

How to develop an irresistible book area and build the foundations of a life- long love of reading for 2 year olds.

Create book friendly spaces that, that maximise deep levels of engagement, where children are drawn in to pick up books, listen to and share stories. A place that children never want to leave...

No matter the size of the environment, every setting should have an enticing space dedicated to books and stories both inside and outside. A space that builds on children's interests and developmental needs. A space small enough to feel cosy and may be even secretive and a space big enough for an adult to join in the fun.

What a 2 year old needs:

- Exposure to stories, lots of stories and some more stories
- Hear books with repetitive rhymes, alliteration over and over again
- Sing nursery rhymes and action songs
- Listen to stories read by passionate adults who bring stories and characters alive through animated voices, puppets and props. Where adult's use a squeaky voice for a mouse, a deep, loud voice for a giant.

Research strongly demonstrates that reading to very young children has a huge impact on young children's learning, including spoken word and language skills. We now know that reading has more impact on educational success than social mobility. Sharing books with loved ones develops confidence, builds strong bonds and fosters imaginations. We want the children in our care to develop a life-long love of reading and be immersed in stories, rhythms and rhymes from the get-go. At two years old the goal is not for children to pick up a book and recognise letters. It is a perfect age to be immersed in a world of stories and imagination.



Top Tips on creating successful reading spaces

Remember a book area cannot be considered a book area if it is placed in the midst of another area. It can however be a portable book area with a box of books and a couple of camping chairs.

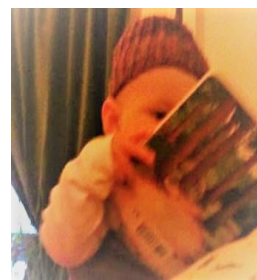
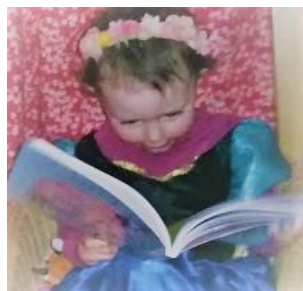
- Locate in a quieter area of the setting
- Create secret, enclosed spaces by using a tent, tepee, wicker arch, a table draped with a cloth and cushions underneath or a dog basket covered in a blanket and cushions
- Add real large plants, cushions, rugs or fake grass, blankets. Make it cosy.
- Vary the seating options – toad stalls, bean bags, log, crates, small sofa. Can the children move the seating around to change the seating arrangements?
- Make links to children's interests, engage with their curiosity by creating a dinosaur reading den, a flower garden or the Grufallo's forest.
- Books need to be accessible to children. Use wire frames, book boxes, baskets, low shelving which allows the front of the book to be clearly displayed.
- Outside books should include favourite stories, the focus book, information books about the natural world, transport or construction. Include a selection of books in the play house, role play area and mud kitchen
- Books should not be limited to the book area. Consider baskets or boxes of books strategically placed throughout the setting e.g. home corner or in the mud kitchen. This will encourage children who do not choose to go into the reading space to look at books.

The Role of the adult

- Use big books, favourite books or new unknown texts?
- Offer a chance for children to choose from two or three books or from the book shelf.
- Introduce the story looking at the picture on the front cover and ask 'what can you see? 'What do you think the story will be about?'
- drawing attention to key phrases and words before reading. For example 'In this story there is a wolf who says 'Little pig, Little pig.... Let's practice saying that so we can sound like the wolf'.
- Use visual aids – puppets and props. Does each child have a prop to hold?
- Use an animated voice with lots of expression, facial expression and gesture
- Use actions children can join in with
- Provide opportunities to make predictions – what do you think this story is about? What do you think will happen next?
- Pause to let children fill in the missing word (predicting words, rhythms) 'Oh help, oh no, it's a'
- Use actions and encourage children to use actions
- Repeat phrases chorally, invite children to join in
- Keep it active – providing opportunities for 2 year olds to move their bodies e.g. climb up the bean stalk, tip toe through the forest
- Demonstrate how to use information books. E.g. we are going to make play dough, let's look at the recipe and instructions in this book to show us what to do'.

Resources:

- Offer a wide selection of good quality books, fiction and non-fiction hard and paper back, flap books, cloth books, pop-up books, books made by children, magazines, catalogues, recipe books, recorded stories.
- Story props (objects), puppets, story sacks, picture cards. For example, if The Three Little Pigs is book of the week provide small world pigs, small bricks, sticks and straw and some information books on pigs and wolves.
- Create story puppets by using characters from the story (drawn or printed), laminate and attach to lolly sticks or make sock puppets.
- Change books regularly to maintain interest and support topics.
- Add a puppet theatre. This could be made from a large cardboard box with the children.



Book loving displays

Develop displays that says to the children 'we love books' and displays that stimulates conversation through the use of photographs, eye catching images (A4 size) of favourite book covers, characters and repeated refrains such as Run, Run as fast you can, you can't catch me... Children relish looking at themselves in photographs. Cover the display board, at child height in their image, looking at books, sharing books, listening to stories, playing with puppets at home and in the setting. Create 'our favourite books' display or 'books we love reading'. Include photographs of all staff and family members with their favourite book. Add speech bubbles quoting what children and adults have said about their books.

How engaging and irresistible are your reading areas?

Take time to stand back and watch children in your provision. Are they engaging with books and story- telling? What else could you be doing? How many stories do you or your team share in a day, a week, a month? What if these children are not having stories read to them at home? Don't leave it to chance. You will know if your book area is successful when you stand back and spy a child quietly flicking through a book, two year olds repeating songs and story actions they have enjoyed with adults, 'reading' familiar worlds from favourite stories with puppets to dolls or teddies, when your adults are deeply engrossed in sharing stories surrounded by children. Remember language used in books is different to everyday talk. Let's give our 2 year olds the best start, help close the word gap and open up their imaginations to a world of wonderful books.

