



Helping your children

with reading

A GUIDE TO SUPPORTING READING

FOR PARENTS OF KS3 CHILDREN AT

LYNG HALL SCHOOL

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

You will find the answers to these questions at the end of the booklet.

What do I need to know about reading at Key Stages 3 and 4?

I am really busy and don’t have time to read with my child. What can I do?

My son doesn’t like reading. What can I do?

My child has problems with reading. How do I help?

I have/my partner has problems with reading. Can I still help my child?

My child is not getting enough support at school to help them with reading. What should I do?

I am worried that my child is not being challenged enough to improve their reading at school. What can I do?

My child keeps reading the same books over and over again. Is this normal?

My child will only read magazines, not books.

I think my child is dyslexic. What should I do?

What sort of books should I choose for my child?

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About this booklet

The move from primary to secondary school is an exciting time   
for parents and children. Your child is growing up and becoming   
more independent. However, you may be worrying about the   
extra demands of secondary school and wondering what you   
can do to help. Many parents feel like this, and it is very natural.

This booklet offers you ideas from other parents that you can choose from, to help your child as they move into and through secondary school.

One of the best ways you can help your child do well at school is   
by helping them to enjoy reading for pleasure - whether they   
like magazines, newspapers, novels or comics. Research shows   
that children who enjoy reading do better at school, and that   
parents play a key role in helping to develop this love of reading.

Research findings: reading means achieving

*Recent research into the reading skills of 15-year olds across the world found that children who are more interested in reading do better at school than those who don’t read for pleasure.*   
*The study also found that parents who talk to their children*   
*about books, TV programmes and films help to keep their*   
*children interested in reading.*

*Having books, newspapers and magazines around at home also*   
*made a difference to how interested children were in reading.*

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Instant ideas for helping your child to love reading

- suggestions from parents

• Let your child ***choose*** what to read, rather than choosing what you think they should read.

• ***Encourage*** your child to read magazines, comics, newspa-  
pers and the internet as well as books.

• ***Talk to your child*** about books or magazines you haven’t enjoyed, as well as things you love.

• Make time to ***read together*** if you can.

• ***Buy books as presents***. Don’t forget TV tie-ins and books about interests such as computer games or bands.

• Remember that your child is reading when they are look-  
ing at bus timetables, menus, instructions, TV guides and the internet.

“I got my son to teach me how to use the   
computer. I was hopeless, but he knew   
exactly what to do. It has helped both of   
us, because I can do much more now and   
he lets me take more of an interest in what   
 he does at school.”

*Dad* 5

Preparing for reading at secondary school

Your child may be looking forward to the challenges of a new,   
‘big’ school, or may feel worried about the work.   
You can help support your child’s reading by ***making them the   
‘expert’*** and getting them ***to talk about all the things they already   
know and can do.***

Instant ideas

• Help your child to find books they will enjoy by joining the public library, if you are not already members. It is free to join and many libraries have Audiobooks and DVDs that can be bor-  
rowed very cheaply, as well as many different types of books that can be borrowed for free.

• **Read together**. Try picking reading material about interests or hobbies you share, like your football team or a place you have visited together. **20 minutes every day will make a huge difference.**

• Talk to your child about the types of reading they think they will be asked to do/are asked to do in secondary school; ***get*** ***them to explain*** to you what they already know about types of non-fiction (factual writing), and try to match them to the subjects your child does at school.

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• Chat about which books or magazines your child might read, to learn more about the subjects they will be doing at secondary school.

• **Buy a book, book token or magazine as a present/reward.**

Try making time to:

• Borrow books from the library in Spanish or Mandarin,   
depending on which language they will be learning, or ask   
a librarian or bookseller about the *Horrible Histories* or *Mur-  
derous Maths* series and other funny books about   
school topics.

• Go online to have a look at sites that might be useful for

different subjects. All libraries have free internet access which   
can be booked. For information about safe websites for chil-  
dren, visit the Parents Information Network at [www.pin.](http://www.pin./)   
org.uk or Parents Online at [www.parentsonline.gov.uk](http://www.parentsonline.gov.uk/)

• Go along to an event at the library together. Most libraries   
run the ***Summer Reading Challenge***, a fun scheme that   
encourages children to read by giving them rewards like   
stickers, bookmarks and medals. You could encourage your   
child to take part.

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“Our local library has free internet access   
and now I book the kids in and take them   
down there some Saturdays. It’s great as

they look forward to it and it gives me a   
chance to do the shopping in peace.”

Dad

“It’s easy to forget how much reading you   
do every day. I make sure my kids realise it is   
a part of my life by getting them involved   
when I can - like cooking using a recipe,   
making a shopping list or looking at the   
paper to see where we are in the league!”

Mum

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Support reading at KS3

Your child will be studying more subjects at secondary school,   
and will be working with many different types of reading   
materials, from newspaper articles and adverts to scientific   
explanations and instructions. Parents who support their   
children’s education make a real difference to how well their   
child does and there are lots of quick things you can do to help.

Instant ideas

• Try some ***skimming and scanning*** together. Skimming is   
when you read through a piece of text quickly to find out   
what the main idea is; scanning is glancing through a piece   
of text to find a specific piece of information. You can do this   
with a newspaper - perhaps ask your child to find something   
out for you. Why not ask them to scan a newspaper for news   
about a favourite footballer or to find out the weekend   
weather, or get them to skim read a recipe to tell you the   
basic steps?

• Help your child to work out what an unfamiliar word means   
by getting them to ***read the rest of the sentence and look   
for clues.***

• Help by testing your child when they have spellings to

learn and by encouraging them to look up words they don’t know in a dictionary.

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Try making time to:

• Build up the number of words your child knows - their

vocabulary. As they go through secondary school, your child will need to know specialist words and recognise them when they are reading. To help them learn these words, you could ask your child to explain to you what they mean.

• Read books or plays that your child needs to study for   
school - in KS3 ***and*** in KS4 English your child will study Shakespeare. It can really help them if you read   
these together, and talk about the language and characters.   
Why not learn a few short quotations together as a competi-  
tion?

• Borrow the video of the Shakespeare play from your local   
library and watch the scenes together.   
***Parent power***: Parents make the difference, say experts.   
A recent study has found that children who were reading   
to their parents improved their reading skills a great deal,   
even if the parents could not read English or read at all in   
any language.

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parents could not read English or read at all in any language.

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Supporting GCSE level reading across a range of subjects

During GCSE courses students have to do longer writing tasks or coursework in some cases,which counts towards their final grade, as well as reading many different things to help them pass the course.   
You will find that your child has much more homework and you can make a difference by helping your child to manage their time. Reading for pleasure can get squeezed out as the amount of homework grows and parents can help by encouraging rest, relaxation and reading as well as school work!

Instant ideas

• Cut out newspaper articles about topics your child is studying.

• Read together if your child is having problems with read-  
ing in a particular subject.

• Encourage your child to go to a study support group (Period 6). Many schools and libraries run free after-school groups - find out if there is one near you and suggest to your child that they go along. They could meet new people, and will get help with their homework as well.

• Text message a good read to your child’s mobile phone,   
if they have one, or send them an email with some recom-  
mendations from friends’ children or from an article.

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Try making time to:

• Speak to your child’s different subject teachers to see if there is

anything that they could read that would help their studies or that would help them enjoy a particular topic.

• Talk about everyday topics, encouraging your child to be the ‘expert’ and use the technical terms they are learning at GCSE. For example, your child could tell you about tomor-  
row’s weather using words such as *precipitation*, *humidity* and *isobars*, or they could explain *how a circuit works* when you switch on the light.

• Look up technical words you or your child don’t recognise from their work in a dictionary or on the internet and make it your word of the day. When you have a list of new words you could test your child on them.

• Talk to your child about reading. Often GCSE students feel   
they have little time to read for pleasure. You can help by   
talking about what they enjoy reading and helping to make   
time for it.

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Supporting GCSE level reading   
in English and English Literature

In GCSE English and English Literature students need to read

plays, some poems, one or two novels and sometimes short sto-  
ries as well. Your child’s English teacher will be working with the   
class to study all these texts, but as a parent you can help your   
child by making sure they have access to many different types of   
text at home.

Instant ideas

• Borrow audio recordings of the texts your child is reading   
for their exams from the library and listen to them together,   
or share them as a family, perhaps while doing the washing   
up or driving?

• Visit your local library to borrow the film version of a GCSE text. Many have been made into films.

• Encourage your child to read more by helping them to find books, magazines, websites and comics that interest them or tie into the work they have been doing for GCSEs. Wider reading is part of GCSE English Literature.

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Try making time to:

• ***Talk about the adverts*** and think about ***what messages they are trying to get across*** when you are watching TV or reading a newspaper. Why not ask the ‘expert’ (your child) - to ‘read’ the advert; encourage them to use the technical terms to talk about the ***language*** and ***style*** of the advert?

• Use the internet to help your child. Websites often give   
reading tips for GCSE texts as well as explaining the key   
ideas and characters. Use a good search engine to help you find suitable sites.

Don’t forget reading for pleasure - ***it is good to read for fun***.   
Reading a magazine, comic or book is a good way to take   
a break.

“I was really worried about my son as he   
 used to tell me that he hated reading.   
One way I could get him to read was by buying   
car magazines as a treat. I found out you   
could borrow magazines for free from the   
library so now he goes down there as well.”

Mum

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Can read, won’t read.   
Help! What can I do?

Lots of children and teenagers don’t read - here are some hints and tips from parents with reluctant readers:

• Talk to your child to find out what they do and don’t like reading.

• Go to the library together and encourage your child to   
borrow something that interests them. Many libraries lend   
magazines as well as books for free. Don’t forget graphic   
novels (novels that are like comics), cartoons and comics.

• Don’t force your child to read something they are not   
interested in, even if you are worried about their reading.

• Set your homepage to a website your child might enjoy, if you have internet access. For example, you could try a skateboarding site or the homepage of a favourite TV programme. It is a good idea to check sites first to see that you are happy for your child to visit them.

• Encourage your child to read by finding reading material about their interests. Any reading that your child does is a good thing.

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What do I need to know about reading   
at Key Stages 3 and 4?

In English, students are expected to read many different kinds of   
text, including plays, poems, and non-fiction (for example, dia-  
ries, travel writing, and science-fiction writing). As well as this, other sub-jects provide the chance for students to read for pleasure and study.

I am really busy and don’t have time to read with my   
child. What can I do?

20 minutes a day or even a few times a week will make a real difference to your child’s reading. Why not have a look at the ‘instant ideas’ at the beginning of each section for quick things you can do to help.

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My son doesn’t like reading. What can I do?

Try to find things for him to read that are about his interests and   
let him choose what he wants to read as much as you can.   
Magazines, comics and non-fiction (fact) books might be more   
interesting to him than stories. Other reading activities, like   
reading flat-pack furniture instructions can also develop   
reading. Don’t forget that using the internet requires reading   
skills too and there is free access at your local library. If he is   
interested in computer games, there are lots of books on how to   
play the games and ‘cheats’ (short cuts). Praise your son for any   
reading he does and make sure he sees you reading too. Keep   
any reading you do together short and fun. Even though it is   
worrying, pushing your son too hard or making reading a chore   
will put him off even more.

My child has problems with reading. How do I help?

If you are worried that your child is struggling with reading, it is   
best to make an appointment to see your child’s PYC. You   
can do this by calling the school and asking to speak to them   
by name or if you don’t know this, give the name of your child   
and ask to be put through to their PYC. It is best to call   
either before or after the school day - be prepared to leave a   
message. When you do speak to the PYC, outline your

worries (it may be helpful to write some notes to remind you

before making the call) and ask to make an appointment to see them to discuss what can be done for your child.

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I have/my partner has problems with reading.   
Can I still help my child?

Research has shown that talking to children about what they

are reading and having books and magazines at home make a difference to children’s progress even if parents have problems with reading themselves. If you want help with reading or have a friend you think needs help, check your local library for infor-  
mation on local adult classes and support.

My child is not getting enough support at school to   
help them with reading. What should I do?

If you think your child needs more support, ring your child’s

school and ask to speak to their English teacher. You can talk

about your worries over the phone, or set up a meeting to

discuss it further. It is best to call either before or after the school day - be prepared to leave a message.

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I am worried that my child is not being challenged   
enough to improve their reading at school.   
What can I do?

It is important for teachers and parents to have high but realistic   
expectations. Make sure that your child is not being put off   
reading by finding the books they are reading too easy or   
uninteresting. Don’t force your child to read a book you think   
they should read. It is much better to talk to them about what   
they like reading and help them to choose books they will enjoy.   
Booksellers, librarians and teachers can help with book choices.

If you are still worried, speak to your child’s English teacher. You can talk about your concerns over the phone, or set up a meet-  
ing to discuss it further. It is best to call either before or after the school day - be prepared to leave a message.

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My child keeps reading the same books over and   
over again. Is this normal?

Children often re-read books they have enjoyed or will stick to a   
particular genre (for example, horror) or series. Reading the   
same books or same type of books over and over helps them to   
build reading confidence and fluency and children will usually move on at their own pace. Don’t stop them reading books again - interfering with what children choose to read can often put them off. If you are worried, you could make some suggestions for other books they might enjoy based on what they are already reading. For example, a child who enjoys *Goosebumps* might enjoy the *Series of Unfortunate Events* books. Ask your child’s teacher, a librarian or a bookseller for advice on suitable titles.

My child will only read magazines, not books.

Don’t worry. Evidence shows that children who enjoy reading for pleasure perform better at school, whether they are reading magazines, newspapers or fiction. You could always try   
suggesting books that they might enjoy based on the   
magazines they read or their interests. Look at websites for advice or ask a librarian or teacher for suggestions.

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I think my child is dyslexic. What should I do?

You will need to make an appointment to speak to the school

Special Educational Needs Coordinator, Ms Gaynon. It may be useful to write some notes about your worries before you make the call so that you don’t forget any points. Arrange a meeting so that you can discuss your child’s needs, and get them tested for dyslexia. You can find out more about dyslexia from the British Dyslexia Association by visiting their website or calling the helpline number. They can advise about the best ways to support your child.

What sort of books should I choose for my child?

Ideally, you should let your child choose books for themselves,   
as they are much more likely to want to read if they have been   
able to choose for themselves. If you want ideas for books, visit a   
website which has reviews of books for 11-16 year olds, by 11-16   
year olds, or ask your child’s teacher, a librarian or a bookseller.

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Help - useful organisations and websites

Below is a list of organisations and websites where you can get more information about reading with your child.

Achuka is an independent children’s book site that has   
something for everyone. [www.achuka.co.uk](http://www.achuka.co.uk)

Barrington Stoke is an award-winning publisher that makes

books for reluctant, dyslexic, disenchanted and under-confident   
readers. [www.barringtonstoke.co.uk](http://www.barringtonstoke.co.uk)

Booktrust promotes children’s reading and produces a wide   
range of information for young readers including booklists. [www.booktrust.org.uk](http://www.booktrust.org.uk) (website for teenagers)

British Dyslexia Association is the national organisation for   
specific learning difficulties. It represents over two million dys-  
lexic children and adults. It is one of the world’s leading dyslexia   
organisations. [www.bdadyslexia.org.uk](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk) Tel: 0333 405 4567   
(helpline).

Family Lives is a charity working with parents and families   
offering advice and information about a range of parenting   
issues. [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk/)

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Finally…myON

Lyng Hall School Pays for your child to have access to myON, a vast online Library. There is an app for phones or tablets. There is something for everyone and it is FREE to your child!

Please talk to your child abut myON and encourage them to read books within their ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development) which their tutors will have shared, following their NGRT (The New Group Reading Test).

<https://www.myon.co.uk/login/>



