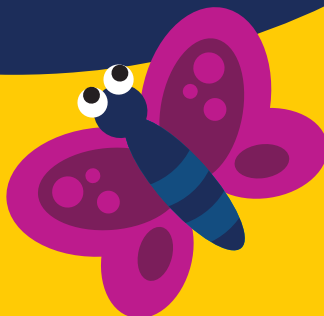


Bookstart Touch

**A guide to enjoying books and
reading with children with
vision impairment**



Welcome to Bookstart Touch

This guide offers lots of ideas on enjoying books with your child. It also suggests a range of books that you can share together.

Not all of the information or books will be right for every child but we hope that this is a useful starting point.

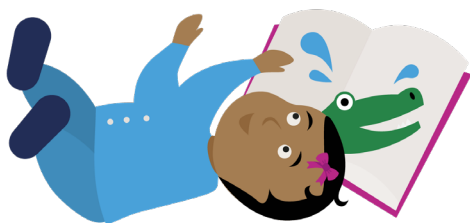


The benefits of sharing stories

- Sharing books develops a closer bond between parent/carer and child.
- Reading with your child from an early age develops their language and literacy skills.
- Books can help to develop a child's health and emotional wellbeing.
- It helps your child to become familiar with books, learning how to hold them and turn the pages.
- Your child's fingers can start to learn about shapes and textures.
- Long before most children learn to speak, they can enjoy listening to your voice. This also gives them a feel for the sounds, rhythms and rhymes of language.

When can I start?

- It's never too early or too late to start sharing books with your child. You can cuddle up together and enjoy books at any age.
- Don't save books for bedtime – share them anywhere, anytime. Try taking them with you on a long journey, queue or waiting room.
- Children will enjoy your comfort and attention as you read. As they get older, encourage them to help choose the stories you read together.
- Toddlers can often be too active to listen to a whole story and might only sit still for a short time, but be patient – with time they'll be able to concentrate for longer.



How do I find the right books?

- This guide offers ideas and recommendations for books you might like to try.
- Use books and rhymes that you enjoy, perhaps including some you remember from your own childhood.
- Your local library is free to join and will give you and your child access to lots of different books to explore.
- Ask other parents about their favourite books and swap with each other for extra variety.
- With time, your child will start to develop their own tastes and want to choose which books to read.



Which books should I look for?

- Books with songs and rhymes are fun and can help children learn about turn-taking.
- Children with vision impairment may not be familiar with things that they might otherwise take in from seeing the world around them, so it can be helpful to start with books that contain things that your child has recently experienced. For example, books about going to the park, shops or doctor.
- All children need to find themselves in books – and siblings also need to see positive images of blind or partially sighted friends and relatives. Visit our website for suggestions.



How can I make sure my child feels involved?

- Encourage your child to help hold the book and try to turn the pages.
- Relate the things you read about to your own child's environment. For example, 'You've got a teddy bear too, haven't you?'
- Ask questions and offer extra descriptions.
- As your child grows, keep books where he or she can reach them.
- Encourage your child to help choose books.
- You might try using tactile stickers on the cover or spine, to help your child find the book they want. You could look for real life versions of things that are in the illustrations, e.g. a teddy bear, to help bring the story and illustrations to life.



What types of books can I try?

Here are some ideas on the type of books you might want to consider for your child. There will also be specific book suggestions later in this booklet.

Books with strong pictures

- The extent to which children with vision impairment can appreciate illustrations will of course vary but in general, simple, bold illustrations without too much detail are easiest to see.
- Look for books with contrasting colours and a clear outline around the words and pictures.
- Clear photos of real objects and people are also easier to see.
- You may want to check that the story does not rely too much on the pictures.

'Touch and feel' books

- Children can start to learn at a very young age by feeling things.
- These books offer extra fun for all children because there are lots of different textures for them to touch.
- They are especially valuable for children who may move on to reading by touch.
- Try soft, squishy fabric books.
- Look out for 'touch and feel' books with meaningful textures and recognisable shapes that relate to the text.

- Take things slowly and talk through what your child is going to feel. Remember that it can be quite a shock to have your hand thrust into an unexpected texture, like paint, water or sand, without any warning.
- Look out for any books with tactile paths or raised lines that little fingers can 'track', particularly useful if your child is possibly going to go on to learn braille.

Large print books

Children with vision impairment may be able to read print or large print, sometimes with the help of specialist equipment. Most books for younger children have large print but size isn't the only factor that affects how easy it is to read.

Try looking for:

- Contrasting colours for print and background (e.g. black text on white background, or dark blue text on yellow)
- Plain backgrounds (rather than words printed over pictures)
- Plain fonts (not italics)
- Matte pages rather than glossy, shiny ones.

In your Bookstart Touch pack, the 'Access to Reading' booklet gives more information about getting hold of large print books.



Reading through touch

Braille is a system of raised dots representing words, letters and punctuation. Moon is a system using raised letters that are simplified versions of the Roman letters. You may want to get advice on which system will best suit your child's needs.

- Children who do not have vision impairment see print all around them from a very early age – on cereal packets, road signs, etc. This helps prepare them to read later on. Children with vision impairment should be given the same opportunity of 'reading' the world, enjoying books and collecting information from an early age.
- It may not be clear when they are very young whether braille or Moon may be right for them when they are older.
- Early years books with braille (or Moon) can help children to become familiar with feeling the dots and making the connection between them and words.
- As your child begins to be aware of braille, sitting at a table may make it easier to follow the dots.



ClearVision offers an excellent library service so that you can borrow 'touch and feel' books and books labelled in braille or Moon.

clearvisionproject.org

Listening to books

- Lots of nursery rhymes and stories for all ages are widely available on YouTube.
- Your local library will have audio books that you can borrow or you might find second-hand ones in charity shops.
- Audio books can help give children a sense of language and can be listened to with other family members or independently.
- You may also want to look out for books with buttons to press (or pages to squeeze) to make noises which bring the story to life.



Make it fun

- Try changing the story to make it more relevant to your own child's life. This might involve replacing words or ideas or adding your family's names.
- Encourage your child to join in, filling in missing words or guessing what happens next.
- Ask lots of questions and encourage questions too.
- Your child may find it helpful (and fun!) if you put your body into the position of the character in the story and let them climb around you to get a 'picture' of what is happening.

Make it noisy

- Try to throw yourself into it! Not everyone finds it easy to read aloud at first, but the most important part is your child's pleasure in listening to your voice.
- Use your voice 'playfully', with different voices for different characters, so that your child can start to recognise who is speaking. Children will also start to understand different tones of voice.
- Try adding sound effects, like animal noises, knocking at the door, the wind blowing, the telephone ringing, etc.
- Encourage your child to join in with noises and voices.

Make it interactive

- Use props! Find objects that appear in the story for toddlers and older children to feel as you read the story.
- Touching real things (like sand or water) is great for helping children to understand something.
- Models can be useful too, especially where you cannot use the real thing. However, they can be confusing if children have never experienced the real thing – there's a big difference between a plastic toy dog and a real one.
- Ask your local library if they have story sacks or similar kits you can use. These are usually a bag containing a book, plus real objects to illustrate the story. Using these props helps children make an immediate connection between the story and the real world, in a similar way to a book's illustrations.



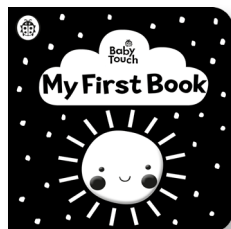
Books to enjoy

There are many wonderful books out there to explore with your child. This booklet suggests just a few you may want to try.

Baby Touch: My First Book

by Ladybird, illustrated by Lemon
Ribbon Studio
Penguin Random House Children's UK
ISBN: 9780241439463

Simple images in high contrast on soft, crinkly pages creates a winning combination in this tactile cloth book. With some added extra shapes to touch on some pages, it is fun to feel and hear.



Black and White: Amazing Baby

by Emma Dodd
Templar Publishing
ISBN: 9781783702121

A stimulating, high-contrast book featuring a range of patterns and shapes, holes in the pages for small hands to explore, and a fun wheel to turn on the last page.



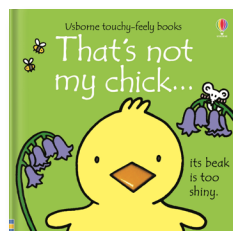
Board books to try

As your child grows, so does the range of books available. Look for sturdy board books, which can be held (and chewed). Look for interesting shapes and textures. If your child is partially sighted, try bright, bold, high-contrast images and look for books which are not too cluttered.

That's Not My Chick

by Fiona Watt, illustrated by Rachel Wells
Usborne Publishing Ltd
ISBN: 9781474942959

One of an extensive series of 'touch and feel' board books with interesting textures and shapes for inquisitive fingers to explore. The series also includes *That's Not My Kitten* and *That's Not My Panda*.



Baby Touch Playbook

by Ladybird, illustrated by Lemon Ribbon Studio
Penguin Random House Children's UK
ISBN: 9780241379134

This large, sturdy book has different textures to touch as well as cut-out shapes to explore, from squishy fish to fluffy sheep. It's brightly coloured but not too busy and includes simple descriptive vocabulary.



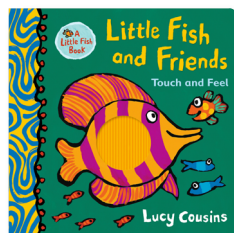
'Touch and feel' books

Look for books which are as varied, stimulating and exciting as possible. 'Touch and feel' books should be really 'informative' to the fingers, with meaningful shapes. Textures should ideally be in recognisable shapes (e.g. fur in the shape of an animal) as opposed to just a patch.

Little Fish and Friends: Touch and Feel

by Lucy Cousins
Walker Books Ltd
ISBN: 9781406385946

Each of Little Fish's friends has something special about them: meet the stripy, fluffy 'Bumble Fish', the wrinkly-eared 'Ele-fish', the shiny Star Fish, and more. With bouncy, rhyming text, it's also a lovely book to read aloud.



Peppa Pig: Puddle Playtime

by Ladybird
ISBN: 9780241375860

Join Peppa and George on a rainy day outing to the park! The book has a lovely variety of textures to touch, from a fluffy duck to shimmery raindrops and even a sticky, muddy puddle.



Living Paintings offers a free service of specialist 'touch and feel' packs for older children.

livingpaintings.org

Book with noise

There are all sorts of books available that make noises – here are just a few.

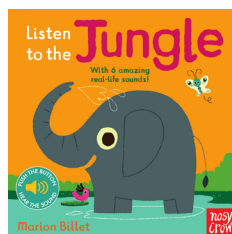
Listen to the Jungle

by Marion Billet

Nosy Crow

ISBN: 9780857636621

A charming board book that explores the animals of the jungle. Your child can enjoy pressing the sound buttons over and over again to hear the noises these animals make.



Don't Tickle the Pig!

by Sam Taplin, illustrated by Ana Martin Larranaga

Usborne Publishing Ltd

ISBN: 9781474981323

One of a series of books combining touch and feel with sound: 'tickle' the fluffy animals to hear what they say! The series also includes *Don't Tickle the Crocodile!* and *Don't Tickle the T-Rex!*



Garden Sounds

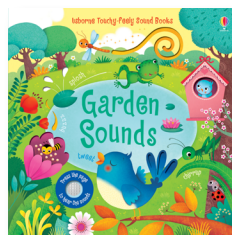
by Sam Taplin, illustrated by

Federica Iossa

Usborne Publishing Ltd

ISBN: 9781409597698

A lovely book all about the wonderful sounds of nature and the outdoors. Children can explore all of these by pressing the multiple buttons on the pages to hear the garden come to life.



Story books

As your child grows, find books with lots to discuss. Look out for story books that contain lots of different types of interactive features, such as holes, sliders, sound buttons, and embossed pictures to really bring the story to life.

Getting Ready

by Child's Play, illustrated by Cocoretto
Child's Play International
ISBN: 9781846438868

This sensory-packed book has multiple textures and clearly defined shapes to touch and feel, from a velvety teddy bear to shiny wellies and even a small zip to zip! It follows a simple and relatable morning routine, getting dressed and ready to go out for the day.



The Wheels on the Bus

by Yu-Hsuan Huang
Nosy Crow
ISBN: 9781788007559

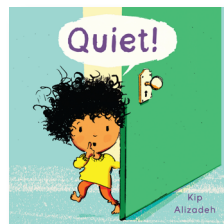
Children will have so much fun joining in with this classic nursery song. A great book to introduce children to early writing hand movements. Scan the QR code inside the front cover to listen to an audio version.



Quiet!

by Kip Alizadeh
Child's Play
ISBN: 9781846438882

This delightful picture book follows a young child with a visual impairment as they experience their home and evening routine through all the different sounds around them.



'Sharing songs and rhymes helps children to make associations with the words and the world around them. It also encourages communication, participation, self-expression – and fun!' **Visual Impairment Specialist**



Look out for YouTube videos or apps which offer singalong rhymes and interactive music. Scottish Book Trust offers the Bookbug Songs and Rhymes app that comes complete with lyrics and videos.

scottishbooktrust.com

BookTrust is the UK's largest children's reading charity. We get millions of children reading each year. Children who read regularly experience better mental wellbeing. They form stronger bonds and relationships. They do better at school and are more creative. This is why we support families to start sharing stories and books together from the earliest possible age.

Visit our website for more information, tips and book recommendations at **booktrust.org.uk/families**

Useful resources:

rnib.org.uk

bagbooks.org

clearvisionproject.org

puppetsbypost.com

livingpaintings.org

Special thanks to:

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)

ClearVision

The RNIB logo consists of the letters 'RNIB' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below the letters is a thick, horizontal pink line.

All the other organisations, specialist teachers in visual impairment, parents and children who have shared their tips and expertise.

Bookstart Touch was originally developed with support from the Roald Dahl Foundation (now known as Roald Dahl's Marvellous Children's Charity).



booktrust.org.uk

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