services including Borrow-box

Happy Reading!

PDST

