

Reading for pleasure on screens

A National Literacy Trust membership resource

Do you read on screen?

Our recent research suggests that a greater number of young people, in particular boys and those eligible for free school meals, are reading more on screen. However, conversations with English teachers suggests that many are still wedded to paper books. Is it time to bridge the divide, especially now that so much teaching and learning has gone online?

National Literacy Trust research

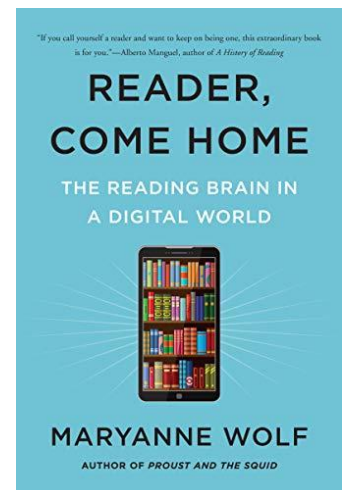
- Pupils eligible for free school meals and boys with the lowest levels of reading engagement are the two groups most likely to benefit from using digital formats. 24% of pupils on free school meals read fiction digitally, compared to 16% of their peers who were not eligible for free school meals.
- Those with low reading engagement are more likely than those with high reading engagement to consume reading materials on screen, potentially providing opportunities to better engage them with reading in the future. We found that 25% disengaged boy readers said that they read fiction on screen, compared to just 9.8% of their more engaged peers.

What's different?

There is no doubt that reading on screen is a different cognitive experience. Remember that our brains are not evolved for reading. We have repurposed areas of the brain used for sound and vision in order to read. Maryanne Wolf and Daniel Willingham have both written about the whole complex process. For example, Wolf's recent book, *Reader come Home* is about the reading brain in a digital world.

Top 5 reasons for reading on screen:

- Accessibility: fonts can be enlarged, background colour can be changed. There are lot of ways of customising the experience.
- Convenience: you can carry lots of books around with you. Access is instantaneous and on multiple devices.
- E-books can provide instant dictionary definitions and access to online translations, which is advantageous for second language learners.
- Interest: multimedia and interactive elements may be more engaging
- Wider participation: easier to publish (range of positives)



How can teachers and librarians best support children to use technology for effective learning?

School or public libraries may offer **free access** to eBooks through the Libby or Borrow Box platforms and apps. These are easy to use and also offer free access to audiobooks. Search online, entering the name of your local authority area and 'Libby' or 'Borrow Box', to see which option is available in your area. You'll need a postcode or library card to register. Then you can borrow a book or audio book for three or more weeks, just like the old ways!

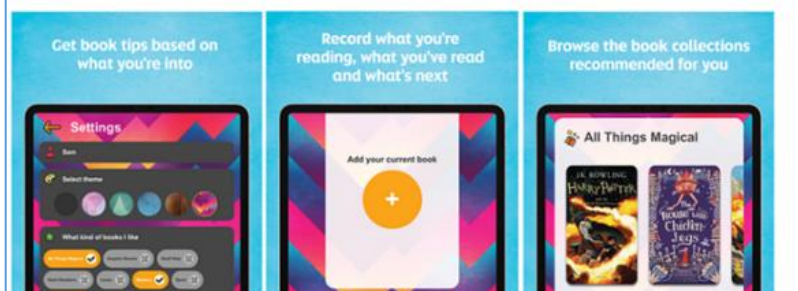


Use online searches and websites for book recommendations

LoveReading4schools tailored book recommendations for practitioners.

Bookzilla is the Scottish Book Trust's free reading app with book recommendations and challenges to motivate students to read for pleasure.

Scottish Book Trust's new, free reading app developed by young people, for young people.



Audiobooks and literacy

Our recent [literature review](#) finds evidence that listening to an audiobook requires the same cognitive skills as reading in print, and also supports the development of skills that children need to read including language comprehension and the ability to understand and retain information.

Some of the research we reviewed showed that listening to a human voice can elicit a stronger emotional response than reading a written narrative or watching a film, indicating that audiobooks have the potential to support a child's emotional intelligence.

We also found audiobooks were effective at engaging reluctant, struggling and developing readers. Children are able to access a wider range of stories through audiobooks, where difficulty understanding a written text is a barrier, with stories beyond their reading level made accessible. The 'cool factor' of listening to stories on a digital device is also particularly appealing to reluctant readers. We have included a few ideas for teachers using audio books in classrooms.

<https://literacytrust.org.uk/resources/audiobooks-and-literacy-resources/>

Finally, we have created a self-access online training course, [Reading for pleasure on and with screens](#) available to our Premium members.