St Jerome’s Catholic Primary School

**Reading shouldn't just be reserved for bedtime**

Lots of children’s books are designed to be soothing and calming and prepare your child for sleep – which is exactly what you want at bedtime.

Your child is tired and grumpy, you’re ready for winding down, energy sapped from a busy day. But what about all those wonderful books just crying out for silly voices and actions or those books that offer the opportunity for really good discussion or debate?

You don’t want to get your child all excited at bedtime by a hilarious performance of *'*[***Oi Frog***](https://www.beanstalkcharity.org.uk/oi-frog)*'*, nor do you want to stimulate lots of discussion from Pippa Goodhart’s brilliant book *'*[***You Choose***](https://www.beanstalkcharity.org.uk/you-choose)*'*. What you understandably want is for your child to wind down and fall asleep.

So children AND books get short-changed!

How many times have you seen the bedtime book as a ‘function’, picked the shortest book you could find or even tried to skip a few pages? Are you really showing your child the fun and magic of books through a quick bedtime read?

Children are often a captive audience at bedtime – they engage with you because it’s putting off having to go to sleep; would they engage so well on a Saturday morning? Or would they rather be doing something else?

Choosing to read over other activities

Part of being a reader is sometimes choosing to read rather than watch TV, surf the internet or play football, for example. It isn’t about being forced to read because there’s no other option. Only ever reading at bedtime subconsciously relays the message that there is a time and place for having a book; that it isn’t ‘normal’ to turn off the TV and read. Children mimic their parents’ behaviour – do your children ever see you randomly picking up a book?

Make books readily available

Having books around the house makes them easily accessible for you to pick one up and read to your child while the dinner’s cooking. Have a book to talk about at the dinner table. Keep a book in your bag for a trip to the dentist. Make it normal in your household to turn to a book for entertainment..

Let reading become something you both enjoy at any time of the day rather than something that makes you sigh with relief as you close the bedroom door at night.

**Read together as a family**

As adults we often think of reading as something we learn to do, something we do when we are instructed to or as an activity we do by ourselves.

Even when sharing books with our children, we often fall into the comfortable routine of a story at bedtime or reading the book sent home from school. But reading can be so much more!

During this current 'stay at home' climate, reading is an opportunity to share and enjoy books and stories as a family. Whether you are a family of two, or a family of seven there are lots of ways to enjoy books together.

**Siblings reading together**

Reading and sharing books with children doesn’t just have be adult to child; siblings can be a great support to each other. An older child reading to a younger child not only gives them a chance to practise reading aloud, but can become a special shared time together. The children can begin to experiment with what makes good reading aloud (trying out different voices for example) and they won’t even realise they are practising!

Be prepared though to hear your reading style mimicked! Making a den can be a good way to make this reading time cosy; a couple of chairs, a sheet, a few cushions, inside or outside and maybe a teddy or two is all that’s required. And a few books of course!

**Family reading time**

Whether you are all sharing the same book or reading your own individual books, take some time to just sit down and read as a family. Model good reading habits; let your children see you enjoying reading for entertainment, talk to them about what you are reading. Children mimic what they see their parents doing and will be more likely to pick up a book for enjoyment if they see you doing it too.