

## “My child isn’t interested in reading, and I can’t get them off a screen!”



Don’t despair! The team at Read for Good has our fair share of reluctant, struggling, and even non-readers. Here are some accessible strategies you might find useful.

There’s a reason your kids love screens, but there’s an even greater reason to use reading for pleasure to provide some balance.

Digital providers (including social media, gaming, streaming services) spend millions of pounds appealing directly to *your* children. They’ve created a wonderful, multi-coloured, fast-paced world of CONSTANT STIMULATION and INSTANT GRATIFICATION that is highly compelling.

Let’s face it, it’s very hard for a simple book to compete with this assault on their senses. It takes a while to get into a book, it’s more effortful than scrolling through TikTok videos, it’s not as instantly rewarding as a film or boxset and it’s less stimulating to the senses than Fortnite...

...but actually these are exactly the reasons WHY we need young people to (re)discover their love of reading, so that reading can sit alongside these other distractions and help achieve the following:

- Reading a book or listening to a story relaxes our bodies and minds: research estimates that 6 minutes of reading can reduce stress and anxiety by 68% - more than listening to music or watching TV.
- Reading gives our senses a break from the constant assault of digital media. It’s important children have some peace and quiet to allow their imagination to take the reins for a while – and who knows where that will take them?
- As well as improved knowledge, vocabulary and writing skills, reading different stories with different characters builds other important life skills like empathy, analytical thinking and problem solving. It aids sleep, boosts self-esteem, builds good communication skills and strengthens their predictive skills.
- Reading for pleasure also means they’re more likely to do well at their GCSEs.

The benefits are clear and wide ranging. What’s more, your kids won’t need an internet connection or any special equipment, batteries or chargers to do it!

Although it is hard, it is also more important than ever that we help our children to love reading to provide essential balance to the digital world that will surely dominate their lives.

One day, they might even thank us....!

## So what can you do to help?

How as parents can we help get our kids into reading when they're not keen in the first place? Well, we suggest meeting them in their world, and then moving them along the pathway to more sophisticated titles but importantly, going at their pace, not ours!

These are some great starting points:

- Books that act like games
- Audiobooks
- Reading and listening to stories together (whatever their age and reading ability)
- Graphic novels, comics and magazines
- Books with TV and gaming tie-ins

The starting point is asking what are your kids into - not what you *want* them to be into but what do they actually like - gaming, football, fashion, Manga?

Find an accessible comic, magazine, annual or non-fiction book that hooks into this passion. Then try and find progressively more sophisticated reading material to progress them along a reading journey - but take it at their pace. If you find a series or type of reading that they really like, try and find more of it so they get into a habit of reading before moving on.

Share stories with them - maybe you need to start by reading with them (regardless of their age and reading ability). Sharing a book together can be really special - you can read or listen together.

In the next few pages, we've made some suggestions on how to introduce reading to non-readers, and then illustrated some potential journeys that a child could take.

These are just ideas - you'll find your own!

We hope this has given you some ideas to help get your kids more interested in reading. However they respond, keep trying. To quote J. K. Rowling...

**“If you don't like to read, you haven't found the right book.”**

# Possible reading journeys



## Ideas to get kids started with reading for pleasure

### Comics and magazines

These are great for reluctant or struggling readers, as content is accessible in bite-sized chunks. Although pricey, comics and magazines often have good trial offers; you could also club together with other families or work colleagues and run a swap system (this works particularly well with material that doesn't date).



#### ***The Week Junior***

This weekly magazine is a hit with kids in KS2 and up. There are snappy articles on current affairs as well as fun stories about things like incredible pets, big Lego towers and record-breaking waves. There are also sections on gaming, new films, sports and puzzles.



#### ***The Phoenix***

Enjoyable for kids from KS1 and up, these comics are packed with short strips created by popular authors/illustrators. Less fluent readers will enjoy the visual feast. Some of the strips have their own full-length books so there's a natural follow-on if your child is really hooked!

### Choose Your Own Adventure books (also Choose Which Way, You're the Hero)

These books make reading a game. Choose what you want to do at the end of each section, and see if your choices lead you to success or catastrophe! They give less confident readers the chance to feel accomplished when they complete a book.



#### ***IHero series by Steve Barlow and Steve Skidmore***

There are so many in this series, lots of illustrations, fun stories to become a part of like Hercules, Unicorn, Space Rescue and on and on. Check the recommended age with each title. Some are aimed at a higher age group.



#### ***Choose Your Destiny: Star Wars. A Han & Chewie Adventure by Cavan Scott***

Combining a popular film tie-in AND Choose Your Own = a winning combination! A few illustrations, a feeling you are getting to read a bit of an untold Star Wars story - and bam, kids can't put it down.



#### ***Choose Your Own Adventure: Ghost Island by Shannon Gilligan***

Not the highest quality title out there, and definitely for an American market, but it looks like a reading scheme book so feels very manageable.

## Books that link to toys and games

Books that tie into your kids' familiar and ever-present pastimes like *Minecraft* and *Fortnite* can be a great stepping stone from gaming to books. At Read for Good we believe in making life easy, and meeting kids in their world. If they don't read much, they're probably not going to dive right into a Michael Morpurgo or even *Harry Potter*, so give this approach a go.

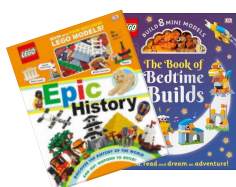


**How-to Minecraft** books can be a real hit. Look out for the titles by **Mojang**, creators of *Minecraft*. Our kids' firm favourites are those created by YouTube *Minecraft* stars Stampy and Dan TDM (I know, we have no idea who they are either!).



**Minecraft: Beginner's Handbook** includes lots of text that can be accessed by *Minecraft* fans because it's backed up by graphics. These books are really easy to dip into.

**Minecraft: Redstone Handbook** is like the *Beginner's Handbook*, but aimed at more able readers with smaller text and more complex vocabulary.



**Lego** tie-ins are always a hit in our opinion. There's enough decodable text for struggling readers, and enough cool photos and jokes for reluctant readers. (It's definitely worth looking in charity shops and on eBay for great children's book bargains like these.)

## Graphic novels

Where to start with graphic novels - there are SO many we love! They can unlock reading for many children, including those with dyslexia. The illustrations carry the story along so if your child struggles to decode words, there are plenty of clues to understand what's going on. Graphic novels can really help to develop a child's understanding of story structure leading to a love of stories, whilst also continuing to develop decoding skills. Going from a graphic novel to the traditionally written novel can be a good pathway for some children.



**Dog Man** by **Dav Pilkey** is a great series for struggling and reluctant readers: very easy text, bright comic illustrations, lots of obvious silly humour, and it's a chapter book - a total confidence booster for kids who hate reading because they can't read at the same level as their peers.



**Percy Jackson** by **Rick Riordan** and **Alex Rider** by **Anthony Horowitz** are two series at a more advanced level. Graphic novels like these are not cheap (about £10 each although about half price on Amazon) but for some kids they really can unlock the doorway to reading.

## Empowerment books

There is a fantastic array of non-fiction out there, with an explosion in recent years of books about great role models from all walks of life. They are informative and engaging, and can be read in bite-sized chunks. They are great conversation starters too. In a similar vein, there are many great books to help boost your child's self-esteem and promote good mental health. Here are just a few examples:



***The Good Guys* by Rob Kemp**

***Stories for Kids who Dare to be Different* by Ben Brooks**

***Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls* by Elena Favilli & Francesca Cavallo**

All of these books have one page of a cool looking graphic of someone really amazing, and one page of text describing why. Do check that these are right for your kids before introducing. Stories of footballers, scientists, politicians, etc. are really inspiring and are super easy to engage with. There's literally someone in these books for everyone.



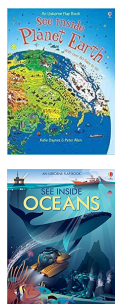
***You Are Awesome* by Matthew Syed**

We LOVE LOVE LOVE this book all about growth mindset - how no one is born amazing, and everyone has to work hard to achieve. It includes great case studies of high-achieving people and how they've reached the top of their game through practice, hard work and resilience.



***Kids Fight Plastic: How to be a #2minutesuperhero* by Martin Dorey**

The publisher Walker books has some fantastic resources to go along with this. We've found this book to be really easy to engage with, and again it can be enjoyed by less able readers because of supportive illustrations. Perfect for the budding environmentalists in your homes and classrooms.



**Usborne's *See Inside* series**

All the books in this series are amazing. Our kids have enjoyed Farms, Ships, WWII, and others. They are incredibly engaging, as well as robust(!), lift-the-flap books. There are about a dozen flaps to lift on each two-page spread, and you can sometimes find jewels like someone on the toilet behind a flap. If getting an older child to open a book is a challenge, try these ones. You can't help but want to stare at the detailed drawing and read a bit of the fun facts.

## World Book Day books

Don't forget to stock up on World Book Day titles when they come out in March. At £1 a pop they're a steal! These books are all chosen to be incredibly engaging - there will be TV tie-ins, short new titles from well-loved series, and great non-fiction. You can see this year's titles here:

<https://www.worldbookday.com/books/>.

## More ideas to help

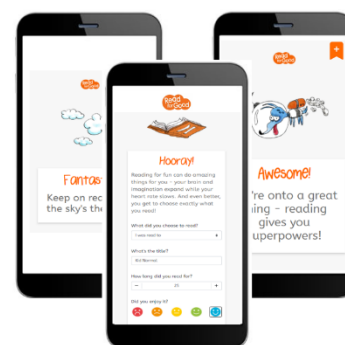
### Read for Good's curated list of reading resources

We know there's a plethora of information out there, and if you're anything like us since lockdown, you'll be fed up with downloading, googling, scanning, printing and more. We've put together some of the best (in our view) and most accessible resources that support reading for pleasure at <https://readforgood.org/reading-inspiration/>



### Set up a family or team Track My Read reading challenge - think of it as Strava for reading!

Use our new tool to set your family a reading challenge. Originally designed for schools, any group, team, book club or family can use it. Just set your collective reading challenge, and then smash it while curled up with a good book! <https://readforgood.org/track-my-read/>



Watch our short video guide on how to use Track My Read as a family or small group - <https://vimeo.com/503391497>

**Read for Good is a national charity that wants children to read for fun - because children who read for pleasure are more likely to be successful throughout their lives.**

As well as running Readathon in schools since 1984, Read for Good provides a regular supply of brand new books and storyteller visits to children in all of the UK major children's hospitals.

For years, Read for Good has seen first-hand the therapeutic benefits that books and stories provide to children in hospital at a time of high anxiety and stress. They want *all* our children to enjoy books in the same way, to help them recover from the unquantified impact Covid is having on their education, social development and mental health.



For more information visit [www.readforgood.org](http://www.readforgood.org)

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