



BfK Basics: Helping your child enjoy books and reading

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Jake Hope explains what libraries offer the very young.

Going to the library

Developing a love of reading from an early age is one of the most valuable and long lasting gifts that any parent can give their child. Nowhere supports the development of reading for pleasure and early shared reading more than libraries. Children's librarian **Jake Hope** explains what is available.

Here is a brief introduction to some of the services and types of provision available for small children in libraries. It takes the form of answers to the questions that parents and other carers most often ask librarians.

To find out more, do visit your local library! If you are unsure where this is, try clicking www.peoplesnetwork.gov.uk/discover/findALibrary [3] and typing in your postcode.

How long do I need to wait before I can join my child up at the library?

No time at all! Even the youngest babies are able to join the public library service. It is completely free to join and your child's library card allows them to begin borrowing books straightaway.

Libraries offer a friendly environment where young children can explore and start their reading journeys for themselves. Librarians are keen that even the youngest children should have the chance to delve into the treasures we keep on our shelves or in book boxes.

Many libraries run a scheme called the 'BookStart Book Crawl'. This is a reward scheme whereby parents and carers are encouraged to bring their early years child to the library six times, after which they receive a specially designed certificate by one of the United Kingdom's acclaimed children's illustrators. There are several to collect and there are no limits to how many times your child can take part. Why not start collecting today?!

Do libraries have board books that my child can borrow?

Most libraries have a specially chosen range of colourful board books, some with touch-and-feel tactile elements that are perfect for parents and babies to share together at home. Look out too for collections of nursery rhymes - some have accompanying CDs, so if you can't remember all the words and the tunes to 'Mary had a little lamb' or 'Jack and Jill', you and baby can listen to the CD.

My child has damaged a book, what should I do?

Librarians understand that children love and are fascinated by books and that for many early years children, that first love can be a somewhat 'tough love'! Young children are learning from their senses all of the time and it's not unusual for books to be chewed, licked, patted with sticky fingers or suchlike. In the majority of instances, librarians will understand that accidents do sometimes happen so it is always worth speaking to your friendly local librarian.

Children go through a paper tearing stage that's great fun for them but of course you'd prefer them not to tear a book. Why not save your old magazines or newspapers and let your child tear them up instead!

Aren't libraries all 'shhh'? Will my children have to keep quiet?

Definitely not! A busy, thriving library is often a noisy place to be. When young children encounter books, stories and other children in the library, it is often the case that they feel excited and like to let everyone know all about their interest and enthusiasm.

What else do libraries offer for small children?

Libraries offer a range of DVDs so whether your child's passionate about 'Pingu' or is a massive Makka Pakka fan, you'll find many of their favourite friends in the library. Libraries also have a range of TV tie-in books including the very popular 'Pocoyo' or 'Peppa Pig' series. Choosing a DVD as well as a book to borrow can be a valuable way of following up your child's interests.

Many libraries run 'Bounce and Rhyme' sessions to introduce nursery rhymes to babies. These are very popular and research has shown the significant role rhymes play in children's early language development.

Most libraries run regular storytime sessions where a librarian will read a carefully chosen story, asking questions, showing pictures, making children laugh and breathing life into the stories. These sessions can be an excellent way to introduce your child to other children and a good way for you to meet other parents!

Will the library have story CDs?

Almost all libraries have story CDs and in those where these are not immediately available, they can be reserved from other libraries so do ask your local librarian. Many libraries have special book and audio book packs so that you and baby can look at the pictures in the book while listening to the story.

Will there be books that reflect children from other cultures and countries and children with disabilities?

Libraries serve everyone in the community and actively look to reflect this diversity in the books they stock. In addition to traditional English stories like 'The Gingerbread Man' and 'The Enormous Turnip', you are likely to find trickster tales from all across the globe. As well as stories from other cultures, a range of books is available in dual language editions. Libraries also support the 'In the Picture' campaign which promotes the inclusion of disabled children in early years books. If you can't find what you need, ask the librarian to help.

My child won't go to bed; do you have any books that might help?

Sometimes there are big issues that affect even little children. Perhaps they have trouble sleeping or learning to make friends. Perhaps they need to understand an allergy or help with potty training. Libraries stock books that you can share with your young child to help them explore and understand issues such as these. Library staff are experienced and have a good knowledge of the books that will best meet your needs, so do ask if you have a query.

My child loved a book with a cuddly kangaroo on the cover; can you help me find it?

It's great when a child has positive, lasting memories about a particular book, but it is not always easy to remember the title or the author's name. Librarians will do all they can to help you find the book that your child wants even with the

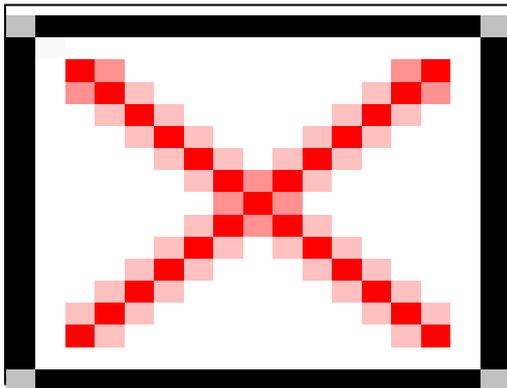
scantiest description ? so please don't feel embarrassed to ask for help.

Help! I need some advice with parenting...

Most libraries have a collection of parenting books that feature tried and tested techniques to overcome whatever problems and difficulties you might be having with your young child. Sometimes everyone needs reassuring and these collections are able to provide sound advice and to offer peace of mind.

What if I have any other questions or needs?

Libraries are keen to be family friendly settings. If you have any other needs, do speak to your local librarian who will be happy to try to accommodate you. We want you and your child to enjoy your reading journeys and we have lots of wonderful books for you to share.



Jake Hope is a children's librarian. He currently works for Lancashire co-ordinating their book of the year award.

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