

The benefits of children reading for pleasure

By Alison David, Consumer Insights Director, Egmont Publishing

Learning to read and being able to read is so important – everyone knows that. But did you know that just as important is reading *for pleasure*. I mean being a child who chooses to read in their free time for fun and enjoyment – not just for their homework.

Here's an interesting fact: **reading for pleasure is the single biggest indicator of a child's future success, more than the school they go to, more than parents' educational background or their income.**

As well as that, there are so many wonderful things that reading brings to children: comfort and reassurance, confidence and security, relaxation, happiness and fun. It feeds their imagination, helps them to see the world from other people's points of view and it even improves their sleeping patterns.

Did you know that your involvement really really matters? Because research shows that if you read to your child they are much more likely to read themselves. We may think that once children *can* read, they *will* read but this is not the case. Quite simply, many children don't want to read because they don't think of it as a fun thing to do. But I know most parents wish their child would read for pleasure, or read more than they do. Well, it really is possible to make it happen. You absolutely can make a difference to your child's enjoyment of reading and it will bring your family so much happiness.

It's so easy to do!

You just need to set up a reading routine. Every evening, cuddle up and share a book – any book – an old favourite or something new. Read aloud to your child. You might think you are not very good at reading aloud, but it really doesn't matter if you stumble a bit or read slowly. What's important is you are giving your child your time and attention, and showing them that reading is a fun thing to do. You will quickly find it's a lovely time to spend together, bonding over a story.

Short of time?

I know we live in a very challenging world where most of us have very little time and energy. As parents, we are the ones who keep the show on the road, and we are under constant pressure as we try to juggle working life with home life, getting children up and to school, focusing attention on our work, their needs, meals and clean clothes, keeping the house in some sort of order and supervising homework. Parents have told me they feel overwhelmed. The idea of making time each day to read to their child seems like yet another thing to do.

Don't despair if this sounds like your life. The good news is it is not hard to find time for reading, because even just 10 minutes will make a huge difference – and it is absolutely not another chore. In fact, it's a huge pleasure for you and your child. You will both come to cherish the time you spend together.

Keep it going

Children should be read to all the way through primary school and well into the teenage years, because it gives plenty of time for them to grow up with reading and for the love of it to take root and become part of their life. Lots of families don't know they should read to their children as they get older. For example, across the UK fewer than a quarter of 8-10 year olds are read to daily or nearly every day. We can change this!

Helping your child establish a love of reading for pleasure is one of the greatest gifts you can give your child and a wonderful way to spend quality time together.

Alison David, author of *Help Your Child Love Reading*



Children who read for pleasure are not only better at English but are also better at maths. Children who read for pleasure make more progress over time. Reading for pleasure brings a wider vocabulary and enables the child to take on new concepts.

Dr Alice Sullivan, the Institute of Education