

1 Storytime fun

Pop to your local library and see what books take your fancy. You could start with these...

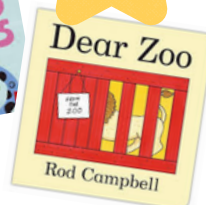
Find a Library – Buckinghamshire Council.



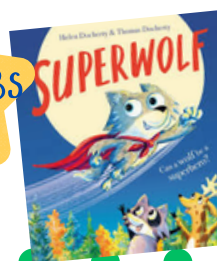
[Book Trust story recommendations](#)



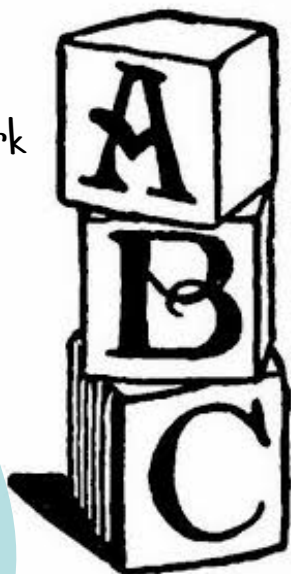
under 3s



over 3s



Fun places
to read!



Remember ABC...

A book beats a screen.

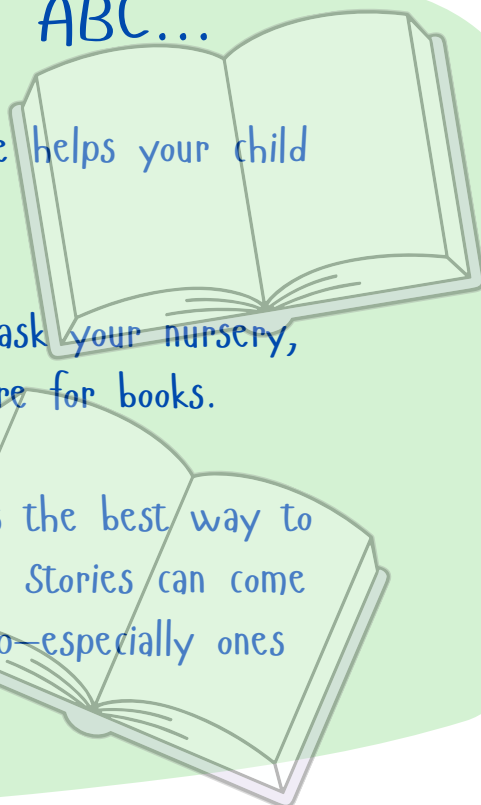
Reading a book at bedtime helps your child relax and sleep better.

Borrow, don't buy.

Use your local library or ask your nursery, pre-school, or family centre for books.

Create and chat.

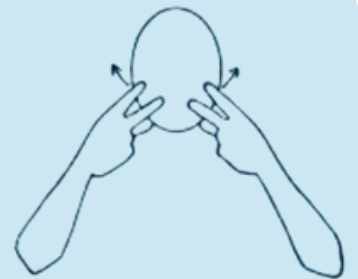
Talking with your child is the best way to support their development. Stories can come from books or be made up—especially ones about your child!



Makaton Signs to try at home



cat

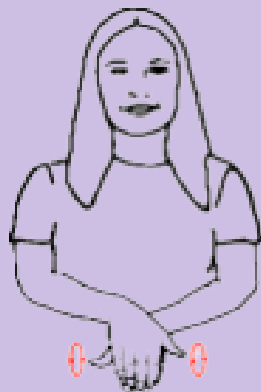


moon

book



turtle



superhero



Flat hand moves slightly forward to 'Good' hand
Hand moves down slightly



Out and about

Heading out to the shops, school, or park can be a great opportunity for fun learning.

Explore these free resources to turn everyday outings into language-rich experiences:

 Tiny Happy People - Tips and Advice: Getting Outdoors

  Walk and Talk Trail - National Literacy Trust



under 3s

Stop and listen —what can you hear?

- Is it loud or quiet? Where's it coming from?
- If your child isn't using words yet, name the sounds for them: "That's a big van!" when they point, or "You can hear the bird singing."
- Get down to their eye level, smile, and make eye contact so they can see your mouth as you speak—this helps them learn how sounds and words are made.

over 3s

Play "I Spy" on the go to build language & thinking skills.

- Start with simple clues like shapes or textures—"I spy something bumpy/round/star-shaped." This helps your child learn describing words and concepts like size and shape.
- Take turns and give time to think. Model how to play, then let them lead.
- As they grow, introduce letter sounds—"Your name starts with 'b', can you spot a 'b' on a sign?"



Early Years
Service

*At the heart of everything we do is
a belief in the best start for children*

3

under 3s

Playtime

What's in the bag?

- Fill a pillowcase or cloth bag with safe, everyday items of different shapes and textures...
- Gain their attention by singing and gently shaking the bag.
- Show one item at a time, say its name clearly - "red car" - and hold it near your face so they can see your mouth move.
- Hand it to them and model how to use it.
- Repeat with other items, but don't worry if they lose interest- you can save the rest for later.
- As their language grows, take turns choosing items and naming them. Extend their vocabulary by adding describing words—"Yes, the spiky brush!"
- Add objects linked to favourite songs (e.g. spider, star, bus) and sing together. Try classics like:

🕷️ Incy Wincy Spider ★ Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star 🚌 The Wheels on the Bus
What about songs and rhymes from your own childhood?

Memory games

over 3s

Memory games are a fun way to build your child's attention and language skills.

- Choose a few familiar items and place them on a table or the floor. Talk about each one, then cover them with a towel.
- Ask your child to remember two hidden items. Uncover and check together.
- Talk about colours, shapes, and sizes "The cup is blue," "The book is small."
- Next, cover the items and secretly remove one. Say a rhyme like "No peeking, no looking!" and ask your child to guess what's missing. Let them take turns removing objects too!
- This simple game helps build memory, vocabulary, and observation skills—all through play.



Mealtimes

4

Create a Calm Environment

- Reduce distractions like screens and loud noises.
- Set a peaceful tone for mealtime.



Get Your Child Involved

- Let them help set the table.
- Ask questions like 'How many cups do we need?'



Eat Together

- Model how to eat, use cutlery, and show good manners.
- Children learn by watching and copying.



Avoid Pressure

- Don't focus on how much your child eats.
- Avoid using treats as bribes or rewards.
- Keep the atmosphere relaxed and friendly.



Talk and Listen

- Comment on and describe your food as you eat: 'These are crunchy carrots.'
- Share happy moments from the day.
- Play games like 'I Spy' or 'What am I thinking of?'



Include Them in Meal Prep

- Let them help prepare meals and snacks.
- Talk about where food comes from and how it changes when cooked.
- Kids are more likely to try food they helped make.



Bath time

Make bath time
calm and relaxing..
splashy and fun.

5

under 3s

- Create a warm, quiet space and check the room and water temperature.
- Encourage independence—can your child pull off their socks or trousers?
- Add simple toys like jugs, spoons, and washable dolls for playful learning.
- Use clear, simple language: “You’re washing the doll’s nose!” or “Splash splash!”
- Talk through what you’re doing: “I’m washing your tummy,” “Drying your toes—one, two, three.”
- Describe their actions: “You poured the water - it was full, now it’s empty.”
- Respond to their sounds and build on them: “Pop pop - the bubble popped!”
- The more words children hear, the more they’ll understand and begin to say.

Encourage independence

- Make it fun: “Can you take off your socks while I count to 10?”

Explore Water Play

- Use jugs, bottles and cups to explore pouring, filling, and emptying.
- Talk about capacity: “It’s full... now it’s empty!”
- Offer different sizes to challenge their coordination.
- Add toys and household items - guess what will sink or float.
- Try sponges, flannels, and plastic toys.

Add Language & Sounds:

- Narrate what’s happening and offer choice: “I’m going to wash your...” (& pause for a response)
- Describe their actions: “You poured the water out.”
- Repeat and expand their sounds: “Pop! The bubble popped!”

Sing Together

- Introduce fun bath songs o build rhythm and vocabulary.

over 3s

I had a little turtle,
His name was Tiny Tim.
I put him in the bathtub
to see if he could swim.
He drank up all the water,
He ate a bar of soap.
And now he's lying in his bed
With bubbles in his throat.
Bubble, bubble, bubble,
Bubble, bubble, bubble,
Bubble, bubble, bubble,
Bubble, bubble, pop!
Bubble, bubble, pop

Bedtime

Help Your Child Wind Down for Bed

Create a Calm Routine

- Follow the same steps each night: e.g. snack, quiet play, bath, brush teeth, story.
- Talk through the routine during the evening to help your child know what's coming.

Final Steps

- Encourage using the toilet before bed if toilet trained.
- Keep the bedtime space quiet, warm, and comforting.

Limit Stimulation

- Avoid screens as much as possible at least 1 hour before bed.
- Use a quiet voice and keep the environment calm.

Share a Story

- Let your child choose one or two books.
- Snuggle up and talk about the pictures, join in with rhymes.
- Explain that after the story, it's time to sleep.

Encourage Independence

- Let your child help prepare for bed—undressing, choosing a book.
- Offer praise: "You tried really hard to pull off your socks!"
- Make it playful: "Can you do it while I count to ten?"

Bedtime

Bedtime Story ideas



under 3s

Bedtime stories are great for snuggling together and develops a love for reading. It can also help children drift off to sleep as they look at the pictures!

over 3s



Cut out and keep...

<p>rice cakes</p> <p>drink</p>	<p>toilet</p>	<p>bath</p>	<p>sing</p>	<p>read</p>	<p>massage</p>	<p>bed</p>
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National Year of Reading 2026



National Year of Reading 2026

Turn what they love into a love of reading

Children come alive when they're exploring the things they're passionate about. From superheroes and football to cooking, dancing and dinosaurs – every word counts.

The National Year of Reading 2026 is your chance to help your child discover new worlds, grow confidence and build a lifelong love of reading – all through the everyday moments you already share.

Families | National Year of Reading 2026 | Go All In

More information can
be found here:



Early Years
Service

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