



10 things to do with any book (early level)

Fun, creative activities for early years settings, classrooms or libraries

Age 3–5

CFE Early Level

Resource created by Scottish Book Trust

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About this resource

The activities in this resource are intended to help staff in early years settings plan playful activities based on picture books. Using books to inspire play will help make stories more exciting, relevant and meaningful for children. All the activities in this resource can be adapted to suit different picture books. The activities are best suited to 3–5 year-olds.

Ideas and activities

Activity 1: Get to know the book

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

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.

Activity 2: Movement and actions

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

Adding in simple actions and movement can bring the book to life and encourage children to engage with the story. Think about how the different characters might move and how they would act. If there are animals in the story, can children move like that animal? Describe in detail how the animal moves and encourage them to try it out. Can the children imagine that they are performing certain actions either featured in the story or that a character might do?

Activity 3: Make it musical

EXA 0-17a, EXA 0-18a, SCN 0-11a

You can add music to any picture book. Think about linking songs and rhymes to the story or the illustrations. For themed ideas, visit [Bookbug's Song and Rhyme Library](#).

Rhyming books naturally sound musical when you read them aloud. To draw this out, and really bring the book to life, try bringing musical concepts like louder and quieter and faster and slower into your reading. You could also try adding a simple tune and singing part of the story.

You can also add in musical elements by asking children to help make sound effects throughout the story. Here are some examples:

- voices e.g. animal sounds, natural sounds (grass swishing, mud squelching)
- simple instruments, including homemade shakers
- loose parts 'percussion' – try sticks, shells, wood blocks, small items in bottles, kitchen utensils
- body movement e.g. stamping feet, clapping hands

Activity 4: Loose parts play

SCN 0-15a

Think about how the loose parts in your setting can link to the story. Loose parts can enable children to incorporate concepts from the story into their play. Objects could

include kitchen utensils, fabrics, natural resources, cardboard boxes, buttons, brushes – anything you have. There are lots of ways to use real objects, for example you could:

- create a role play area based on a story, and provide a range of loose parts for children to experiment with
- leave objects in different areas of the nursery to allow children to explore them at their own pace
- create a box or basket of items loosely linked to a story

For ideas of what to provide, visit [Play Scotland](#).

Activity 5: Take it outdoors

SOC 0-07a, SOC 0-08a, HWB 0-25a

You can read a story anywhere and sharing a book outside will change the children's experience of the story. Think about how you can use an outside space to link in with the story – does the landscape or local area reflect any part of the story?

Taking your story outdoors also links in with physical activity and movement. Rather than staying in one spot to read a story, think about reading a few pages and then moving. This could be a great opportunity to link in some of the earlier 'movement and actions' ideas.

Once children are familiar with a story, try planning a picture trail or treasure hunt based on the book. Hide images or items from the story around the outdoor space or on a walking route. It can help to provide a sheet showing children what to keep a look out for along the way. This is also a great way to re-tell a story, providing you have placed the pictures or items in order.

For more outdoors idea, see our resource on [10 things to do with any book outdoors](#).

Activity 6: Play a game

HWB 0-23a, HWB 0-24a

It's easy to adapt traditional games to tie in with almost any story. Here are a few examples:

I Spy - 'I spy with my little eye, something coloured blue'. Ask what other blue objects there are on the page. You could also use this game to develop an awareness of sounds and ask them to choose 'something beginning with... or something that rhymes with...' Give children a chance to lead the game too.

What's The Time Mr. Wolf - based on the classic game 'What's the Time Mr Wolf. Is there a character in the book whose name you could use instead of 'Mr Wolf'?

Simon Says - use a character's name from the book instead of Simon. Try to relate the actions called by the leader to the story. This is a great way for children to think about different things that the character might say or do.

Activity 7: Prepare for a character visit

LIT 0-01c, HWB 0-19a

Which character would you like to invite to your setting for the day? Involve children in planning. For example, what would they need to provide for the character to make him or her feel at home? You could:

- make invitations to send to the character
- plan games and activities
- sing a song to welcome the character
- prepare a themed snack,
- decorate your room, or a corner of it

Activity 8: Make words meaningful

LIT 0-01a, LIT 0-10a, LIT 0-11a, LIT 0-20a, ENG 0-12a, LIT 0-13a, LIT 0-21a

Think about which words in the story may be new or less familiar to the children. Talk about new words and link them to the story. This will help children to understand their meaning. Use the new words in your conversations with children. Using a new word in different contexts will help children grasp the new word. If the new word features in a song or rhyme, then sing or say with the children several times. Songs and rhymes are a great way to help make language meaningful to children. Visit [Bookbug's Song and Rhyme Library](#).

Try writing the new word on a large piece of paper to display, or in a floorbook. Include a picture to represent the word's meaning. You could create a mindmap documenting the children's use of the word. Write new words up and create a display around your setting. Add pictures which describe the word's meaning for children.

Activity 9: Retell the story

LIT 0-02a, ENG 0-03a, LIT 0-19a, EXA 0-13a

There are lots of ways to retell a story – from simple oral retelling to a dramatic production! Make the retelling a sensory experience for the children by involving a variety of textures, smells and sounds. Include appropriate props and objects which will enhance their experience and understanding of the story. Look for opportunities to include natural materials like tree bark, seashells, grass, fresh herbs or flowers.

Children can take on the roles of different characters and tell the story in their own words. You could also use props such as story spoons as prompts for re-telling. Decorate a number of spoons to represent characters or objects from the story. This works really well when re-telling a classic tale like *The Three Little Pigs*.

Activity 10: Counting

MNU 0-02a

Look closely at the illustrations and look for items that are the same or similar. Count them together. You could also count objects of the same colour, or even groups such as animals, foods or plants. Think about opposites and encourage

children's thinking skills by asking them to count things that are NOT the same e.g. 'how many children are not wearing blue'. Extend the conversation to talk about concepts such as more and less.

Further resources

- All of our [learning resources](#) can be filtered by age, including [resources for 0–2s](#) and [resources for 3–5s](#)
- We have resources on [Building a reading culture](#) to support reading for pleasure in your setting
- Learn more about [Bookbug](#), Scottish Book Trust's programme for babies, toddlers and pre-school aged children.