



Celebrating World Book Day: early years

A guide to World Book Day including suggested activities and ideas for your setting

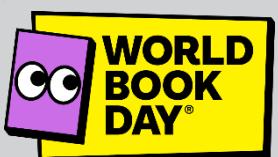
Suitable for early years settings

Resource created by Scottish Book Trust and World Book Day

scottishbooktrust.com



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About this resource

[Scottish Book Trust](#) is a national charity that believes everyone living in Scotland should have equal access to books. [Bookbug](#) is Scotland's universal early years book gifting programme which supports families to read, sing, and play with their little ones from birth to give them the best start in life. [Our Bookbug sessions](#) are free events for children aged 0-5 years and their mums, dads and carers, comprising of stories, rhymes and songs.

[World Book Day](#) is a national celebration which changes lives through a love of books and reading. They are a national charity that operates in the U.K. and Ireland to promote reading for pleasure, offering every child and young person the opportunity to have a book of their own. World Book Day 2026 is **Thursday 5 March.**

We have partnered with World Book Day to adapt their resources for Scottish schools and settings and help you celebrate World Book Day 2026! On [the Scottish Book Trust website](#), you can find all of the resources including:

- Celebrating World Book Day: early years resource
- Celebrating World Book Day: primary resource
- Celebrating World Book Day: secondary resource

- Celebrating World Book Day: school library resource
- Celebrating World Book Day: home educator resource

You can also find our [designated World Book Day webpage on the Scottish Book Trust website](#), which gathers activities, articles, videos, and more resources that have been handpicked to help you further explore reading for pleasure and the World Book Day £1 titles!

This resource, created in partnership with World Book Day, contains advice and ideas for celebrating World Book Day in your early years setting. Throughout, we've highlighted Scottish Book Trust resources you can use as part of your celebration, or to deliver further opportunities to read for pleasure.

The key areas of this resource are:

- How to create a whole setting plan to celebrate World Book Day
- Suggested activities to celebrate World Book Day
- Communicating with families to support all-year reading
- How to continue to support reading for pleasure in your setting, build a reading culture and make reading fun using World Book Day and Scottish Book Trust resources and programmes

Why celebrate World Book Day?

Reading for pleasure is a key indicator of a child's future success¹. In fact, studies show it's more important for a child's educational success than the socio-economic class they grow up in. Babies who are read to every day, on average, perform better at school and have higher levels of wellbeing². Reading for pleasure, as well as supporting literacy and key learning skills, also develops life skills such as empathy, imagination, problem-solving and communication skills³.

Reading for pleasure is a lifelong habit, and it's never too early to start! Even before they are born, babies can hear in the womb. [This short video with Suzanne Zeedyk](#)

[on the Scottish Book Trust website](#) looks at how shared experiences of reading and singing helps babies' brains to develop (2 minutes, 49 seconds). As a practitioner, supporting reading for pleasure and celebrating books can have a huge impact on a children's confidence with reading, as well as making books for fun and engaging!

World Book Day has six key principles of reading for pleasure. They believe children are more likely to love reading if:

- Someone reads to them regularly
- They find time to read
- They have books at home and at nursery
- They know a trusted person who can help them find the right books
- We make reading fun for them
- They are given a choice in what they read

Scottish Book Trust packages

On the Scottish Book Trust website, we've created [a World Book Day page](#) which gathers activities, articles, videos and more resources to help you celebrate World Book Day, including advice on how to choose picture books for young children or top tips for reading with your baby.

Creating a whole setting plan

Key actions

- Arrange a planning meeting with staff
- Plan World Book Day delivery with staff
 - Decide if children will dress up. See [World Book Day's dressing up guide](#) on how to make this accessible or alternatives you can offer.

Key things to consider

- Are our children being read to regularly at home and in the setting?

- What access to books do they have at home and in the setting?
- How confident are they in choosing books they like?
- How do we recommend books to children and families?
- Are families aware of alternative ways to engage with reading – as well as how to access books for free?
- Do we know about our children’s home reading environments? How can we celebrate these?
- Are our delivery and texts representative of the children in our school? Children are more likely to engage with reading when they see characters like them⁴.

Involving families

We recommend you communicate with families ahead of World Book Day, informing them how you will be celebrating the day in your setting and how they can continue reading for pleasure at home. You can also share Scottish Book Trust’s [Home Activities Hub](#) with families or share [our webpage on how to find your local Bookbug Session](#). Bookbug Sessions are free events for 0-5s and their families and include sharing stories, songs and rhymes.

Remind families about the [Bookbug Bags](#). Every child in Scotland is entitled to four free Bookbug Bags between birth and age five to help them develop an early love of stories, songs and rhymes. Each bag contains books and fun age-appropriate resources. Families can find out how to get theirs on [the Scottish Book Trust website](#).

Date	Activity
12 February	Books available in shops. The earlier you take your tokens to a bookshop, the wider the choice of books will be.
5 March	World Book Day 2026
15 March	Final day of token exchange

Finding out how families read

Celebrate how families read at home by inviting them to share photographs or bring in books. Include and encourage dual-coded or home language books. You could encourage families to take “extreme reading” photographs, where they try to read in the silliest place possible! Creating a display of these is a great way to make reading fun and prompt discussion about how reading can make us feel.

Share information on reading

Share information with families about how to access reading, including the [Scottish Book Trust Home Activities Hub](#) and [local Bookbug Sessions](#) links, as well as how to find their local library [via MyScotGov](#) and bookshop [via the Booksellers Association](#).

Host a family reading session

Show families how to read with their children by hosting a family reading session where you model reading aloud. You could theme this around World Book Day or have a bedtime story to show some of the benefits of reading before bed.

Host a book or costume swap

Invite families to visit for a book swap. If you’re planning on dressing up, you could also have a costume swap or costume rail where people can leave or take a costume.

Setting activities

Activity 1: A big World Book Day welcome

LIT 0-01b/0-11b

Welcome the children with a display of photographs of their favourite texts for the families to see. Invite children and families to share home stories in response. You could also host a stay and read at either the start, or the end of the day.

Activity 2: Get to know your books

LIT 0-01b, LIT 0-04a, LIT 0-07a, LIT 0-09b, LIT 0-11b LIT 0-16a, ENG 0-17a,
LIT 0-31a

You can use this activity for any of the £1 books, or any other books in your setting.

Before you read the book together, take time to look at the cover and endpapers.

Talk about:

- What you can see – people, animals, objects, colours, details
- What you think this story might be about

Record your discussion and display it on the wall, or in a floor book. Include children's questions, observations and drawings. After reading the story, revisit your initial ideas. Are there questions you would like to add to your display? What has sparked children's interest from the story? Think about how you can use this to inspire follow up activities, learning and play. If the book features different animals, perhaps they would like to find out more about a particular animal. Or learn about a different place, culture or food.

This activity has been taken from our [10 things you can do with any book at early level resource](#), which you can use for any of the £1 titles, or any other books in your setting.

Activity 3: Using songs and rhymes

HWB 0-21a, HWB 0-22a, EXA 0-08a

You can use [the Bookbug Song and Rhyme Library](#) or the [Bookbug Songs and Rhymes app](#) to explore songs and rhymes in your setting. Why not add a second layer onto the £1 titles by exploring some songs or rhymes on the similar theme?

Activity 4: Create a sensory story

Our resources [Getting started with sensory stories](#) and [Turning picture books into sensory stories](#) suggest some ideas, inspiration and activities for adapting texts into

sensory experiences. You could base these on the £1 books, or any books that are well-loved in your settings!

Next steps

Promoting reading for pleasure in your setting is important all year, not just on World Book Day!

- Our [World Book Day section of the Scottish Book Trust website](#) gathers activities, articles, videos and further resources to further extend reading for pleasure and World Book Day's £1 titles.
- See the [Bookbug section of the Scottish Book Trust website](#) for webinars and resources to support staff understand and knowledge about using books with early years children.
- [Find out more about Bookbug Sessions in your area](#) – this is a great resource for families, as all sessions are free and designed to help families read, sing together and bond.

Endnotes

¹ ["Reading for Change: Performance and Engagement across Countries"](#), PISA 2020

² ["Reading for pleasure at home with babies and toddlers"](#), Waltham Forest. 2020

³ ["The role of home learning environment and emerging insights into the impact of the pandemic"](#). National Literacy Trust. 2022

⁴ ["How teachers can put the right book in the right hand"](#), Katherine Wilkinson for Scottish Book Trust