



A COMPLETE PHONICS RESOURCE
TO SUPPORT CHILDREN



An introduction to Reading for Pleasure

One of the key curriculum goals of the Reception year and Key Stage 1 is for children to become capable and engaged readers. Learning to read is crucial because it is through reading that children are able to access other areas of learning and achieve their full potential. Phonics teaching gives children the tools they need to become effective readers. However, *choosing to read* is also crucial in order for children to reap the benefits of being a reader in childhood.



**READING
FOR PLEASURE**

Professor Teresa Cremin and Dr Lucy Rodriguez of the Open University explore the importance of Reading for Pleasure (RfP) and how we can nurture children's desire to read.

What is Reading for Pleasure (RfP)?

Reading for Pleasure (RfP) is often described as reading that we do primarily for enjoyment, possibly for relaxation, or for the thrill, suspense or emotion we gain from the experience. **Essentially it is choice-led reading, reading that children do of their own free will.** When children are introduced to a wide variety of stories and non-fiction in a supportive environment, the reading they are required or encouraged to do in class can become reading they choose to continue and return to by choice.

“One of the key aims of the National Curriculum in England is to ensure that all pupils ‘develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information’.”
(DfE, 2013)

Throughout childhood, the motivation for children to read independently, with adults or with peers may be driven by intrinsic factors, such as enjoyment, the desire or need for information or to feel socially connected.

Children may also be motivated by extrinsic factors, such as competition, reward or better test scores, but RfP is more closely associated with intrinsic motivation. So RfP pedagogies and classroom practices therefore focus on nurturing children’s intrinsic desire to read, with the aim of developing the habit of choice-led reading in childhood.





The benefits of Reading for Pleasure

Teachers are often aware that children who enjoy reading, and who read frequently, do better in school. In recent decades, this anecdotal evidence has been substantiated by research from large national and international studies.

For example, in England, analysis of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) found that 10-year-olds who reported the most enjoyment from reading scored, on average, 45 points more than on a reading assessment than those who reported not liking reading (McGrane et al., 2017). **The will influences the skill (and vice versa).**

Children who choose to spend time reading develop a wider vocabulary, enhance their comprehension of texts (in English and across the curriculum) and broaden their knowledge about the world.

Furthermore, the benefits of engagement with books begins in the early years; a study found that children who are read to regularly at age four to five achieve higher levels of attainment in reading, maths and cognitive skills at age eight to nine (Kalb and van Ours, 2013). These are the children who are supported in developing the vital habit of reading.

Being a keen habitual reader nurtures children's social and emotional development, introduces them to rich vocabulary, enhances their capacity to express themselves, and develops their knowledge and understanding of the world. Through reading widely and by choice, children gain a broader range of perspectives than those they may encounter in their everyday lives. They begin to ask questions about the texts and the world around them. Furthermore, and significantly, 'engagement in reading is strongly correlated with reading performance and is a mediator of gender or socio-economic status' (OECD, 2021).

The reciprocity of SSP (systematic synthetic phonics) and RfP

High-quality, systematic phonics teaching is crucial for children to learn to crack the alphabetic code, and to support children to learn to read.

However, it can be a challenge for teachers to give equal time and attention to teaching children *how to read* and teaching them *to want to read* – to desire to do so. This must be addressed if we are to raise the reading and wider educational attainment of all children.

Therefore, alongside the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* phonics programme, we must develop the pedagogies, practices and teacher characteristics that support children to become keen readers.

Developing the skill to read influences the will to read, and developing the will to read influences the skills to read (OECD, 2002).

Whilst RfP is mandated in England, we cannot insist that children will enjoy it, or that they will be motivated to continue to read of their own free will in their own free time. Additionally, while many Reception and Key Stage 1 teachers routinely read aloud to their class and make time for free reading daily, there can be a tendency for these aspects to be more orientated toward consolidating phonics skills than promoting reading enjoyment.

Reading is a tool for social justice issues. It is essential therefore that school curricula and classroom practices ensure that children develop the ability to read and the desire to read. This is why Reading for Pleasure has been mandated in the National Curriculum in England (DfE, 2013) and is profiled in the Reading framework (DfE, 2021).





Ways forward

Developing children's desire to read cannot be left to chance; the curriculum needs to be underpinned by an evidence-based RfP strategy.

A model developed during the *Teachers as Readers* research project (Cremin et al., 2014) sets out the RfP pedagogies, classroom practices and educator characteristics that support children to become engaged readers.

Teachers need:

- a well-developed knowledge of children's literature and other texts
- to know their children as readers; to know their interests, practices at home and their passions
- a RfP pedagogy that includes reading aloud, time to read, informal book-talk and recommendations in a social reading environment

- to reflect their own reader identity and act as role models
- to develop reciprocal and interactive reading communities in the classroom and beyond through strong home-school partnerships.

You can read about these strands in the Developing Reading for Pleasure downloads in the [Everybody read!](#) area of the website..

It is crucial that teachers take the time to observe and reflect on children's engagement with books and reading, and act to ensure all children can find enjoyment in reading. The first step is to audit your RfP provision, enabling you to identify your strengths and areas to develop.

References

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