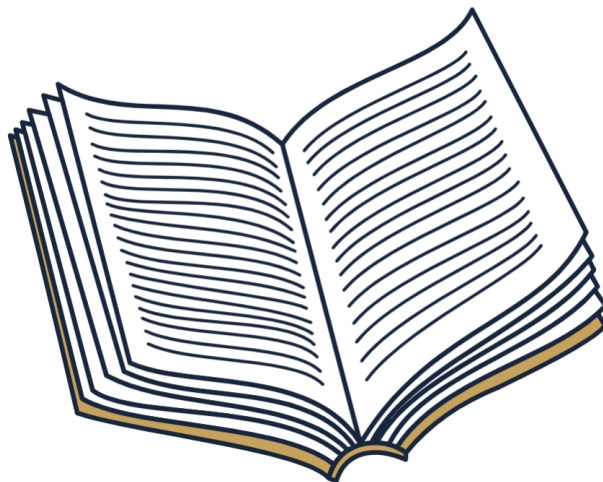




Supporting Your Son At Home:

Parent Reading and
Literacy Evening
Workshop

Practical Ideas and Strategies

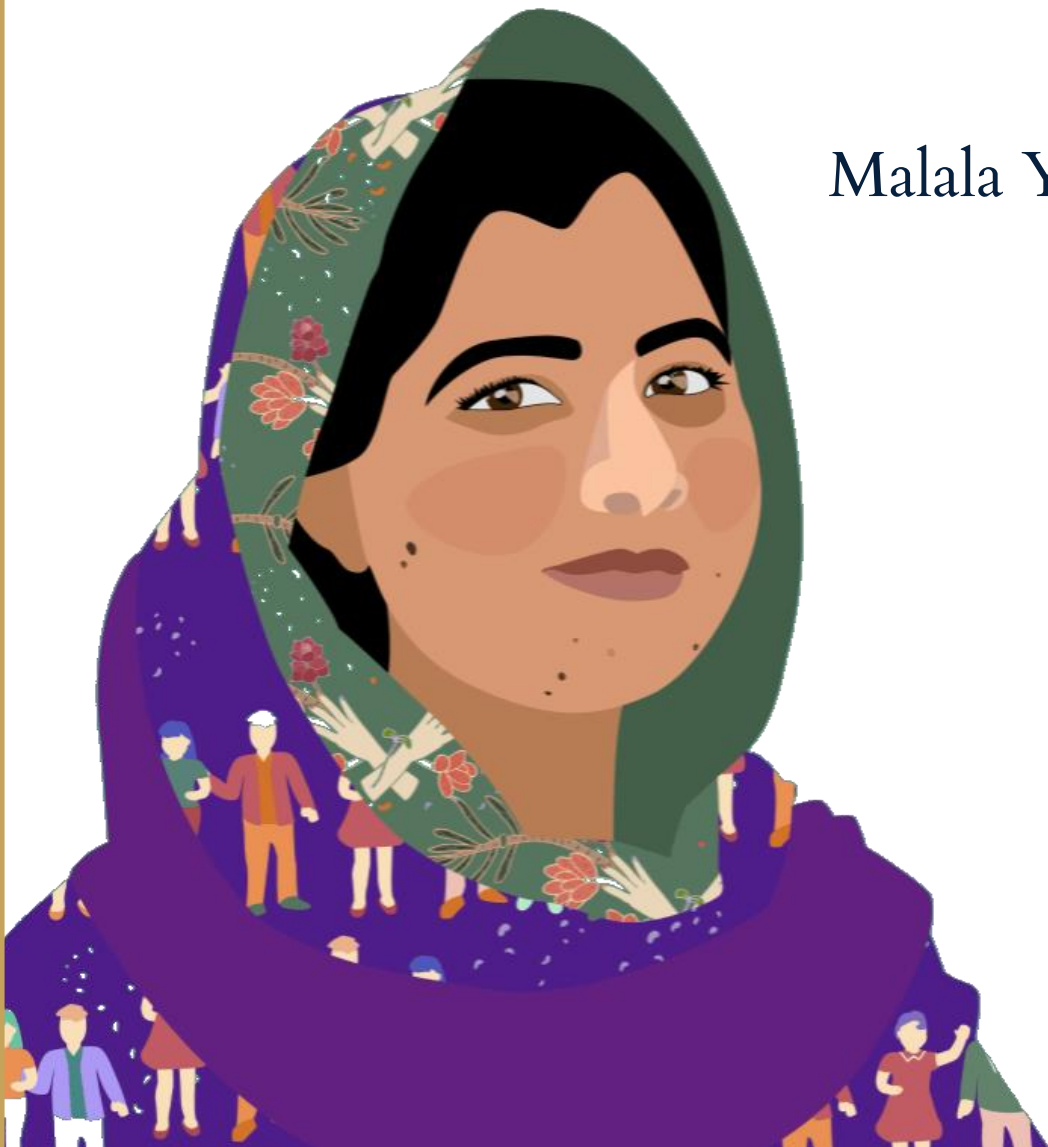


“

I have challenged myself that I will read thousands of books and I will empower myself with knowledge.

”

Malala Yousafzai



Supporting writing at home: exposure



- Try to ensure your son sees you reading and writing. For example:
 - Re-reading a letter as you write;
 - Preparing a grocery or shopping list;
 - Writing a birthday or a greeting card?
- Do you work from home? Have you thought about showing your child any of the written elements of your job and linking that to the importance of writing at school?

Supporting writing at home: opportunities

- Look for opportunities for purposeful writing at home:
 - Read and write letters, lists, messages, postcards and thank you notes – these all provide a regular opportunity for most children to put pen to paper.
- Encourage your son to keep a scrapbook of family holidays and to write captions or brief descriptions underneath the photographs;
- Provide interesting stationery, pens, and stickers to encourage writing;
- Encourage your son to enter writing contests in local newspapers or to write “letters to the editor” on issues he feels strongly about;
- Suggest that your son writes a diary or blog.

Supporting writing at home: investment

- Ask to see your son’s exercise books for all subjects.
 - Ask them about their writing – why have they chosen certain words? Are they happy with the layout? What makes writing in Maths different from Geography?
- Ask your son to read their work to you – can they spot any errors before they hand it in to the teacher?
- Encourage your son to proof read their written work.

Supporting speaking and listening at home



- Structured talk around a **piece of media**:
 - Talk about the **purpose** of a book/article/TV programme and the author's/producer's reasons for creating it;
 - Discuss ways in which language is used for **persuasion**. For example, discuss the powerful effects of language in **advertising** and in methods used to persuade viewers to watch a television show;
 - Explore different **interpretations of an event** that are expressed by other readers.
- Ask questions about the **TV shows/films** you watch **together** (or that they watch alone) – for example:
 - What is this about? Why are you interested in it?
 - What do you think the producer wants us to know or think?
 - Do they want us as the viewer to believe something?
 - How has TV show or film used words and images to communicate its message?
 - Are the opinions in TV show or film fair?
 - How do you feel about this TV show or film?
 - What do you think the person who wrote this TV show or film is like?



Supporting reading at home: quick wins



- Let your son see you reading;
- Take an interest in what your son is reading – if they are enjoying a particular author, book or genre, then read it too and you can share the experience with them;
- Make sure that you have books, magazines, and other reading materials on hand for long car rides or train trips;
- Consider getting a subscription to a children's magazine on nature, sports, science, or another area that interests your son;
- Visit the local library together;
- Ensure your son reads during the holiday periods, particularly the summer.

Supporting reading at home: books

If you are looking for the best of new releases for children, the Reader Teacher does an excellent monthly video about newly published books from picture books through to young adult fiction and non-fiction. <https://www.thereaderteacher.com/>

EBooks are available at Verulam School Library and Ebooks and audiobooks are available at public libraries

There are several authors with excellent websites and/or YouTube channels with read alouds, interviews and activities. In particular:

- Cressida Cowell, the Children's Laureate, has read aloud many of her books, including *How to Train Your Dragon* and *The Wizard of Once*. <https://www.youtube.com/c/CressidaCowellOfficial/featured>
- Tom Palmer, known for his hugely popular football fiction (sometimes linked to war), has multiple free reads on his site <https://tompalmer.co.uk/free-reads/>. He also has engaging and helpful videos to support creative writing: <https://tompalmer.co.uk/writing-tips/>. In addition, he has a YouTube channel where he reads aloud extracts and offers tips. Palmer's new book, *Resist*, tells the story of Audrey Hepburn's childhood in occupied Holland during World War II – it is brilliant!

Supporting reading at home: from an expert



Alice Visser-Furay is a reading expert. Alongside working in a school in the UK, she delivers programmes for the National College of Education.



Alice has provided an excellent list of ways to help promote reading at home. She has five children and understands how difficult it can be in a world of electronic distractions.



1. Find books with a connection to something they love. If they are football fans, look for football fiction for teens – try the *Ultimate Football Hero series* by Matt and Tom Oldfield or Tom Palmer's books: <https://tompalmer.co.uk/>. If they like military/action/war, then try any of Alan Gratz's books (*Allies*, *Grenade*, *Ground Zero*). And if they are into gaming, try fast-paced chapter books or 'choose your own adventure' stories (Tip: try the interactive 'Lost' series by Tracey Turner or the 'Select Your Superpower' series by David Blaze).
2. Graphic novels are wonderful for reluctant readers. In addition to the *Heartstopper* novels which are hugely popular, try graphic novel versions of *The Recruit* by Muchamore or *Silverfin* by Higson.
3. Try Barrington Stoke or OUP Super-Readable books: these are produced with tinted pages, special fonts and spacing, thicker paper and editing to reduce reading barriers, and they foster success as they are age-appropriate quick reads. <https://www.barringtonstoke.co.uk/>

Supporting reading at home: from an expert



4. If your child is ready, you might select a 'grittier' book, then verbally deliberate about whether or not they are old enough to read the book. Tell them maybe they should wait six months as 'there is some language and some blood'. Pretty soon they will be begging you for the book, and you can eventually give in, saying 'since you are now in Year ..., I guess it is okay'. Charlie Higson's *Enemy* series is a gritty series written for teens, as is *Zom-B* by Darren Shan.
5. Set ambitious but realistic Accelerated Reader targets for your child: can they get to 100,000 words read? Or can they finish 15 short books? It can be motivating to work towards a target and then celebrate its achievement.
6. Visit the library with your son when you go into town. Ask your son to meet you in the library and then take your time selecting a book to read yourself.
7. Try a 'phone free' hour. Alice tried this with her YouTube-addicted middle son: every day he had to hand in his phone for an hour. Eventually (out of boredom) he started re-reading his favourite series, *Skulduggery Pleasant*, and then he turned to other books.
8. Be enthusiastic about what they are reading: ask them to describe a character or to read aloud an exciting bit. You might read a teen/YA book yourself; the plot-driven nature of many of these books means they are relatively easy reads – perfect after a day at work.
9. Let your children see you reading for pleasure, and talk about what you read and how you choose books.

Supporting reading at home: from an expert



10. If you have younger children, ask your older (reluctant reader) child to read aloud to them. This is a big confidence booster and it helps with sibling bonding. Michael Morpurgo is a particularly good shared read, as his books have something for everyone; Alice recommends *Kensuke's Kingdom* for sibling read-alouds.
11. Children can also read to pets: when Alice's youngest child went through a 'reluctant reader' phase, she asked him to read to the dog for 10 minutes every day. He quickly switched back to being an enthusiastic reader – and funnily enough, the dog seemed to love it too.
12. Continue to read aloud to your son (even if they are fluent readers – Alice read aloud to her youngest son until he was 15 years old). You might read until you get to a cliff-hanger in the story, and then say you need to do something urgent but if they want to read on...
13. Offer incentives: For years, Alice had a summer reading rewards programme for her children; if they read a certain number of books or pages, Alice took them to a theme park. Alice obviously did not always do this, as she did not want her children to read only for rewards, but it works for summers or for times when a 'breakthrough' is necessary.
14. Another idea is to find the book version of a movie: *Stormbreaker*, *Eragon*, *Harry Potter*, *The Book Thief*, *I am Number Four*, *The Princess Diaries*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Percy Jackson*, *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent*, *Maze Runner*, *Fault in Our Stars*, *Twilight* and *Inkheart* and *Wonder* are all films based on children/YA books. Both of you can read the book and watch the movie together – then discuss the differences.

Supporting reading at home: from an expert



15. Have them pick up a device – an e-reader! Then check with your local library about borrowing e-books or try the Kindle daily deal.
16. Try audio books: Libraries have free, downloadable audio books plus Audible has a wide range of teen books. Many teens like the idea of being able to do something active while listening to a book. By listening to an audio book, your teen will pick up new vocabulary, hear complex sentence structures and engage with stories. It is a great way to begin reading.
17. Listening to audio books as a family is another good idea. Sharing a story together is a fabulous way to bond; Alice still talks about books her family listened to 5 years ago, especially *Stop the Train* by McCaughrean, and they recently listened to *Mort* by Terry Pratchett.
18. Visit a bookstore and allow your son to select a book of their choice. The visually appealing marketing and layout of best-selling books can attract even reluctant readers.
19. Try biographies/autobiographies that interest your child. Recent student favourites have been *You Are a Champion* or *You Can Do It* by Marcus Rashford & *Becoming Muhammed Ali* by James Patterson & Kwame Alexander
20. Non-fiction books linked to a child's interests are a great way to spark a desire to read.

Alice Visser-Furray

Supporting reading at home: reading aloud



- Reading sessions between parents/carers and their son(s).
 - Parents **read out loud** to their son for **15 minutes**, followed by their **son reading out loud** to a parent for another **15 minutes**, making a total of **30 minutes** of reading out loud a week.
- Important for boys to **read works of fiction** because it extends vocabulary and comprehension.
- This does not have to be fiction and can be **anything that requires and challenges reading**, such as:
 - News stories and current affairs;
 - Newspapers and magazines;
 - Materials with both print and pictures, such as comic books;
 - Non-fiction books or articles;
 - Sports non-fiction (e.g. articles about Premier League tables/transfers or sports match reports/commentaries).



Blue Stag Award
Letter of Recognition:
Love of Learning

