

Information for parents/carers: Using Audiobooks and IT to support reading:

# Audiobooks:

Listening to an audiobook is a great way to enjoy books. Your child does not have to follow the words while listening to an audiobook to get the benefits of reading, such as exposure to rich vocabulary.

The SpLD Services newsletter on Reading gave suggestions on how to share a book and many of these ideas also apply to audiobooks you listen to with your child. For example, making predictions about what might happen next, visualising and discussing characters and talking about new words, will help your child develop their vocabulary and other comprehension skills.

# Why use an audiobook?

* They are an excellent way to engage reluctant readers with books and stories, as they are often read by the author or an actor, making them entertaining and bringing characters to life.
* If your child struggles with reading, an audiobook removes the difficulty of decoding (working out the words) and enables them to ‘read’ a book at their interest level, that their friends might be reading and to join in conversations about the book.
* They are great for recapping a book being read in class or for revising exam set texts.
* They can be streamed or downloaded to a portable device, making them easy to transport. Your child might like to listen to an audiobook when travelling or just before they go to sleep at night. You can set a timer on the screen so that the audio will end after a set time. There are also simple audio controls at the bottom of the screen to ‘rewind’ and listen again and to change the speed of the speaking voice.
* Some eBooks also have audio narration, meaning your child can listen to the text and follow the words at the same time. This will support them to work out any difficult words and help with reading comprehension. Listening to an eBook first is a good way to build confidence before your child reads the book themselves.



# Where to find free audiobooks and eBooks

 **Suffolk Libraries** through the Borrowbox [app](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.bolindadigital.BorrowBoxLibrary&hl=en_US&gl=US):

* after downloading the app on an iPad or tablet, register a library card, using the number on the card. This only has to be done once.
* search under Featured Books or categories, such as Children/Young Adult
* if the audiobook is currently on loan, you can reserve it
* six audiobooks can be borrowed at a time for up to 3 weeks

 **Suffolk Libraries** through the Libby [app](https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/libby-by-overdrive/id1076402606):

* register a library card, as above
* the app gives free access to audiobooks and eBooks, some of which are ‘Read Along’ titles

[Audible](https://www.audible.co.uk/) has a free 30-day [trial](https://www.audible.co.uk/)

[BBC Sounds](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p06q9h6q) app is another good source of free audiobooks and podcasts

[Storyline Online](https://storylineonline.net/)hasvideos of a variety of children's stories read by well-known celebrities, along with subtitles of the text on the screen.

Using IT to support reading

If you or your child uses a computer or laptop, there are a number of

free, in-built accessibility tools in **Microsoft Word** to help with comfort

and ease of reading documents on a screen.

The most useful features are:

**Change page colour:** - if the white background causes glare and is uncomfortable, select Design in the toolbar and then Page Colour on the right of the toolbar. Hover your mouse over the palette to find a more suitable background colour.

* **Read Aloud:** - this enables text to be read by selecting Review in the toolbar and then Read Aloud. Once selected, a simple audio control bar appears on the screen, allowing you to change the voice and voice speed. The words on the screen are highlighted at the same time as they are read, enabling the reader to follow the text more easily.
* **Read Mode:** - selecting View in the toolbar and then Read Mode on the left of the toolbar, enables a document to be viewed in Read Mode. This removes clutter from the screen and allows spacing between letters and lines to be increased and longer words to be divided into syllables, enabling greater focus on the text. There is also the ability to change the background colour of the page and to use Read Aloud.
* **Immersive Reader:** - this is available on the Office 365 version of Word or on the desktop version. Select View in the toolbar and then Immersive Reader. The desktop version has the features of Read Mode, with the added ability to choose from a larger colour palette for the page colour. The column width of the text can also be changed, e.g. to make lines shorter to help tracking and the line focus tool works like a reading ruler, enabling focus on a single line, or up to five lines at a time. The Office 365 version of Immersive Reader in Word has further features, such as the ability to colour code different parts of a sentence, e.g. nouns and verbs, a picture library and the ability to translate
* the whole document or single words into a different language, which is a great tool for children learning a language. [This link](https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/education/products/learning-tools) gives more information about these tools.
* The SpLD Service has made a short video on the accessibility features of MS Word and Google, which you can view [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ax1a24sJ6C0) and on the accessibility features of the iPad, which you can view [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYEOeGPN0qA)