



Family Reading Segments

A guide to the reading engagement of
children ages 0-16 in the UK

Introduction

This guide will help you get to know the Family Reading Segments. Our research breaks down the types of families that exist when it comes to engagement with reading for pleasure.

The segmentation includes the perspective of both the parent and child to create a holistic picture of the family. It is based on how people feel about reading and their reading habits rather than their background. Each of the segments has distinct patterns to how they feel, think and behave; so the segmentation helps to give a more nuanced understanding of how families in the UK with children under 16 engage with reading for pleasure.

About the segmentation research

The segmentation was devised from analysis of a quantitative survey conducted with 1,629 families. Where the child was aged 6 and under, the parent/carer completed the survey alone; for children aged 7–16 both the parent/carer and the child took part. This was followed by a qualitative phase that involved interviewing 24 families from across the segment groups: 19 of these families were also recruited to carry out a week-long in-home research task to help illustrate how reading for pleasure fits into the lives of families in different segments.

In this guide you'll see references to the social grade classification of families. This is a classification that assigns every household to a grade, as summarised below, based on the occupation and employment status of the Chief Income Earner.

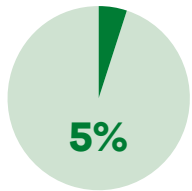
- AB Higher and intermediate managerial/administrative/professional occupations.
- C1 Supervisory, clerical and junior managerial/administrative/professional occupations.
- C2 Skilled manual occupations.
- DE Semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations; unemployed and lowest grade occupations.

Find out more

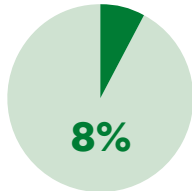
Please contact research@booktrust.org.uk for further information and resources related to the Family Reading Segments.

All segments ages 0–16

Highly Engaged



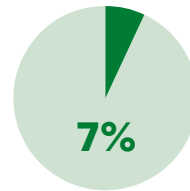
Early Enthusiasts



Happy Habituals



Enthusiasts

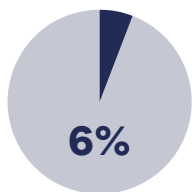


Transitionals

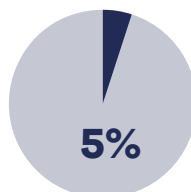


Early Enthusiasts

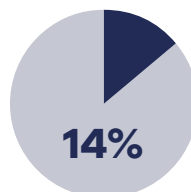
Engaged



Eager Kids



Goal-Focused Strivers

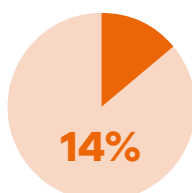


Busy Explorers

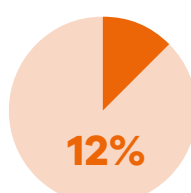


Busy Explorers

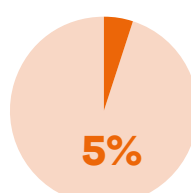
Somewhat Engaged



Entertainment Seekers



Routine Followers

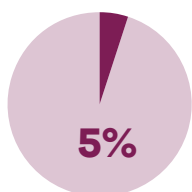


Media Browsers

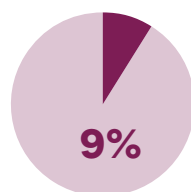


Routine Followers

Not Yet Engaged



Early Familiarity Seekers

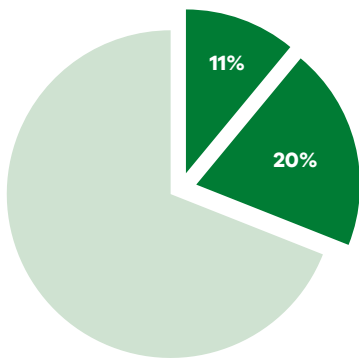


Familiarity Seekers



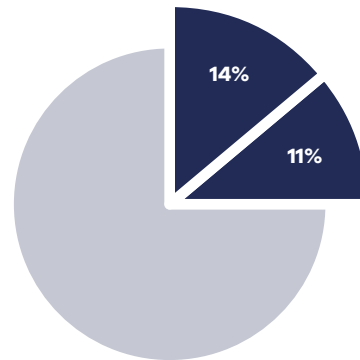
Early Familiarity Seekers

Family Reading Segments: ages 0–6



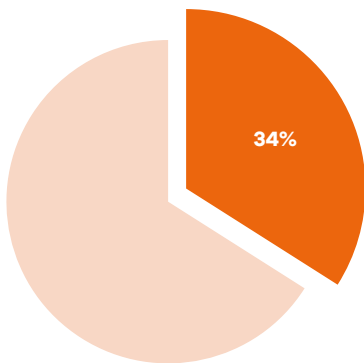
Highly Engaged

- Early Enthusiasts **(11%)**
- Happy Habituals **(20%)**



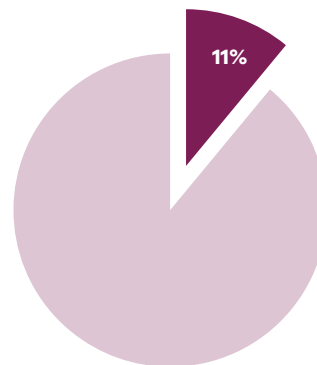
Engaged

- Eager Kids **(14%)**
- Goal-Focused Strivers **(11%)**



Somewhat Engaged

- Entertainment Seekers **(34%)**

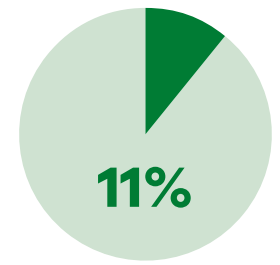


Not Yet Engaged

- Early Familiarity Seekers **(11%)**

Highly Engaged

Early Enthusiasts (11%)



A family of book lovers whose passion for reading is passed from parent to child.

About the family

- This segment skews towards children aged 4–6, who belong to a C1 social grade home, with parents/carers who have higher education.
- Children: 84% love being read to (+37%*).
- Parents/carers: 64% love reading (+18%*).
- As a family they relish spending time outdoors whenever possible and maximise their time together with activities.

Motivations and barriers

- 93% think reading with their child is very important (+22%*).

“ I think it’s so important for the joy of reading to be transferred to my kids. We are a household of readers. ”

- Reading with their child is valued primarily for developing vocabulary/ language and creating a love of reading (+20%*).
- Families experience fewer barriers to finding time to read than those in other segments. TV and devices are limited within the home and generally don’t interfere with reading.

Reading behaviour and preferences

- Nine in ten children are reading with their parents/carers every day, for just under 25 minutes.
- Seven in ten are reading by themselves daily.
- Parents/carers are attracted to books that engage their child’s imagination and sense of humour.

“ He seems to like a plot unravelling. He recently read a lot of fantasy books on Egypt that were plots against Kings and Queens. ”

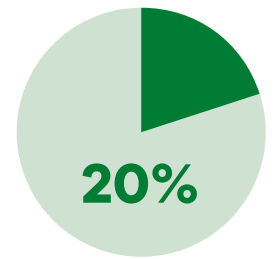
- Parents/carers seek out books that are also enjoyable for them.
- Children like books that challenge them, and are happy to tackle longer books.



*= +/- from average

Highly Engaged

Happy Habituals (20%)



Reading is a regular, pleasurable part of family life, valued for the chance to spend quality time together.

About the family

- Skew towards 0–2 year olds with a stay-at-home parent/carer.
- Children: 72% love being read to.
- Parents/carers: 56% love reading.
- Parents/carers spend quality time with their child through play and reading.
- Family time is likely to be spent at home and routines like shared meals are important.

Motivations and barriers

- Parents/carers may not be as engaged with reading themselves, but see it as central to their child's development.
- 86% of parents/carers think reading is very important.
- Reading is associated with relaxation, imagination, quality time and happiness.

“ You get this great sense of satisfaction when reading to your child. Quality time that is impactful to their development makes you feel like you're a good parent. ”

Reading behaviour and preferences

- 69% of parents/carers set themselves goals for reading with their child (+26%*).
- Over half of Happy Habituals are reading together every day.
- 85% read with their child before bed (+30%*). Reading acts as a technique to initiate bedtime.

“ It's the same thing most nights. Ivy will have a bath, is given her bottle and we read one or two books. By which time she's finished her milk and then it's lights out. ”

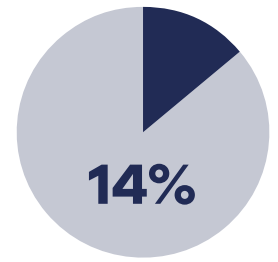
- Parents/carers prefer interactive print books and are looking for books that are shorter in length and have a positive message.



*= +/- from average

Engaged

Eager Kids (14%)



Children are the instigators of shared reading occasions, and parental enjoyment of reading is not as strong.

About the family

- Skew towards boys aged 3–4, who are from C1/C2 social grade households.
- Children: 76% love being read to.
- Parents/carers: 49% love reading.
- Being read to features among children's favourite things to do.

“ If it was up to Joe, he would read four or five books at night. But it's usually getting late, so we negotiate it down to one or two.”

- Family time is spent outdoors or watching TV together at home. Parents/carers tend to see their children as too young to enjoy cultural activities.

Motivations and barriers

- The key barrier to reading is time.
- Sometimes it's easier to let their child watch TV or play on devices, especially after a long day at work.
- Generally, parents/carers feel confident selecting books for their child, but can be frustrated with their child's desire to re-read the same book for the 100th time.

Reading behaviour and preferences

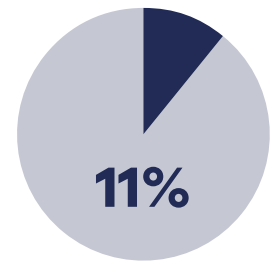
- In the household, shared reading normally takes places at bedtime or after their evening meal.
- 46% of parents/carers are reading with their child every day.
- Most books in the household are from a bookshop or purchased online. Picture-books and those featuring animals are popular with their children.



*= +/- from average

Engaged

Goal-Focused Strivers (11%)



Parents/carers take the lead on shared reading because they value it as an educational tool to help their child learn and grow, but are not as keen on reading themselves.

About the family

- Skew towards 3–6 year olds. They are more ethnically diverse and more likely to have wider family living with them than those in other segments.
- Children: 48% love being read to.
- Parents/carers: 34% love reading.

“To be honest I’m not a big reader, I don’t have the time for it. But reading is so important for the children; it helps develop their vocabulary skills and imagination.”

- Five in ten children place reading among their favourite activities, but it falls behind TV, playing and doing arts and crafts.
- Parents’/carers’ educational viewpoint on reading is also transferred to other types of activities such as gaming and watching TV.

Motivations and barriers

- Although parents/carers see reading as a good way to bond with their child, the main purpose is to help their child learn and grow.
- Numerous barriers tend to get in the way of reading with their child: being a working parent; demands of the house; competing interests; and English not being their first language.

- Barriers to reading can cause frustration, so sometimes parents/carers rely on other family members to help achieve the benefits of reading to their child.

Reading behaviour and preferences

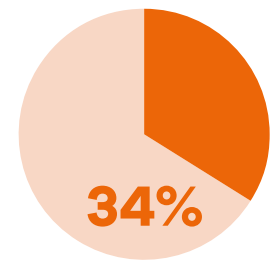
- 54% of parents/carers read with their child every day.
- Interactive print books are preferred by both parent and child.
- Parents/carers favour stories with inspiring characters or role models, or books that help their child understand experiences they might be going through.
- Choosing suitable books can be a struggle, so parents/carers often will rely on their nursery or pre-school for recommendations.



*= +/- from average

Somewhat Engaged

Entertainment Seekers (34%)



Parents/carers see the importance of reading, but can struggle with motivation when reading occasions aren't as fun as other activities for them and their child.

About the family

- Skew towards girls, 4–6 years old from DE social grade households.
- Children: 43% love being read to.
- Parents/carers: 42% love reading.
- Parents/carers prefer to get their relaxation and enjoyment time from sources other than books.
- Children have embraced technology and enjoy high levels of stimulation. Reading does not always satisfy this desire.

Motivations and barriers

- Children can get bored easily, so keeping them engaged with books that are longer and/or not interactive can be problematic.
- In an ideal world, reading is used to help with the bedtime routine and to reverse the effects of activities such as using a tablet or playing.
- The bedtime routine is often fraught with obstacles.

“ Bedtime is something I secretly dread. Getting her to bed can be difficult as she'd prefer to be playing or on the iPad. ”

Reading behaviour and preferences

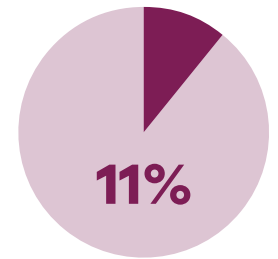
- 42% of parents/carers read with their child every day.
- 83% of parents/carers say their child is in charge of choosing books to read, rather than it being a mix of parent and child decision making (+30%*).
- Children like books that challenge them and stretch them. However, their parents/carers struggle to know where to find these types of books.



*= +/- from average

Not Yet Engaged

Early Familiarity Seekers (11%)



Reading occasions are often unsatisfying, and as a result parents/carers struggle to find the motivation to read with their child.

About the family

- Skew towards 0–1 year olds, and are less likely to be from AB social grade households.
- Children: 28% love being read to.
- Parents/carers: 43% love reading.
- They value time together as a family and typically spend it at home on comfortable and familiar activities like playing games or watching a film.
- Only five in ten like to spend time being physically or culturally active as a family.

Motivations and barriers

- Parents/carers understand that reading is important but struggle with ideas to engage their child.
- Parents/carers report that their child can quickly lose interest in reading, so they often give up rather than persevere.
- Parents/carers don't have a strong connection with reading themselves.

“ Things that get in the way of reading are time, activities, umm, lack of willing from them to read.”

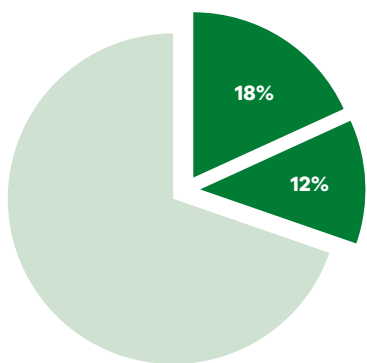
Reading behaviour and preferences

- Five in ten parents/carers read to their child during the day, usually in shared rooms at home. However only four in ten read together at bedtime.
- 35% of parents/carers read with their child every day. One in ten have never read with their child.
- When choosing a book for their child, parents/carers try to find something that they'll enjoy reading to them.
- Books are usually bought online or are hand-me-downs from family members. They are less likely than others to visit a public library or a bookshop.



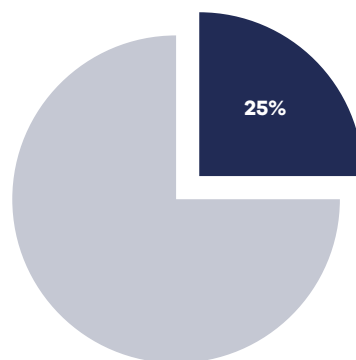
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Family Reading Segments: ages 7–16



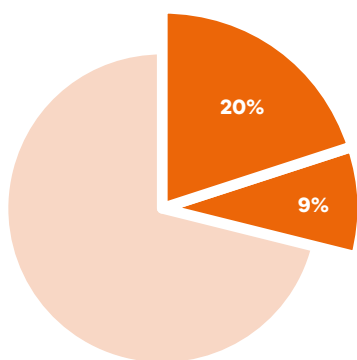
Highly Engaged

- Enthusiasts (18%)
- Transitionals (12%)



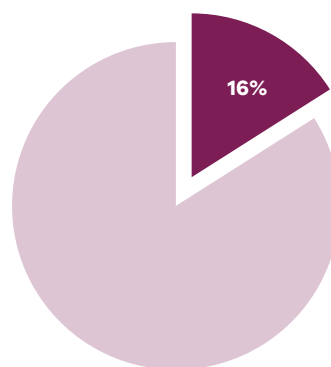
Engaged

- Busy Explorers (25%)



Somewhat Engaged

- Routine Followers (20%)
- Media Browsers (9%)

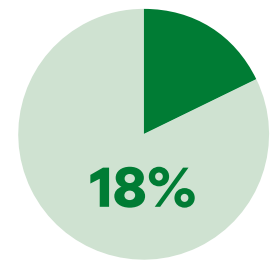


Not Yet Engaged

- Familiarity Seekers (16%)

Highly Engaged

Enthusiasts (18%)



Curious and confident by nature, these families read widely and love sharing and discussing books.

About the family

- Skew towards 7-10 year olds. Parents/carers are most likely to have higher education.
- Children: 85% love reading (+45%*).
- Parents/carers: 67% love reading.
- Books are treasured possessions, cared for and always visible around the home.
- Children have a wide range of interests and hobbies, more so than those in any other segment, but reading is their favourite activity.

Motivations and barriers

- Children are motivated by learning new things and exploring topics they've learnt about at school.
- Reading is something they actively make time to do as it can cater for a wide range of moods and needs.
- Few barriers to reading are experienced beyond juggling hobbies and starting to get more homework.

Reading behaviour and preferences

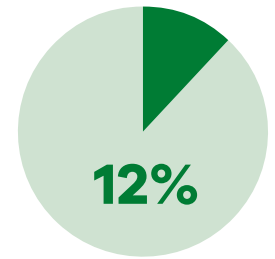
- Over half read every day (excluding school/homework) for around 32 minutes on average.
- Children read widely and are more likely to read niche genres and formats like historical books and short story collections.
- Children seek out fiction that allows them to imagine other worlds or books that teach them something new. Their parents/carers are more likely than others to choose non-fiction books for their child (+26%*).
- Reading is considered a social activity; children like to discuss ideas, themes or funny bits, and seven in ten trade books/comics with friends.
- Parents/carers are role modelling reading, with nine in ten children regularly seeing them reading at home.



*= +/- from average

Highly Engaged

Transitionals (12%)



Parents/carers see the importance of reading but shared reading occasions have begun to dwindle as their pre-teens become more independent.

About the family

- Skew towards 7-11 year olds.
- Children: 57% love reading.
- Parents/carers: 56% love reading.
- Imaginative and independent, Transitionals are less likely than others to worry about what their peers think about them. Although they appear confident and keen to join the teenage world, their parents/carers still act as a security blanket.
- If in the mood to relax, Transitionals much prefer to read a book than watch or listen to a story.

Motivations and barriers

- 81% of parents/carers think reading is important as it allows children to destress and take time out for themselves.
- 95% of parents/carers feel that reading with their child gives them a great sense of satisfaction.
- For children, reading is associated with relaxation and absorption in another world.
- Children find it easy to select books they enjoy and that challenge them sufficiently.

- Children have begun to turn to sources other than books for information and entertainment.

“ I like to use my phone to watch YouTube clips on how to draw animals. YouTube is better than looking at a book as you can see how they do stuff better. ”

Reading behaviour and preferences

- Children typically read at bedtime or after their evening meal.
- 51% of children are reading every day (excluding school or homework), with reading occasions lasting 32 minutes on average.
- Their favourite books are action/adventure (+21%*), fantasy and funny books.
- Children prefer new books to re-reading.

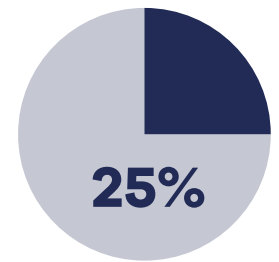
“ Every time we go to Sainsbury's Emma will head straight over to the book section to see what the new books are. ”



*= +/- from average

Engaged

Busy Explorers (25%)



Families have positive associations with reading, but hectic schedules and other hobbies mean it's competing for time in their day-to-day life.

About the family

- Skew towards 11–16 year olds, from C1/C2 households.
- Children: 40% love reading.
- Parents/carers: 40% love reading.
- Not a family of passionate readers, and so children are less likely to see parents/carers or wider family reading.
- Extremely busy households means time together is scarce and often combined with activities or getting tasks or chores done.

Motivations and barriers

- Time is the biggest barrier to reading as much as they'd like to, and 75% say homework gets in the way of reading more.
- Parents/carers think reading is very important, but are more aware of the educational benefits than the wider effects such as increased creativity and wellbeing.
- 88% of children read for relaxation. It allows them to escape into another space that's tranquil, absorbing and closed off to the rest of the world.
- Children take pride in the books they have and in being a reader.

Reading behaviour and preferences

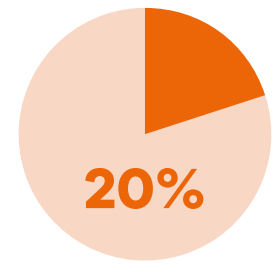
- 41% are reading daily (excluding school or homework). When reading takes place it usually last for 32 minutes.
- 90% of reading occurs in the bedroom.
- Children enjoy engrossing fantasy books or stories that make them laugh.
- Busy Explorers prefer to read about new things rather than to re-read books.
- Children actively look for books that have an emotional hook and want to read books that challenge them.



*= +/- from average

Somewhat Engaged

Routine Followers (20%)



Reading is more of a parent-led routine than an enjoyable activity in the home.

About the family

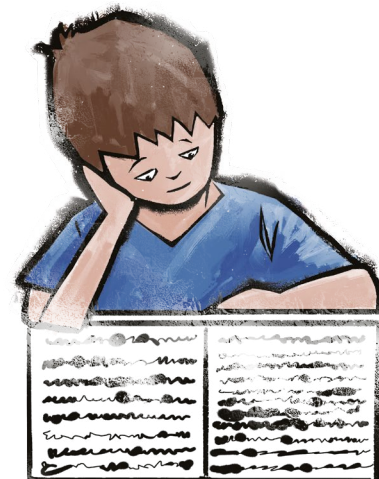
- Skew towards 7–10 year olds.
- Children: 34% love reading.
- Parents/carers: 40% of parents/carers love reading.
- Children are trying to find their independence, and most prefer to read on their own rather than be read to by a parent.
- Parents/carers see reading as a good educational tool. However, they don't really see the relational or emotive benefits reading can have (either for themselves or their children).

Motivations and barriers

- 98% read because it's part of their routine, and reading can sometimes feel like a chore.
- Enjoyable reads are associated with bedtime.
- Children are also motivated by an opportunity to relax.
- Books that children find challenging or can't relate to are often perceived as boring, but books or comics that feel really engaging are consumed quickly.

Reading behaviour and preferences

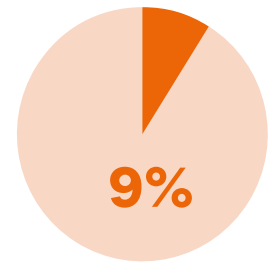
- 58% of children read at bedtime, and 34% have a routine of reading after their evening meal.
- Most children read on their own five days a week for 28 minutes on average (excluding school or homework).
- Parents/carers are much more likely than other parents with children of a similar age to lead with choosing books for their child.
- Many books are sourced from the school library, which also acts as a motivator to read.
- Routine Followers prefer sticking to subject areas they know they like to read about.



*= +/- from average

Somewhat Engaged

Media Browsers (9%)



Families lack an internal drive for reading, and for young people it takes a back seat to interest in gaming and social media.

About the family

- Skew towards 11–16 year olds from urban areas.
- Children: 12% love reading.
- Parents/carers: 26% love reading.
- Media Browsers don't come from a family of big readers.
- TV watching is a big feature of family time; they're less likely to go out for cultural activities or sport.

“ He used to read much more when he was younger but he's more into technology and music now. ”

Motivations and barriers

- Reading can feel like hard work sometimes. Children would rather have bite-sized content that's easy to find.
- Books don't provide as quick a shortcut to relaxation and unwinding as their devices do.
- School is a key instigator of reading. However, books recommended by school often don't align with children's interests or hobbies.
- Media Browsers are also likely to read because they're nudged by their parents/carers or have seen something interesting and book related on TV/in a film.

Reading behaviour and preferences

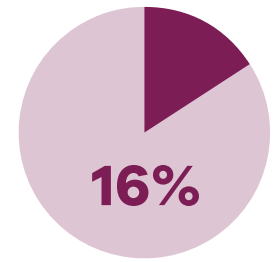
- When Media Browsers read, it's likely to take place in their room at bedtime.
- 16% of children read every day (excluding school/homework).
- Children have a preference towards hearing or seeing stories rather than reading them (+14%*).
- They are most likely to look for fiction that makes them laugh, or a book that teaches them something new.
- Books are mostly sourced from school or the school library, but also received as gifts or bought at a bookshop.



*= +/- from average

Not Yet Engaged

Familiarity Seekers (16%)



Families are not actively engaged with reading, which is seen as a chore, and children are not confident in finding books they can relate to.

About the family

- Skew towards 13–14 year olds from DE social grade households, with parents/carers who don't have higher education. This segment has the highest proportion of white British children.
- Children: 0% love reading. Four in ten actively dislike it and six in ten think it's OK.
- Parents/carers: 37% love reading.
- Children are less likely to view themselves as imaginative and creative, while also being most likely to get bored if on their own.
- Technology plays an important role in their lives, particularly smartphones and game consoles.

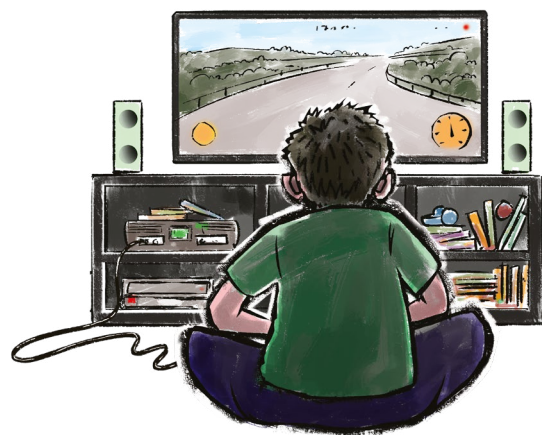
Motivations and barriers

- Parental attitudes to reading are largely shared by their child. One in five parents/carers say reading is boring and one in three children say the same.
- Children express lower confidence in their reading ability compared to their peers.
- Children lack inspiration and have difficulty finding books that interest them and feel relatable.

- Children are not intrinsically motivated to read – they are most likely to read if prompted by their teacher (73%) or parent (62%). Film or TV links with books can also encourage them to read.

Reading behaviour and preferences

- 4% of children read every day (excluding school or homework): 22% say they never read outside of school or homework.
- Children have not developed a strong sense of their reading preferences and interests. One in five has no preference when it comes to book formats and most have not read widely across genres.
- Children are most likely to select funny books or something that features their favourite characters.
- Nine in ten would rather see or hear a story than read it.
- Children are most likely to get their books from school or the school library.



*= +/- from average

About BookTrust

BookTrust is the UK's largest children's reading charity dedicated to getting children reading.

We know that children who read are happier, healthier, more empathetic and more creative. They also do better at school.

We work with a variety of partners to get children excited about books, rhymes and stories. Because if reading is fun, children will want to do it.

For more information about the Family Reading Segments, please contact [**research@booktrust.org.uk**](mailto:research@booktrust.org.uk)

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Find out more about us
[**booktrust.org.uk**](https://booktrust.org.uk)

 **BookTrust**
Inspire a love of reading