



# SHARING STORIES & BONDING OVER BOOKS

*Tips for mums, dads and carers with  
little ones on reading together*

[www.readingforce.org.uk](http://www.readingforce.org.uk)

*The shared reading charity supporting all British military families*

# Hello

Every day at Reading Force we hear from Forces families who have used books to stay bonded and connected when mum or dad is away from home.

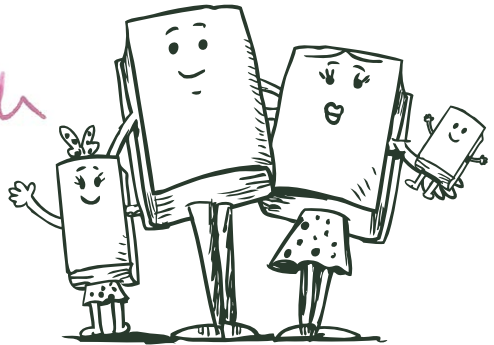
This booklet is for mums, dads and carers with babies and young children and is all about the fun of reading together.

We passionately believe reading with children is good for everyone – children and parents! In this booklet we share tips on how the simple act of sharing a book helps soothe children and provides routine, even when life is disrupted and can feel challenging.

We hope you'll find this booklet useful.

*Alison Baverstock*

**Alison Baverstock**  
Founder of Reading Force



# Why read books together?

It's never too soon to start reading aloud to your baby!  
Babies, toddlers and young children love sharing books.

Reading for just ten minutes a day with your children makes a big difference.

- Your children will get so much out of listening to you read and will like the sound of your voice
- When you read to them, their vocabulary expands and their imagination grows
- Sharing books is a precious time for you and your children to bond – it's cosy, comforting and fun



*It's an enjoyable way to pass half an hour  
or just a few minutes*

- Sharing books shows a child how to read and prepares them for reading on their own

# What to read

- Books with lots of pictures are great because your children will enjoy looking at them long before they are able to read the words
- Young children love books with repetition and rhyme and they can join in once they can talk
- Books with flaps to lift reveal wonderful surprises
- Soft books and small board books are great for toddlers in buggies
- Go to your local library and help your children explore the books and discover what he or she likes

*You can read anything together.*



# How to read

If you're not used to reading together it may feel awkward to start, but once you do it can become one of the most precious parts of your day.

- Snuggle up and read on the sofa or bed
- Have a reading corner with comfy cushions
- Sit close so your children can see the pictures easily
- Link the words to the pictures by pointing
- Let them turn the pages if they want to
- Do let your children interrupt to ask questions

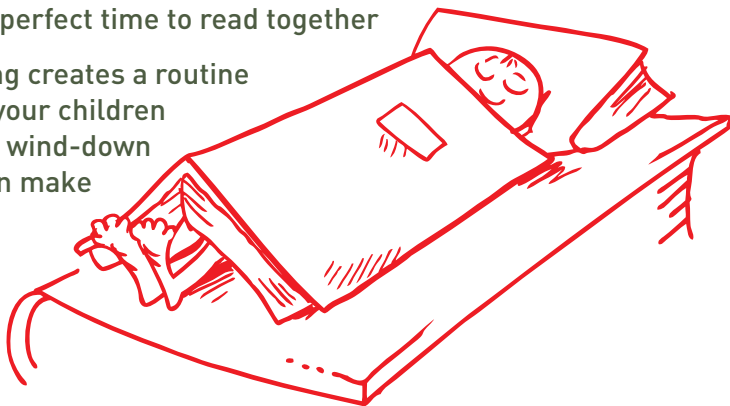
*Try to read aloud every day. It doesn't need to take long, little and often gives little ones all the benefits of shared reading.*



# When to read

You can read anytime and anywhere. At home, on the bus, train – even in supermarket queues!

- Bedtime is the perfect time to read together
- Bedtime reading creates a routine and signals to your children that it's time to wind-down and relax. It can make going to bed something you and your children look forward to
- Some parents like the routine of bath, book, bed as a tried and trusted way of establishing a good sleep routine – which means you get rest too!
- If mum or dad is away on deployment or training, they can also read a book to the children over the phone, Skype or FaceTime, or chat about a story. As well as comforting to children, this keeps the deployed parent feeling involved with home life too

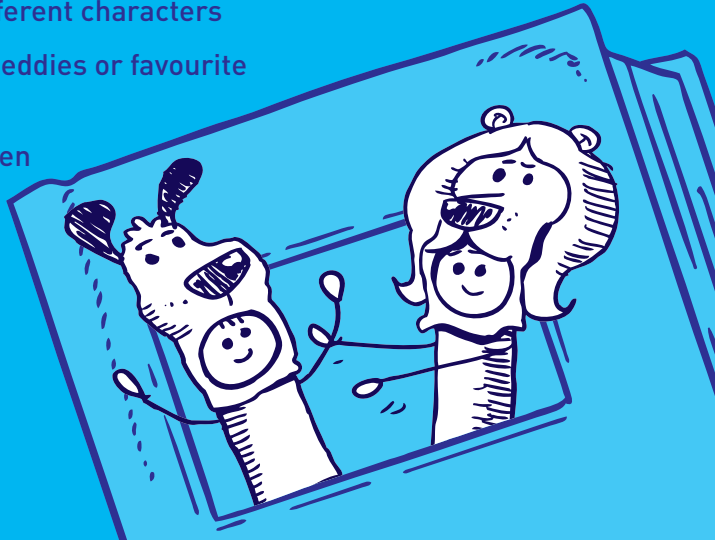


# Tips on reading aloud

*"We always share a story at bedtime. It's great to have a cuddle, go on a new adventure and just be together."*

*Kelly Paddon, military mum*

- Point to and name things in the pictures as this will encourage your children to get involved in the story
- Use different voices and sounds for fun, be as silly as you like! "Woof, woof" when you see a dog in the picture, "roar" when you see a lion!
- Make up voices for different characters
- Invite your children's teddies or favourite toys to listen too
- Encourage your children to guess what's going to happen next



# Activities around books

Doing activities around a book you've read with your children is fun, and can be helpful during challenging times or while they're missing mum or dad.

- Your family could enjoy filling in a Reading Force scrapbook at home, and ask family members away from home to get involved too
- You could post a copy of the book to mum or dad if they are deployed away from home, so they can share it too
- Your children could make drawings or write things down about the book, and put them in a special memory box or a scrapbook

As children grow up they often fondly remember stories read to them when they were little.

Doing a scrapbook or making a picture about the book is a good way to capture thoughts about a favourite story and have a long-term keepsake.

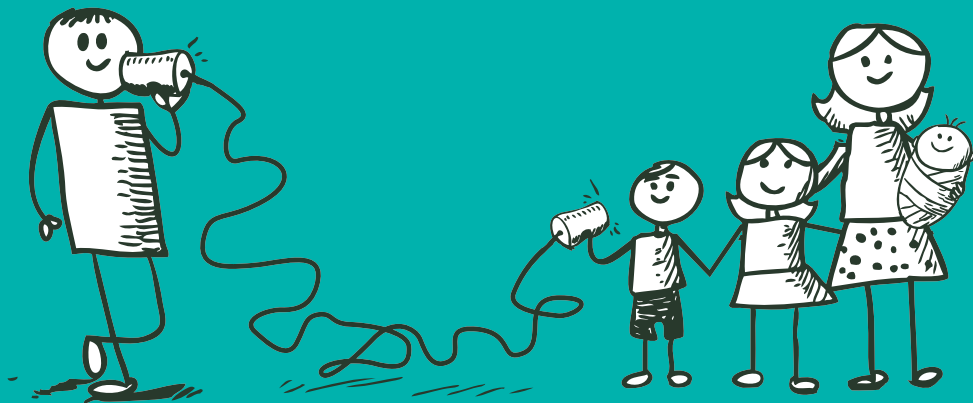




# When life is challenging

While there are lots of positives to being part of a military family, sometimes life can be challenging. Moves of home, nursery and school, and separations from a parent, can unsettle children.

- Reading together can help soothe, settle and calm infants
- This is a precious time for you and your children to bond over a story
- Simply settling down, snuggling up and spending time together can calm both parent and children
- Familiar and favourite stories can be very comforting, especially if mum or dad is away



## Book, tablet or an app?

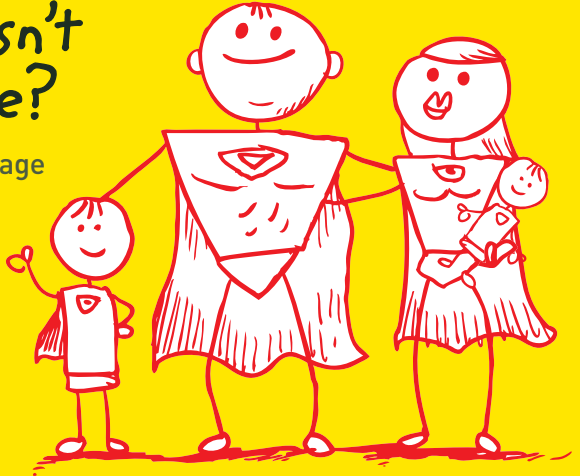
At bedtime, books are better than digital activity. Research shows that reading to children has a calming effect on their brains, whereas digital screens can create excitement and over-stimulate the brain.

## What if I'm not a confident reader?

Picture books are a great starting point for adults who don't particularly enjoy reading themselves. Some parents find their own reading improves, without even noticing it, because they're reading regularly to their child.

## What if English isn't my first language?

If English is not your first language reading aloud to your child can be a good way to improve your fluency. Take turns to say and repeat the words. And carry on sharing books in your first language!



# Useful websites

[www.booktrust.org.uk](http://www.booktrust.org.uk)

[www.bathbookbed.org.uk](http://www.bathbookbed.org.uk)

[www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk](http://www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk)

[www.readingforce.org.uk](http://www.readingforce.org.uk)

[www.storybooksoldiers.org](http://www.storybooksoldiers.org)

[www.storybookwaves.org](http://www.storybookwaves.org)

[www.rafa.org.uk](http://www.rafa.org.uk) (Storybook Wings)

*"I love spending time reading with Finlay, it's our calm down and cuddle time. I enjoyed seeing him smile at certain parts. Daddy loved having a new story to read with Finlay. We sat all together on Facetime so Daddy could join in too."*

**Kat Euston, military mum**

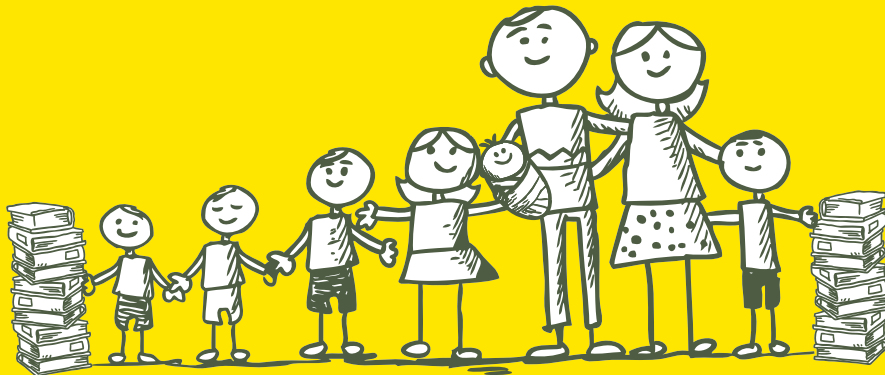
## Acknowledgements:

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Reading Force is a fun shared reading  
and scrapbook activity that helps bring families closer



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Reading Force provides books and scrapbooks to all British Forces, Reserves and Ex-Services children of all ages and is generously supported by various sponsors, charities and trust funds.

