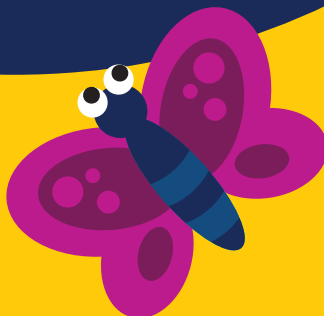




Bookstart Touch

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



Welcome to Bookstart Touch

This guide offers lots of ideas on how to enjoy books with your child with vision impairment. It also suggests a range of books that you can share together. We have included tips given to us by parents and experts that you might find useful when you're sharing books with your child. Not all of the information or books will be right for every child but we hope that this is a useful starting point.



Why share books with babies?

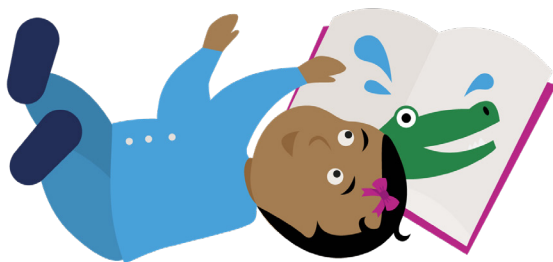
- Sharing books develops a closer bond between parent and child.
- Reading with your child from an early age develops language and literacy skills.
- Books can help to develop a child's health and emotional wellbeing.
- Children become familiar with books, learning how to hold them and turn the pages.
- Your child's fingers can start to learn about shapes and textures.
- Having access to stories, books and rhymes develops children's language skills and brain development.

Did you know?

Long before children learn to speak, they enjoy listening to the sound of 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 a book at any age.
- Don't save books for bedtime – share them anywhere, anytime. Try taking them with you to relieve the boredom of a long journey, queue or waiting room.
- Children will enjoy the comfort and attention of sitting on your lap as you read. As they get older, encourage them to help choose the stories you read together.



Top tip

If your child is beginning to be aware of braille, sitting at a table may make it easier to follow the dots.

How do I find the right books?

- Your Bookstart Touch pack contains a great book and this guide offers lots more ideas for other 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 little one access to lots of different books to explore.
- Ask other parents about their favourite books and swap books 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.

Top tip

Toddlers can often be too active to listen to a whole story and will only sit still for a short time, but be patient – with time they'll be able to concentrate for longer.

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, the shops or a visit to the doctor.
- As your child grows, try different types of books that reflect his or her interests.



How can I make sure my child feels involved?

- You can encourage your child to help hold the book and turn the pages from an early age.
- Keep relating 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 lots of extra descriptions.
- As your child grows, keep books where he or she can reach them.
- Encourage your child to help choose books.

Top tip

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.

Top tip

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.
- 'Touch and feel' books offer extra fun for all children because there are lots of different textures for them to touch.
- 'Touch and feel' books are especially valuable for children who may move on to reading by touch.



- Try fabric books, with flaps, noises and textures.
- Look out for 'touch and feel' books with different size shapes that are meaningful, reflecting what is actually in the picture.

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.



Top tip

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!

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.
- 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.
- It may not be clear when they are very young whether braille or Moon may be right for them when they are older.



Did you know?

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.



Top tip

If your child isn't in the mood to listen or read – try another time instead.

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.
- Don't expect it to be a quiet time!

Make it interactive

- Try acting out bits of the story. You could encourage your child to take on the role of one of the characters.
- 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.
- Your child might like to make their own 'pictures' for the book, using plasticine, clay, craft materials or a collage.
- 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!



Top tip

Ask your local library if they have story sacks or similar kits you can use. These are usually a cloth 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.

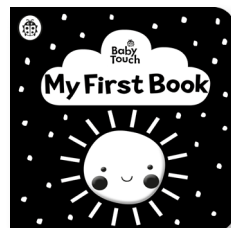
Books to enjoy

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

Baby Touch: My First Book

Illustrated by Lemon Ribbon Studio
Penguin Random House Children's UK
ISBN: 9780241439463

Simple images in high contrast on soft crinkly pages create 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.



Top tip

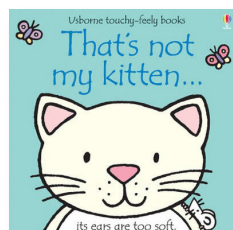
Adding your own textured stickers or stick-on plastic bumps (you can buy them at craft stores) makes finding the buttons easier for your child.

As your baby grows, so does the range of books available. Look for sturdy board books, which can be held (and chewed) by your toddler. 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 Kitten

by Fiona Watt and Rachel Wells
Usborne Publishing Ltd
ISBN: 9780746071489

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 Panda* and *That's Not My Chick*.



Baby Touch Playbook

by Ladybird and 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.



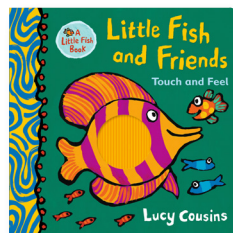
'Be prepared for your books to be chewed – it's all part of the book-sharing experience!' **Parent**

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 a 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 stripey, 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 Books
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.



Top tip

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

livingpaintings.org

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

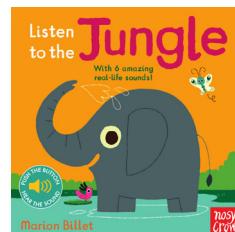
Listen to the Jungle

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 and Anna 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 and 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.



As your child grows, find books with lots to discuss. Look out for story books that contain holes, 'scratch and sniff' features, embossed pictures and 3D effects to really bring the story to life.

Off to the Park

by Stephen Cheetham

Child's Play

ISBN: 9781846435027

Take a fun-filled trip through the park with this sensory-packed story, with multiple things to touch and even a 'scratch and sniff' page. Simple rhyming text provides lots of repetition, and braille numbers are included too.



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

Visual Impairment Specialist



Top tip

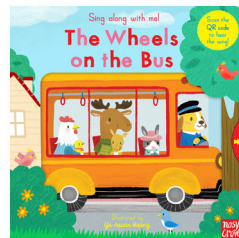
Look out for YouTube videos or apps which offer singalong rhymes and interactive music. Scottish Book Trust offers the Bookbug Songs and Rhymes app that comes complete with lyrics and videos.

scottishbooktrust.com

The Wheels on the Bus

by Yu-Hsuan Huang
Nosy Crow
ISBN: 9781788007559

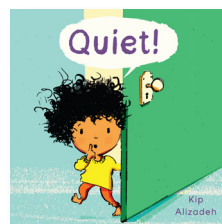
Children will have so much fun joining in with this classic nursery song. A great book to introduce children to early writing hand movements. Scan the QR code inside the front cover to listen to an audio version.



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.



'Babies love the sound of rhymes. Switch off the television so that your baby can really hear you.' **Parent**

All children need to find themselves in books – and siblings also need to see positive images of blind or partially sighted friends and relatives. You can find lots more information and ideas for books on our website:

booktrust.org.uk

Bookstart Touch is run by BookTrust, the UK's largest children's reading charity. We get millions of children reading. Children who read regularly are happier and healthier. This is why we work with families, supporting them to start sharing stories and books together from the earliest possible age.

Visit our website to discover more about the magic of sharing stories, books and rhymes at **booktrust.org.uk**.

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 red 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).



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