

Reading for pleasure

The importance of reading for pleasure is a thread that runs throughout the Reading Framework. Research has consistently shown that pupils who enjoy reading and read independently for pleasure are more likely to be academically successful – not only in literacy, but right across the curriculum. This effect seems to be long-lasting, and also it's not dependent on a pupil's background – pupils who read widely with enjoyment do better at school regardless of their family situation.

The advantages of wide reading are fairly obvious – it extends children's knowledge and builds their vocabulary, which in turn increases their comprehension skills.

Reading with enjoyment also provides a rich source of relaxation, wellbeing and pleasure which can last a child's whole life.

There is evidence that reading enjoyment is declining among children – National Literacy Trust research in 2022 showed that reading enjoyment among 8–18-year-olds was at its lowest level since 2005.

However, an independent study of approximately 1500 pupils showed that nearly 95% of children in Year 2 enjoyed reading after 18 months of using Bug Club – significantly higher than children in the control group who were not using Bug Club.



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Bug Club includes a set of **Professional Development** slides giving more detail about how to build a reading for pleasure culture in your school. These have been created in conjunction with the Open University and Teresa Cremin, an acknowledged authority on reading for pleasure.

How to boost children's enjoyment of reading

- In your book corner or library, focus on providing the kinds of books children really want to read – as the Framework says, ‘anything that helps to establish the reading habit’ is worthwhile, including popular page-turners, comics, books that are easy reads and books that stretch children. You can also make available any book you’ve read to the class – children often want to revisit stories they’ve loved listening to, and re-reading helps boost their fluency and comprehension. Bug Club Reading Corner will help boost your library with high-quality, diverse books to ensure all children will be able to find something they can identify with and love.
- Allow children to choose books that are above and below the level at which they can read independently. Just as adults often enjoy relaxing with an ‘easy read’, something easy and familiar can boost enjoyment for children. Likewise, many children will inevitably find that some of the books that interest them are beyond the level they can read independently – but if the topic interests them, they can enjoy reading parts of the book, studying the images and listening to the eBook being read to them in Reading Corner.
- Spend time getting to know the books in your classroom and use your knowledge of each child to **recommend books**. A personal ‘I think you’ll love this book’ goes a long way. Offer a choice of two or three books you think the child will enjoy, allowing them to choose – and sometimes include one that is a bit different from what they normally choose to encourage broad reading.
- Promote reading to **parents** – encourage them to read aloud to their children at home, to model reading for pleasure themselves, and to choose books that fit their child’s interests.

How to build reading for pleasure into your timetable

- Timetable some special ‘book club’ time – maybe once a week for 20 minutes – to give children a chance to browse, explore and discuss books. This could be part of a timetabled storytime, in an English lesson, or in a slot of its own. It’s a great way to put tempting books in front of all children – including those who may not have many books at home.
- Have a regular scheduled story time – the Framework recommends at least four times a week, for 20 minutes per session. This gives you the chance to read aloud and introduce children to a wider range of brilliant books which will extend their vocabulary and comprehension skills as well as their enjoyment of reading. You can then put the books in the book corner for children to borrow and re-read. Bug Club Shared books are great for story time, as are Reading Corner books.
- A regular quiet reading time in school makes sure that all children get the chance to read independently, regardless of their home circumstances. You can use this time to read with any children in the class who might need support.

What to avoid

- Be cautious about using rewards or certificates to incentivise reading, as this can have unforeseen consequences – for example, children may end up reading a lot of very short books they’re not really enjoying, simply to get more rewards.
- When focusing on reading for pleasure, avoid asking too many questions or asking children to write a book review – this can be demotivating and reduce enjoyment. If you would like them to reflect on what they have read, a quick star rating and one-click review in Reading Corner is enough. Keep the more detailed questioning for your guided reading sessions.