



**National
Literacy
Trust**

Change your story

Share stories with me

Simple, fun ways to share books and stories with your little one

It is never too early – or too late – to share stories with your little one.

Sharing books and stories helps to build babies and children's language and communication skills from the very start.

Doing this little and often helps your child develop a love of reading and helps you feel close to each other. It also gives your child the chance to hear and recognise new sounds and words, which are the first building blocks of language.



You don't need special skills or lots of time. **Your child will love hearing your voice.** If you sing, play, or make things up with your child, you are already sharing stories. You can't get it wrong.

Read and tell stories in the language you know best. The benefits will be just the same.



How to get the most out of this booklet

You'll find simple ideas for sharing books and making up stories together. We've split the suggestions into three stages to help guide you through.

Children develop in their own time. You know your child best so pick the tips that work for them.

Enjoy books together

Books are a great way to bond with your little one. Find a quiet, cosy spot and enjoy spending time together.

- You don't have to read all the words. Look at the pictures together and chat about what you see.
- Books help children discover new things. Talk about the pictures and words and link them to what your child already knows.

Go at your child's pace. If they want to stay on one page for a while, that's okay.



Keep books where your child can reach them and choose which ones they'd like to look at.

- Take turns. Follow your child's lead and respond to their words, sounds, pointing and expressions.
- Stop when it feels right for your child. Sharing books should feel fun and relaxed, so don't worry if your child moves away or loses interest.
- Give your child time to respond to what they see or hear. Pause and wait so they can share their ideas.

Before baby arrives

During pregnancy, babies can already hear and are beginning to recognise voices. Reading to your bump will help them get to know your voice.



Story moments as they grow

Books help them explore ideas and talk about feelings. You can begin to ask simple questions:

"What do you think will happen?"

Invite your child to join in with words, sounds or ideas.

"Can you make a bird sound?"

Early story moments

As your baby grows, they'll start to notice things in books. Talking about what they notice helps build their understanding of the world around them.

When you read the same story again and again, they'll get to know the story and can begin to join in.

Babies and children will love to hold, point, feel and explore books.



Make up stories together

Stories don't have to come from books. Making them up together builds imagination and confidence, and it's lots of fun.

Stories can be short and simple or action-packed. To create a story, start with what your child is interested in or something they have said.

- Small moments in the day can turn into stories.

"The bath bubbles are making a crown for your doll. She is getting ready for a party!"

- Use silly voices and make funny faces or actions to get them involved.

"I wonder if bear would have a squeaky voice like this..."



- Try using things you already have at home: a spoon or blanket can become anything!

"That's a cool cape. Where are you flying to?"

- When children play, they often make up stories and choose what happens next. Join in by copying their ideas.

Child: *"My teddy doesn't feel well."*

Adult: *"Oh no! What do you think will help teddy feel better?"*

Early story moments

Before your baby is talking, they will still love hearing your voice. Even though they don't yet understand the words, they're listening to the sounds.

When your child starts talking, simple stories help them learn new words and how they fit together. They can also help them link words to feelings.

"Sheep had a fun day. He looks excited!"

Adding actions and sounds can make stories come alive.

*"Let's **creep up** quietly. **Shhhhhhhh!** Then we can **run fast** and hide."*



Story moments as they grow

Children learn best when they can choose or lead their play. Try to encourage their ideas.

Child: *"Oh no! The fire engine crashed!"*

Adult: *"How can we help the firefighter escape?"*

Children learn new words every day. Try adding one or two more words to what they say.

Child: *"Dragon!"*

Adult: *"The **tired, sleepy** dragon."*

Build their thinking skills by adding a problem. Ask them what should happen next.

"The mermaid has lost her wand, who will help her find it?"

Share stories when you're out and about

Look at books and make up stories when you are out and about. Stories can happen anywhere, in the park, at the shops or on the way home.

- Keep a book in your bag, pocket or buggy, to look at together, wherever you are.
- Describe what you both can see, hear, feel or smell.

"I can hear a loud truck. Bruumm, brumm!"



- Make up simple stories about the things your child notices or the objects around you. Build a story from something they've spotted – a leaf, twig or pebble.

"I've found a wand (twig). What spells shall we make?"

- You can make up or re-tell stories when you are outside. This will help them to link real life to stories.

"That beautiful butterfly is like the one in The Very Hungry Caterpillar."

Visit the library

Libraries are fantastic, free places with lots of books to borrow and enjoy together. Visiting the library can become an exciting part of your routine.

- Explore the children's area and let your child choose a new book each time you visit.
- Join a free story or rhyme session. You'll hear new stories, have fun and maybe make new friends too.
- Library staff can help you find books and activities to suit your child.

Books, audiobooks and activities are free in your local library.



Use technology to share stories

Stories can be shared in different ways. Audiobooks, apps and storytelling videos can bring stories to life with voices, sounds and pictures. Enjoying them together will give you new things to talk about.

- Sit with your child when using technology. Talk about what you see and hear. Try introducing new ideas, words, characters and sounds.

"I wonder why the bear looks sad?"

- Choose stories that are calm and not too fast. This gives your child time to understand what's happening. Repeating words also helps them join in and remember new words.
- Listen to an audiobook, then act the story out, or watch a story being told and then read the book together.

Stories are best when they include talk, play and cuddles.



Their story starts with you

We hope you enjoy sharing stories together.

Every shared story – big or small – makes a difference.

Keep going

[!\[\]\(c3d993ca47bfe2a953c700506ce31fa0_img.jpg\) Visit your local library to discover new books and join story sessions.](#)



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The National Literacy Trust is a registered charity no. 1116260 (England and Wales) and SC042944 (Scotland).

Special thanks to Libraries Connected and the parents we consulted to develop this resource.