



Reading for pleasure pedagogy: Independent reading

Practical classroom strategies



“Now there is ERIC [Everyone Reading In Class] own reading time... this has gone to 10 to 15 minutes every day at least. This has prompted more book talk and informal recommendations. The reading chat is constant then, and at other times when children just seize the moment and talk about what they are reading to me and to each other... I’ve gained so much knowledge through them.”

(TaRs teacher, Medway)

1. Establish a regular independent reading time

Set a regular time aside in the curriculum for choice-led reading. Try to avoid offering this as a planned routine during the register or at other times when interruptions are likely. You could hang a notice on the door - 'Come back later we're reading!' This needs to be a quality time for reading and talk. It doesn't need to be silent, although there may be occasions when the children might prefer to read silently. Involve the class in decisions about when independent reading time happens; this is their time for reading.

2. Offer a choice of reading material, onscreen and print

Choice is crucial to foster engagement, so discuss with the class the range of texts and places from which they can select their reading material for this time. They could bring texts from home, the school library, the class library, online... Observing and/or recording their choices over time is important, enabling you to respond to their interests and make recommendations.

3. Ensure time to talk is built in

This is crucial to the success of independent reading time. Reading chat may happen before, during or after this time. You can prompt this by inviting the class to talk in pairs about:

- a key event /fact in the narrative/non-fiction
- something that amused/moved/annoyed them
- a line of powerful language
- their favourite character
- why they like/dislike their text
- other books they know by the same author

4. Seek out a variety of places/spaces

Independent reading time does not need to be undertaken in the classroom only. Make use of alternative spaces in the school and the playground and use your reading area. Children may prefer to sit with friends, lie on the floor or lean against the radiator rather than tucked into the tables.

Independent reading, often called ERIC (Everybody Reading in Class, or DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) is just one part of a reading for pleasure pedagogy. It works in interaction with reading aloud, the presence of supportive talk around reading and the social nature of an engaging reading environment.

Comfort when reading for pleasure is important; negotiate these options with the children.



5. Make time for browsing/reading aloud to support text selection

To avoid endless book swapping during ERIC (Everybody Reading In Class) and to encourage wise choices, offer regular supported browsing time and book recommendations, as well as reading aloud and displays. Post-it ratings on books with the signature of the reviewer can be useful.

6. Model engagement by reading and talking

In showing that you are hooked by your own adult or children's text you will be modelling engagement. Being ready to talk to others about what you are reading will also be effective in demonstrating the enjoyment gained from talking about texts. By partnering with a child when you both share what you were reading, you avoid taking too much of their time and get the chance to listen to your partner's perspective.

On other occasions, you may be discussing with groups or individuals or observing choices and groupings as children read and share their texts during ERIC.

7. Create themed weeks – on particular topics, authors or genres

To support children in finding pleasure in a wide range of texts and writers that they may not have encountered yet, ring the changes and establish themed weeks on particular topics, authors or genres. You could:

- create book boxes by borrowing picture books from the library and other classes, on themes such as fear, journeys, chocolate etc.

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This could be in response to the wider curriculum or simply following the children's interests or discussions that have happened in class

- gather books by 6 authors and enable children across a fortnight say to read, meet and discuss the work of one author. With individuals/groups sharing their reading and recommendations of one author's work, other children may be encouraged to experiment with their writing
- gather piles of comics, magazine or newspapers. You could seek to buy some new ones/find free ones or invite children to bring some in. Explore what is available in school as well as online. This creates another focus for a week. Time to share these and talk as they are read will be essential.



8. Offer further opportunities for independent reading

In addition to establishing regular independent reading times for the whole class, some children may want to read at other times. Offering reading within free choice time or when other work has been completed supports those readers. Play and lunch breaks are also times when independent reading can happen so provide opportunities for this, e.g. by providing picture book/magazine boxes on the playground.

9. Establish a class/year group book club

Offer the children the opportunity to set up a class book club. This might begin with more confident readers and you suggesting a book/text/author for them to read. At first you could model discussion of the text and suggest how to best organise the group, but over time the group will want to shape how to run their group and which authors/texts/themes to pursue.

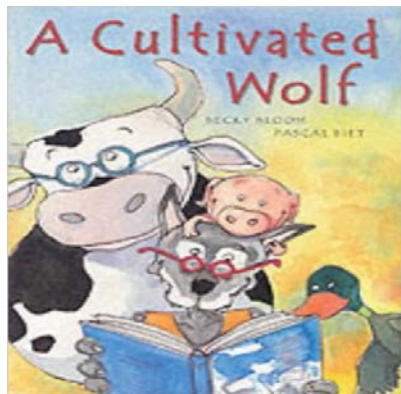
For further details about how this has been successfully run in classrooms, see

www.chatterbooks.org.uk

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10. Use particular texts to inspire independent reading time

Many of the teachers involved in the TaRs research found particular texts useful as a springboard into promoting independent reading time. For example, Tim Hopgood's *Our Big Blue Sofa* was used as a springboard into creating one class's own big blue sofa as a space where reading can be enjoyed. Another focused on *The Cultivated Wolf* by Becky Bloom and Pascal Biet and explored the animals' reading habits as a springboard for discussing their own in ERIC time.



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