



Running a paired reading project

A resource to help you run a paired reading project in your school

Age: 3–18

CFE Levels Early to Senior Phase

Resource created by Scottish Book Trust

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About this resource

Paired reading is a simple model; it involves one individual reading to another, such as an older pupil reading to a younger pupil. The year groups involved are up to you. You could pair P7 with P1, or S6 with S2. You could also collaborate with other schools in your local area and work across primary and secondary levels. For the purpose of this resource, the activities have been created around older pupils reading to younger pupils. However, if you are working with members of the local community, these activities are completely flexible and easily adaptable to your paired reading project.

If you are taking part in [Reading Schools](#), the activities in this resource could support delivery of Key Area:

- [1.2.2: Learner role modelling](#)
- [2.3.3: Creating learner social networks](#)
- [2.7.1: Partnership within local community \(Gold only\)](#)
- [3.2.1: Rewarding progress and recognising achievements](#)

Benefits of paired reading

Paired reading helps pupils:

- Improve literacy and speaking skills including comprehension, decoding, pronunciation, tone and inflection
- Improve their confidence in reading aloud
- Develop questioning skills
- Develop nurturing and leadership skills, and gives pupils the opportunity to be a role model
- Develops a love of reading
- Enables all pupils to participate in reading, regardless of learning ability
- Encourages friendship and community across your school or local area

Planning your project

If you're new to paired reading, we suggest starting it with two classes: one older and one younger. We also recommend planning when you'd like to run them and putting them into your school calendar.

To introduce the project, tell the older pupils they're going to become Reading Champions and give them a copy of the Pupil mission letter with the details and a Pupil mission report for them to fill in with any sessions they do. Both of these are available on the [Paired reading toolkit webpage](#) alongside this resource.

When your project is complete you can also give them a Pupil certificate [from the same webpage](#)!

Activity 1: Exploring books

LIT 2-01a/3-01a/4-01a, LIT 2-11a/3-11a/4-11a

To prepare your older pupils and help them feel confident, we suggest running a book tasting with lots of different picture books. Put a selection of picture books on a table in the classroom and ask the pupils to look through them – to add some excitement you could use a timer, only allowing them a couple of minutes to look at each book before they move on.

Now, as a class, chat about:

- Which books did you particularly like?
- Do you think your reading buddy would like them?
- Which aspects of the book do you think younger pupils would enjoy – colours, illustration style, jokes, storyline, characters, setting etc.?
- How do you think a younger pupil would feel after reading the book?
- Which books would you feel most confident reading aloud to a reading buddy?

Activity 2: Reading aloud

ENG 2-03a/3-02a/4-02a, LIT 2-10a/3-10a/4-10a

Ask your pupils to read two different books and ask them for their thoughts.

- Did they like the book?
- What words would they use to describe it?
- Do they think younger children would like it?
- What aspects do you think they'd enjoy? (e.g. jokes, storyline, characters, illustrations, setting, etc.)
- Which book would you feel the most confident reading aloud to a buddy?

After this, ask the pupils if they think all books should be read aloud in the same way, or if each book needs a different approach. Put pupils into pairs and give them copies of Worksheet 1. Ask them to read through different sections of the books to read aloud, thinking about:

- Voice
- Pace
- Pitch
- Volume

- Character voices

You could also use our resource on [Quick drama activities for performing picture books](#) to help pupils warm up and feel more confident reading aloud.

Activity 3: Author videos

ENG 2-03a/3-02a/4-02a, LIT 2-07a/3-07a/4-07a

For some inspiration, you could watch some of the authors reading aloud on the [Authors Live on Demand broadcasts on our website](#). Ask your pupils to discuss:

- What did they think of the reading?
- How did the author engage the audience?
- Did they notice any techniques that they liked?
- Would they have done anything differently?

Activity 4: Develop questioning skills

LIT 2-04a/3-04a/4-04a, LIT 2-16a/3-16a/4-16a, ENG 2-17a/3-17a/4-17a

Once your older pupils have become more confident in their ability to read aloud, the next step is to develop their ability to ask their reading buddy questions and help them respond to a book.

Make a photocopy of the book covers the pupils are interested in reading to their buddies and ask them to annotate it with their observations (I can see...), their thoughts (I think...) and their questions (I wonder why...?)

Allow the pupils to look at each other's annotations. You could put them in groups where they swap their photocopies and add their own notes and observations.

Activity 5: The right place to pause

Ask the older pupils to look through the book they have chosen to read and identify a point where it might be good to stop and ask their reading buddy what they think will happen next, how a character will solve a problem, or how they think a character feels at that point in the story.

Activity 6: After reading

LIT 2-16a/3-16a/4-16a, ENG 2-17a/3-17a/4-17a

Ask older pupils to come up with some questions they would like to ask after they have read the book. Their questions could be about character, emotions/feelings, setting, the plot or illustrations, e.g.:

- Character: Would you have done the same thing? Which character did you like the most?
- Emotions: How do you think that character felt? Have you ever felt like that?
- Setting: What do you think it's like to live there? Have you ever been somewhere like that?
- Plot: This reminds me of another story we have read... Have you ever read any other stories like this?
- Illustrations: Did you like the art? What colours did you like?

Paired reading sessions

Your older pupils should now feel more confident to start sharing picture books with their buddies! Before they start reading together, it can be a good idea to allow the pupils to meet so they know one another.

Sunnyside Primary School in Clackmannshire prepared their pupils for shared reading by asking the older pupils to create a questionnaire to get to know their younger reading buddy.

Ask your pupils to devise their own questionnaire by asking them to think of questions that would help them get to know the younger pupils, for example:

- What kind of stories do you like?
- What is your favourite book or story?
- If you wrote a story, who would be the main character?
- Where would the story take place?
- What would happen in the story?
- What are your interests or hobbies?

Older pupils could use the answers from these questions to write a short imaginative story. You could also work with your local librarian to ask them to help find some stories that match the answers.

As well as paired reading, your sessions could also include crafts or other activities. See our 10 things to do with any book resources for suggestions of ideas:

- [10 things to do with any book \(early level\)](#)
- [10 things to do with any book \(primary\)](#)
- [10 things to do with any book \(secondary\)](#)
- [10 things to do with any book \(expressive arts activities\)](#)
- [10 things to do with any book \(outdoors\)](#)

Concluding the project

Ask the pupils to reflect on what they enjoyed:

- Would they like to be a Reading Champion again?
- Would the younger pupils like to be read to again? Or become Reading Champions when they're older?
- What books did they like? What books would they like to read next?

Remember you can give all pupils who took part a Pupil certificate from [the Paired reading toolkit webpage!](#)

Further resources

The other resources for our [Paired reading toolkit](#) can be found on the Scottish Book Trust website.

- Our resource on [Building a reading culture](#) has more tips on creating reading groups and events
- Our [Reading Schools accreditation programme](#) has more information and support on whole school reading programme, peer reading support and social groups
- We also have a resource on [Running an intergenerational writing project](#) which could be used to extend any paired reading you do within your community

Worksheet 1: Reading skills

Print this page

Your voice is your most important tool when telling a story. When reading aloud, our facial expressions also help people understand the story.

Pitch

Pitch is created when our vocal chords vibrate. More vibration = higher pitch.

Activity: Try reading your story with a higher or lower pitch – which pitches work better for different characters?

Tone

Tone helps show the emotion behind the words. For example, it sounds a bit weird to say “I’m so angry!” in a bubbly, happy voice.

Activity: Go through your story and make a note of what emotions you want to convey. How does pulling the face of each emotion effect how you read it?

Volume

Varying your volume makes the story more interesting. Reading more quietly can force your audience to listen more carefully, drawing them in.

Activity: Find a moment in your story where you could build the tension by dropping your volume, or an exciting moment to read more loudly!

Rate

Rate refers to how slowly or quickly we read something. Reading more quickly can build the tension. But for a calm and quiet book, reading more slowly can make the story more relaxing.

Activity: Think about your story. Is it a fast-paced quick read, or more slow-paced? Is it a bit of both?