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# Encouraging reading during blended learning

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Age 5-16

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CFE Levels First to Senior Phase

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Resource created by Scottish Book Trust

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[scottishbooktrust.com](http://scottishbooktrust.com)



**Scottish Book Trust**  
inspiring readers and writers

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## About this resource

Supporting reading during the Coronavirus pandemic can seem daunting, and difficult to know where start, especially with reduced access to books. It can be hard to know how to encourage young people to read and talk about reading. And challenging to source books and share books.

The aim of this resource is to give you support and ideas to help you sustain enthusiasm for reading. And to direct you towards where to get books, how to encourage reading and how to keep having conversations about books.

We have included examples from schools and libraries across Scotland to give you a flavour of how other educational settings are adapting to the current situation. You do not need to use all the activity ideas in this resource; you can choose activities that suit you.

Two other resources that you may also find helpful are:

- [Safe book borrowing during COVID 19](#)
- [Guidance on reading books aloud online and sharing book digitally](#)

# Access to books

Here are our top tips for supporting pupils to access books during the Coronavirus pandemic.

## Read aloud to your class

Reading aloud is an easy and cost-effective way to get pupils reading, and can easily transfer to the digital classroom and blended learning. You can mix reading aloud in person with sharing recordings with pupils or live digital sessions. If you are concerned about the copyright restrictions of reading books aloud, [visit our website](#).

## Where to get books

If you are struggling to source books to read aloud or share as a class novel, there are a range of different online options to help you:

- [BBC School Radio](#) has a wide variety of dramatisations and podcasts to listen to.
- [BBC Sounds app](#) offers audiobooks for a limited time, as well as the children's podcast series such as [Once Upon a Time in Zombieville](#).
- [The Book of Hopes](#), edited by Katherine Rundell, is free to share and read from the National Literacy Trust.
- [Stay at Home](#), edited by Joan Haig, is free to download as an e-book. The publisher Cranachan have also provided activities to link to the Reflective Reading framework.
- Scottish Book Trust has videos of all the books included in the [Bookbug Primary 1 Family Bag](#) and the [Read Write Count Primary 2](#) and [Primary 3 bag](#) being read aloud. These are available on our website and on [YouTube](#) to share with pupils.
- Scottish Book Trust has the graphic novel [Earth Planet Universe](#), free to download as a PDF with accompanying resources.
- Local library services offer audio books via [BorrowBox](#) or [Libby](#) as well as e-lending services. Check what is available in your local area.

You can use the [digital reading passports](#) available through the [First Minister's Reading Challenge](#) to record this and other reading, individually or as a class. Pupils will have a great sense of achievement seeing their progression and the reading passport fill! [Register now](#) to take part in the challenge and access free resources.

## Reading assemblies

If you are hosting online or in person assemblies, these are an ideal opportunity for you to promote and share books on a regular basis. They are the perfect place to read books aloud to pupils, to ensure all children have access to books. This could

be a picture book, a poem, or a chapter from a novel. Other ideas for celebrating books in your assembly include:

- A book recommendation section, where a pupil or staff member can recommend one of their favourite reads.
- A meet with a literary character (one of the teachers in disguise).
- A meet with another school, sharing recommendations.

### **Books in the community**

During lockdown, [Eastertoun Primary School](#) left a box of learning and book resources in their local supermarket for families to take home whilst doing their shopping. Updated each week, the box contained writing supplies as well as books to read. Partnerships like this are a great way of getting resources to pupils, and they make reading visible to the community.

### **Alternative reading**

The current situation offers the opportunity to encourage pupils to explore different formats and types of reading, and link to different curricular areas.

- Looking at a recipe could link to mathematics, but also science. Encourage pupils to keep an observation journal of baking or cooking.
- Encourage pupils to look at instruction manuals around their home. These are often complicated, and sometimes hard to understand. Ask them to rewrite them more clearly, and design a better format or layout.
- Books come in a variety of genres and formats- encourage pupils to find more non-fiction to read, perhaps linking to a specific topic you are looking at during a lesson.

### **24-hour read**

An activity that can help pupils think of their reading more broadly, and which is great for generating conversations on what we mean by “reading”, is a 24-hour read. Ask pupils to record everything they read in a 24-hour period, from worksheets, to titles on a TV programme, to cereal packets or instructions. Bring your class together and talk about the variety of reading they have been doing without realising it. Discussion questions could include:

- What surprised them most about the 24-hour read?
- What was the most fun thing to read?
- Was there anything they think they missed or didn't record?

# Engaging with reading

You can still encourage children and young people to engage with books and reading even when access to physical copies of books is restricted. Here are some activities to help you engage pupils with reading.

## **Drop everything and read**

Holding a regular ‘drop everything and read’, where everyone drops whatever they are doing and reads for a set period, can be a great way to create a buzz around reading. Setting a time each week can also help sustain continuity between home and school, and will help pupils adjust to a new school routine by offering something familiar and enjoyable.

To continue a ‘drop everything and read’ digitally, you could share photos or videos of staff members “dropping everything to read” at a given time, perhaps in unusual places or timings. For example, whilst walking the dog or part way through their lunch or tea break. Alternatively, you could create a digital “drop everything and read” klaxon and sound it throughout the week to keep pupils excited about reading (and keep them on their toes!).

## **Extreme reading**

Extreme reading is a great way to get pupils interested in books, especially reluctant readers, and a great way to create a feeling of community whilst we are apart. Hold a competition to see who can be photographed reading in the most obscure or entertaining location (within current guidelines and restrictions). You could take this as an opportunity to discuss what we might mean by “extreme” and how our perceptions might have changed over the last year. For example, “extreme” might now be reading in the bath, rather than on top of a mountain.

Alternatively, you could reframe this challenge as a “less-extreme reading challenge” and encourage pupils to read books whilst they are doing daily activities or exercise.

## **Create a reading space**

Many schools have reading nooks or cosy reading spaces in the classroom to encourage reading. You can encourage pupils to create their own cosy reading nook at home. Remind pupils and families it does not take much- a blanket and a cushion (or a duvet) is enough to make a cosy space to snuggle up in, or reposition a chair to lean against, or move to a different room to read in.

Alternatively, you can ask pupils to design or draw their ideal reading nook or corner, and run the activity as a design challenge. Encourage pupils’ imagination to run free- what would their perfect reading corner look like? Findochty Primary School set pupils this challenge, with the aim that some of the design could become a reality when they return to school!

## **Encourage pupils to interact with authors**

Interacting with authors is a great way to keep pupils enthused about reading. Many authors have their own blogs, website or Twitter accounts and will speak on a personal level about their work or keep fans up-to date. Encourage pupils to find out the latest news from the author they are reading (or have read recently).

You can also direct pupils towards our [Authors Live on Demand](#) events, where they can hear from a variety of authors on their writing and reading life. Remind parents and carers that Authors Live is also available to watch on [BBC iPlayer](#).

## **50 Word Fiction**

Scottish Book Trust runs the [50 Word Fiction competition](#), with a new writing prompt monthly. You can share our monthly prompt with pupils and families, and encourage them to write a 50-word story together, or create your own to link to a specific curricular area or topic you are working on. Encourage pupils and families to write a story together, and perhaps talk about stories or books that have inspired them.

## **Hold a Bookbug Picture Book Prize vote**

Taking part in a national vote is a great way to celebrate reading. Although official votes for this year's [Bookbug Picture Book Prize](#) closed on 5 February 2021, you can still [watch our online video readings of each book](#) and hold your own classroom vote! Scottish Book Trust offer [some great activity ideas](#) to help you get excited about voting. This would be a great project to run as pupils return to the classroom to support pupil voice and to help pupils settle into working together again.

## **Create a book throwing video**

For a fun activity to connect pupils and staff whilst they are apart, ask staff and pupils to film themselves catching and then throwing on a book (e.g. comes in from the right, out to the left). These can then be edited together to make it look like everyone is "passing" on a book. This is a fun way to engage pupils in books and reading!

# **Talking about reading**

Talk to pupils about their reading, and have conversations about books and their reading life. You can also share your reading experiences, for example, sharing that many of us are struggling to concentrate on books or reading now as [research by the Scottish Book Trust has found](#). On the other hand, pupils might find reading a comfort right now or found they have more time to read. Regardless of whether pupils have access to books, you can still talk about books and reading.

## **Meaningful conversations**

Set aside dedicated time to talk to pupils about books. Ask pupils what they are reading for pleasure, enjoying, or not enjoying reading, or what they would like to

read as they return to school. This conversation could be broadened to include media texts and what pupils are watching, as well as physically reading.

Once you have established what pupils like, introduce them to strategies for choosing new material. This might be challenging with limited access to physical resources, but there are resources available to help:

- Use our [Bookzilla App](#) with secondary pupils to help them find new materials and explore new genres.
- Encourage pupils to read first chapters of books via websites such as [LoveReading4Kids](#).
- Share [free e-books](#) across a range of genres, and discuss with your pupils which they enjoyed most (or least) and why.

You could also use a class vote- to find your first class read when pupils return- as a way to start conversations around books, and what pupils would like to read. This might also help you to understand what books or genres pupils have missed whilst learning from home.

### **First lines**

This activity is a great way to introduce pupils to new books, and a way to explore different genres (even if they are not yet able to read the whole book!).

Create a worksheet with a variety of different first lines. Ask pupils to rate the first line of novels from one to five; five being 'I would read on', and one being 'I would put this book down and move onto something else'. Make sure you include a range of genres and reading levels. These can be discussed together as a class, or you can ask families to look at the first lines together and talk about which they would like to read.

### **Reading videos**

Staff at St John's Primary School made videos for pupils talking about their favourite read during lockdown. Pupils loved hearing from teachers, and pupils shared their own reading videos too. They also introduced "Wellbeing Wednesday" with a focus on reading for pleasure and conversations on books. Find out more in [their case study](#).

### **60 second sell**

In this activity, pupils have 60 seconds to "sell" or encourage listeners to read a book. It could be a book they have currently read, or perhaps a favourite book they read last year. This activity is flexible and can work online or in person, and is adaptable for a blended learning classroom. You can either ask each pupil to present in turn, or spread the 60 second sell presenters out across a week or month. After the 60 second sell, encourage pupils to ask questions of the presenter and talk about the book. You could also encourage pupils to do this activity at home with family, either in person or on a video call with distant family members.