

Parent Booklet

Big Bedtime Read



**Helping Families Build a Love of Reading
at Home**

1. Welcome to the Big Bedtime Read



1. What your Nursery School/Pre-school will offer

Information Sessions for Parents

Friendly, informal sessions to help you:

- understand why early reading matters
- learn simple ways to use books at home
- build reading into your bedtime routine

Stay and Play Sessions

You and your child can explore books together in relaxed Big Bedtime Read session.

These sessions give you ideas, show you how children respond to stories and make reading fun.

Big Bedtime Read Lending Library

Your pre-school will provide regular access to books.

This may be through:

- Book Bags with a number of books selected by your nursery teacher/ pre-school leader.
- A Lending Library where you and you child choose books to take home.

This will give your child a chance to enjoy lots of different stories in a fun, familiar way.

2. Why Reading Matters

Reading with your child every day helps them learn, feel secure and explore the world around them.

Even 10 minutes a day makes a big difference.



Bonding

Storytime is a wonderful opportunity for you to spend quality time with your child. Snuggling up with a book fosters a sense of security, comfort and emotional connection, making reading a cherished part of the day.



Feelings

Reading stories helps children understand different emotions and experiences. Books about feelings and real life help little ones navigate their own emotions better.



Confidence

When you read together, your child gets your full attention. This makes them feel:

- Valued
- Secure
- Important

Feeling emotionally safe is the foundation of confidence.



Creativity

Books transport children to new worlds, introducing them to characters, magical places and exciting adventures. This will stimulate their imagination, encourage creative thinking and imaginative play.



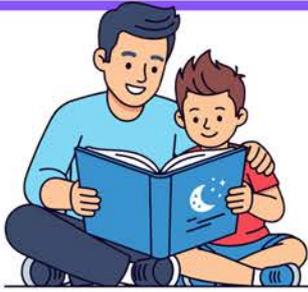
Reading is one of the best things you can do for your child.

When you read regularly to your child, you are giving them a gift that supports learning for life.



4. How Reading Helps Your Child Learn

Sharing a book together with your child is a lovely activity and allows you to spend time laughing, hugging and snuggling. Reading to your child for 10 minutes a day will help them develop social and emotional skills, support their language development and help them become confident, happy learners.



Developing Language Skills

Hearing stories helps children learn how to talk. They listen to how words sound and how sentences are built. The more stories your child hears the more their language skills will develop.



Expanding Language

Books use words that children may not hear at home. Stories will help your child use new words such as names of animals, places, feelings and much more.



Repetition Helps

Children love hearing the same book over and over again. This helps them:

- Remember new words
- Predict what will happen next.
- Begin to notice patterns in the story.
- Develops their confidence



Understand the World

Stories help children:

- Learn the difference between real and pretend.
- Understand new events and experiences
- Explore big feelings safely.

5. How to Read with Your Child

There is no wrong way to read a book. Your voice is the magic, the special ingredient that turns a book into a cherished story. You don't have to use funny voices or accents for your child to enjoy the story. Your time is all they need



How to Share Stories with Your Child

- Relax and enjoy the moment
- Point to the pictures
- Ask simple questions such as "What do you see?"
- Let your child turn pages
- Read at their pace
- It's okay to skip pages or make up your own words

A Simple Reading Routine

- Look at the cover
- Talk about the picture
- Read slowly
- Pause for a chat
- End with a cuddle



Bedtime stories are an opportunity for you and your child to spend time together. Reading a bedtime story together can help with a bedtime routine.

5 Bedtime Stories

Bedtime stories are a wonderful and magical opportunity for you and your child to spend time together. Reading a bedtime story together can help prepare your child for sleep, relaxing them and getting them sleepy. Bedtime stories have many other benefits for your child.



★ Reading and sharing books together helps to strengthen the bond between you and your child.

★ Stories can help your child learn the difference between real and make-believe. They can help your child understand change, new or frightening events and also the strong emotions that go along with them.

★ Reading or telling stories to your child helps your child's brain development and has been shown to improve their social and communication skills.

★ When a child shares a book with an adult, they hear words they might not otherwise hear e.g. if the book is about animals who live in the wild, the child will hear lots of new words about the animals and the environments they live in.

★ When a child is read to, they hear more complex language. This helps them to use these words themselves e.g. "... but not the hippopotamus".

★ Anytime is a good time for a book or story. Try to read at least one book to your child each day.



7. Using Stories to Encourage Play



★ Dress Up

Let your child dress up as their favourite characters. They can act out part of the story or make up their own version.

★ Make simple puppets

Use sock puppets, soft toys or paper characters - to bring scenes from the book to life.

★ Small Play Scenes

Create little story worlds using dolls, cars, animals or blocks to act out the story.

★ Change the Story

Let your child make up a new ending or change parts of the story.

★ Pretend Play

Pretend to be the characters and use different voices and sounds.

★ Household Props

Use blankets, boxes, spoons, scarves or other items from home as story props.

★ Draw the Story

Draw characters, places or their favourite parts of the story together.

★ Make New Stories

Encourage your child to create their own stories inspired by the book.



These activities help children learn new words, build imagination, grow confidence and enjoy stories even more!



7. Choosing Books



What Young children Enjoy:

- Bright pictures
- Simple stories
- Repetition
- Rhyming words
- Board books
- Touch-and-feel books
- Books about animals, families, food, colours and everyday routines

Where to find books

- Local library – (free to join!) also offer eBooks and audiobooks
- Charity shops
- Book swaps with friends.



Let Your Child Choose!

Choosing builds independence and helps children get excited about reading.

Choose Books that Are Age Appropriate

Most books have age recommendations to guide adults. Many children will be better suited to books aimed at a little below their actual age or sometimes a little above.

Looking for New Reading Ideas? The Book Trust website offers an excellent selection of expertly curated book lists for every age and a wide range of topics.

<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/>



8. Sharing Nursery Rhymes

Sharing rhymes with your child is very important for their early learning. Whatever rhymes you share with your child, you can be confident you are helping develop skills and ability they will need when they are older.

01 Vocabulary

Nursery rhymes are easy for young children to remember and repeat. They help your child learn new words and new ways of using their voice – by being loud or quiet, speaking quickly or slowly or trying out different inflections.

02 Early Reading Skills

Rhymes are simple stories. They have a clear beginning, middle and end: **Jack and Jill went up the hill**, a story in just a few lines.

Rhymes introduce new words to your child eg: pail = bucket, crown = head. This helps them understand that there can be more than one word for something!

03 Early Maths

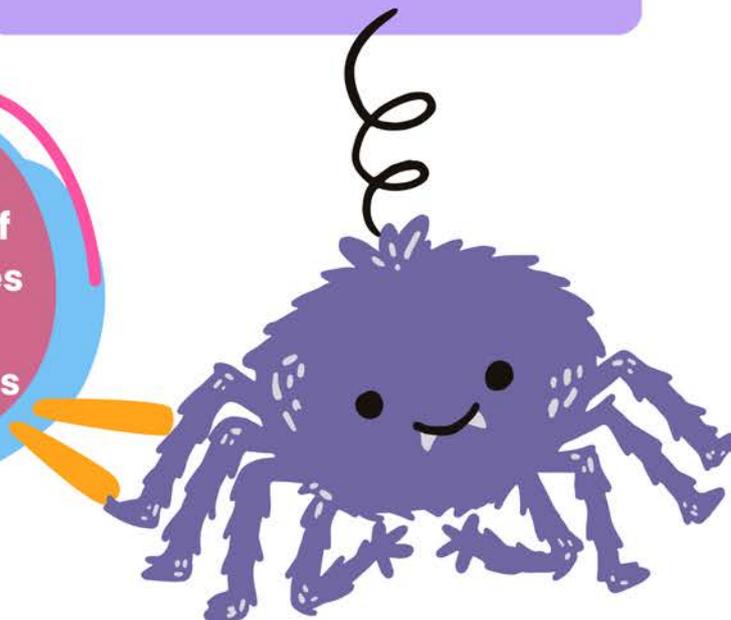
Many rhymes will help your child become familiar with numbers and counting. Rhymes such as **'One, Two, Three, Four, Five—Once I Caught A Fish Alive'** will help your child remember the order of numbers.

04 Physical Development

Children love acting out their favourite rhymes and they can be great at getting them moving. Movements in action rhymes and songs will help develop a child's fine and gross motor skills as well as their balance and coordination.

Did You Know...?

Experts have discovered that if children know 8 nursery rhymes by heart by age 4, they are usually among the best readers by the time they're 8!



Teach lots of rhymes

Share as many rhymes with your child. Try adding a new rhyme each week.

Rhymes are great tantrum diffusers

Children find rhymes hard to resist. Use them to help calm tricky moments.

Play with words

Swap a few words around & let your child giggle as they "correct" you. Humpty Dumpty sat ona banana?!

Personalise the rhymes

Use your child's name in the rhyme to make it special. E.g., "Little Miss xx sat on a tuffet"

9. Fun Ways to Use Rhymes at Home

Here are some simple, ways to make rhymes part of everyday play.

Pause & let them join in

Stop before the last word in a line and let your child fill in the gaps. Little ones love finishing the rhyme!

Use movement & actions

Add clapping, tapping or simple actions. This will help children remember the rhythm.

Do The Actions

Add simple actions to nursery rhymes. This will help with co-ordination, memory and keeps children engaged.

Rhyme Basket

Fill a basket with objects eg a toy sheep, star, spider etc. Let your child choose an item, then sing/say the rhyme that matches it.



10. Nursery Rhymes Examples



Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

Twinkle, twinkle, little star
How I wonder what you are
Up above the world so high
Like a diamond in the sky
Twinkle, twinkle, little star
How I wonder what you are.



It's Raining, It's Pouring

It's raining, it's pouring.
The old man is snoring.
He bumped his head and went
to bed
And he couldn't get up in the
morning.



Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream
Merrily, merrily, merrily,
merrily
Life is but a dream



Mary Had a Little Lamb

Mary had a little lamb,
His fleece was white as snow.
And everywhere that Mary
went,
The lamb was sure to go.



Incy Wincy Spider

Incy Wincy spider climbed up the waterspout
Down came the rain and washed the spider out
Out came the sunshine and dried up all the
rain.
And Incy Wincy spider climbed up the spout
again.



This is the Way

This is the way we brush our teeth,
Brush our teeth, brush our teeth
This is the way we brush our teeth
Early in the morning.
This is the way we wash our face
Wash our face, wash our face.
This is the way we wash our face,
Early in the morning.



Hey Diddle Diddle

Hey Diddle diddle,
The cat and the fiddle
The cow jumped over the moon;
The little dog laughed
To see such fun,
And the dish ran away
with the spoon.



11. Pre-Reading Skills:

What children learn before they can read

Children develop important reading skills long before they can begin to read actual words.



Sound Awareness

Helps children hear and play with sounds in words.

- Hearing Rhymes
- Noticing patterns in songs or stories
- Noticing beginning sounds (like "b" in ball)



Print Awareness

Helps children understand how books and print work.

- Knowing how to hold a book
- Understanding that words on the page have meaning
- Spotting their own name in print.



Story Skills

Helps children understand how stories are built.

- Guessing what might happen next.
- Remembering what happened in the story
- Talking about characters and events.



Vocabulary

Helps children learn new words and ideas.

- Learning new words through stories and daily conversations.



Fine Motor Skills

Helps children get ready for writing and handling books.

- Turning pages
- Pointing to pictures or words.
- Acting out finger rhymes and actions.



Thinking Skills

Helps children understand stories and make sense of what they see in books.

- Spotting details in pictures
- Talking about what happens first, next and last.
- Guessing what might happen next.
- Noticing patterns or repeated phrases in the story. "I'll huff and I'll puff"

12. WHY BEDTIME ROUTINES MATTER

Little bodies recharge when they sleep and this gives them energy. Sleep helps a child's brain develop, helps them manage their emotions better and gives them energy to learn and play.

1. Sleep

A pre-school child needs between 11 and 13 hours sleep each night. Aim to make bedtime 12 hours before they need to wake, so if they are up at 7 am they should be in bed by 7pm.

2. Daily Exercise

Time outside during the day helps children use up energy and sleep better. Avoid energetic play in the last hour before bedtime.

3. Screentime

Try to keep the hour before bedtime screen-free (no television, portable devices). It is best if bedrooms are screen free. However, if there is a television in the bedroom make sure it is switched off.





14. Getting Ready for Bed

A calm, predictable bedtime routine helps children feel settled and ready for sleep. Doing the same steps in the same order each night lets your child know what is coming next and helps their body get ready for rest.

Start the Wind-Down

Begin winding down 20–30 minutes before bedtime.

- Dim the lights
- Turn off screens
- Use a quiet, calm voice.

Create the Right Mood

Make sure your child's bedroom feels comforting and safe.

- keep lights low - use a dim lamp or night light if needed
- Close blinds or curtains
- Reduce noise
- Speak softly to help your child relax.



1. Toilet & Wash

This will help settle your child & reduces waking during the night.



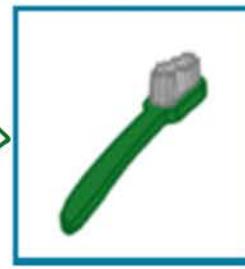
2. Warm Bath (optional)

A warm bath is soothing & helps relax before sleep.



3. Pyjamas

Pyjamas signals that the day is ending & bedtime is coming.



4. Brush Teeth

It will keep their mouth healthy & is an important part of the routine.



5. Book Time

Reading together helps your child feel close, calm & ready for sleep.

Time for Sleep

Before Leaving Your Child

- Let your child choose a favourite toy to have beside them
- Give them some water, if needed
- Tuck them in and let them know you are nearby
- Use the same short, calm phrase every night such as "Goodnight. I'll see you in the morning." This will help your child feeling secure.

A Reassuring Thought

Some nights will go smoothly and others won't - and that's okay. Most children settle best when bedtime happens around the same time each night and when the routine is familiar and predictable.

Parenting & Early Learning

CBeebies – Parenting & Bedtime Routines

A fantastic website packed full of resource for parents of young children with ideas and activities for keeping little ones entertained. Also contains practical guidance for routines, emotions, sleep and building language through stories and play.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people>

PlayBoard NI

Ideas for play-based learning, child development and fun family activities.

<https://www.playboard.org/play-activities/>

Early Years & Education

Getting Ready to Learn

Our website provides information for parents about early learning at home, including reading, language, play and school readiness.

www.gettingreadytolearn.co.uk

Education Authority's SEN Early Years Local Impact Teams

The EA Early Years Service provides a range of resources that can be accessed or downloaded.

<https://send.eani.org.uk/support-services/sen-local-impact-teams/sen-categories/sen-early-years/useful-resources-and-links>

RISE NI

The website has information leaflets, suggested activities, resources and parent training videos developed by range of health professionals.

<https://belfasttrust.pagetiger.com/RISEParentEarlyYears>

Child Development & Family Support

NSPCC – Parenting & Child Development

Helpful articles on routines, communication, emotions and bonding.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/advice-for-families/>

Family Support NI

Resources on children's health, sleep, emotional wellbeing and developmental milestones.

<https://www.familysupportni.gov.uk/>

Stories (but remember – nothing beats a familiar voice!)

CBeebies Bedtime Stories

Familiar celebrities reading simple bedtime stories – great for language development and routines. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/shows/bedtime-stories>

Story Nory (Free Children's Section)

A selection of free audio stories suitable for pre-schoolers. <https://www.storynory.com/>

Reading & Book Resources

BookTrust

The UK's largest reading charity. Offers booklists, tips for reading with young children, and free activities for families. <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/resources/find-resources/reading-with-your-child-3-4-years/>

Libraries NI

Information on joining the library, accessing free books, rhyme sessions, eBooks and audiobooks. <https://www.librariesni.org.uk/resources/children/>

World Book Day

Provides lots of fun ideas for reading at home. <https://www.worldbookday.com/families/>