



Changing life stories

# Activity Guide for Literacy Champions



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# Thank you for deciding to become a Literacy Champion!

This guide will take you through the many ways you can be a Literacy Champion, ranging from sharing important campaign messages online, promoting literacy in your workplace, or being active in your neighbourhood.

Choose projects from this guide, then follow the steps and guidance to bring them to life in your community. We hope you like the ideas and have fun doing them.

We'd love to hear how your activity goes, any successes or challenges you are having, and any ways you think we could improve our activity guidance. Get in touch by emailing our team at [literacy.champions@literacytrust.org.uk](mailto:literacy.champions@literacytrust.org.uk)

## Things to remember when using this guide:

- For **safeguarding** reasons, the activities detailed do not involve working or speaking in person or online with children, young people or vulnerable adults who you don't already work with or care for.
- You must seek permission with your chosen organisation before planning an activity, and speak to their designated safeguarding lead to make sure you are adhering to their policies and practice.
- If you would like to do a different activity or have any questions about planning one of the activities shown in this guide, please contact our team at [literacy.champions@literacytrust.org.uk](mailto:literacy.champions@literacytrust.org.uk) and we will provide further support.
- Use our top tips on page 9 to ensure the books you collect are appropriate for the chosen audience.
- You can find ready-to-use posters and assets related to the activities below [here](#).



# Book sharing and gifting

*Did you know...?* In 2022, 1 in 10 children from disadvantaged backgrounds in the UK said they didn't have a book of their own at home.

## Community bookshelves

Community bookshelves or 'book swap spots' are a great way to encourage reading in your area by providing easy access to a wide range of free and exciting books. Anyone can take, drop off or swap a book at their leisure, giving everyone the opportunity to build a lifelong love of reading!

### Step 1: Choose a location

The bookshelves or box should be somewhere that can be visited by lots of people; it could be at a café, in a doctor's waiting room, a community space, a sports club, or even on your own doorstep!

Remember:

- If you'd like to create a community bookshelf at a venue or organisation, don't forget to get permission and explain how you will keep the book stock from running out or looking messy
- If you are creating a bookshelf on your doorstep, make sure it's on your own property, installed securely, and out of the way of foot traffic. Remember to keep your book swap tidy to avoid complaints!

### Step 2: Collect books

You'll need a selection of books to kick start your community bookshelves. You could ask family, friends and colleagues if they have any books to donate.

Check out our guidance on collecting books on page 9 of this guide.

### Step 3: Set up your community bookshelves

You can use simple boxes, a lightweight shelf or a trolley to make your bookshelf. Don't forget to consider waterproofing, and to safely secure any cupboards, cabinets or shelving.

You can use the poster – found on the [Literacy Champions guides and assets](#) page – at your bookshelf to show users how it works.

With the support of your community, keep the books stocked up and encourage people to continue swapping.

### Step 4: Get the word out

Let people know about your community bookshelves in the following ways:

- Share photos or videos of your community bookshelf on social media
- Spread the word to community groups and organisations you are part of
- You could also have a 'Book of the Week/Month' to spark interest



You can find a planner to help you organise this activity [here](#).

## Hold a book swap event

Hosting a book swap event is a great way to get your community excited about reading and give everyone free access to a wide range of books.

### Step 1: Choose a location

Find a venue that is popular with local families or community groups and able to host a book swap, either on its own or as part of an existing event. Make sure there is enough space for people to browse, talk together about books and sit to read. It could be at a café, community venue, sports club, place of worship or your local library.

Remember: you'll need to choose a date and time that works for your venue, but also that would be most convenient for people to visit your event.

### Step 2: Collect books for your event

It is always best to have a selection of books ready before your book swap event. You could ask family, friends and colleagues if they have any books to donate to your event.

You can find guidance on collecting books on page 9 of this guide.

### Step 3: Get the word out

- Let people know about the book swap by word of mouth, social media or using the poster found on the [Literacy Champions guides and assets page](#).

Connect with local community groups to encourage lots of people to come along, and you can use our **'Talking about literacy' conversation starters** on page 7 of your handbook to inspire them to get swapping and get reading!

### Step 4: Running your swap

- Lay out your existing stock of donated books on tables in your venue; the books should be organised in categories such as age or genre.
- When people arrive at your swap, they should hand in their donated books. If you are worried about your stock running out, you could provide a token for each book handed in, to ensure people aren't taking too many.
- If you are using tokens, remember to also give these out to people who might not have a book to donate.
- Any left-over books can be donated to charity, placed in your permanent community bookshelf, or kept for your next book swap event.
- You could also provide sticky notes and pens so that people can write what they loved about the book.

You can find a planner to help you organise this activity [here](#).



## Hide books in your neighbourhood

Looking for a fun and exciting way to share pre-loved books in your community? You could hide them around your area for others to hunt down and enjoy!

### Step 1: Organise the resources

- Hide each book with a note explaining that the recipient has found a free book, detailing who the book is appropriate for (i.e. children, young people or adults), and encouraging the finder to reshare the book once they've read it. One way you can do this is by printing out and using the postcard found on the [Literacy Champions guides and assets page](#).

If you don't have many of your own books to hide, you can gather the books by asking family, friends and colleagues if they have any books to donate.

You can find our guidance on collecting books and tips on the types of books you should hide on page 9 of this guide.

### Step 2: Hide the books

Hide the books in your neighbourhood where they are most likely to be found, such as a park bench or outside a local community venue. Remember to find a way of protecting the books if you are hiding them on a rainy day.

### Step 3: Get the word out

Let people know you are hiding books in your neighbourhood via word of mouth or your local community group. Encourage those finding them to share the same book or a new one!

You can find a planner to help you organise this activity [here](#).



## Run a book collection to gather books

Whether you want to directly donate books to an organisation or run one of the activities above, you'll need some books to get started. As well as asking friends, family and colleagues to share their pre-loved books, you could run a book collection drive.

### Step 1: How will you be using the books?

If you are directly donating the books or using them for a gifting/swapping activity, follow the steps on your chosen activity above.

### Step 2: Where will your collection be held?

Decide on a location for your collection. A central spot in your workplace could work, as long as your organisation is happy to accommodate it.

It needs to be in a spot where people can easily add their books, and you could have multiple spots within your organisation!

### Step 3: How long will your collection run for?

Determine when you should hold your book collection and how long for. You could launch it around a literacy moment such as World Book Day or National Storytelling Week.

We recommend running your collection for at least two weeks and up to a month. This time span allows for people to hear about the book drive, search their shelves and bring in their books.

### Step 4: Get the word out

- Spread the word about your book collection! You could use the poster found on the [Literacy Champions guides and assets page](#) to raise awareness in your organisation. Remember to mention the following things:
- The time span of your book drive
- Where the books are being collected
- The type of books you need most (i.e. age range)
- A reminder that the books should be in good condition
- A contact person for the book drive

You can find a planner to help you organise this activity [here](#).

### Step 5: Close your collection

Count the books you've collected and use them in your activity! If you are donating them, you could ask how many families will benefit from them.

Share the news with your organisation to thank everyone for donating to such a brilliant cause!



## Top tips when collecting books

- Remember to check that the books, comics or magazines you collect are age appropriate for your audience; the easiest way to do this is by searching the item on Amazon and checking the product details, or checking the publisher's website.
- Remember to remove any titles that are inappropriate, which could be the case with books published a long time ago. If you are in doubt, contact our team at [literacy.champions@literacytrust.org.uk](mailto:literacy.champions@literacytrust.org.uk).



- Please note, you should not imply that the National Literacy Trust endorses or approves of any book selections/titles you include in your own activity.
- If the books you collect are too damaged to donate, you can recycle them. Or if you're feeling creative, **upcycle** them!



# Reading and writing groups

*Did you know...? In 2023, 1 in 4 young adults aged 24-30 said they do not feel confident communicating their feelings to their friends or romantic partner.*

## Set up a reading group for adults

Reading groups are a great way to encourage adults to enjoy and share reading, and will also give them the opportunity to develop their speaking and listening skills in a fun and friendly environment.

### Step 1: Recruit members and choose a time and place

Ensure that you have recruited enough members to start your group. We'd recommend a minimum of four, and a maximum of ten. Keep a list of members with everyone's contact details to keep track of attendance.

Consider the following things:

- You could set up the first meeting a month in advance to give members enough time to read the chosen book.
- Alternatively, you could use the first meeting as an open discussion to choose the first book, play some icebreaker games, and invite everyone to share their thoughts on their favourite books, films and TV shows.
- Choose a convenient meeting space such as a library, café, workplace or community venue where you'll have enough room.



### Step 2: Deciding on a book for each session

The book should be available in your local library (don't forget, your library can often order in extra copies from other branches if they have enough notice) or affordable for all members, and ideally one that everyone is keen to read. You can also share and swap copies.

Your group could focus on one particular book genre or have fun trying out different ones. Members could vote for their preferred book from a range of options each month.

Once a book has been decided, ensure that everyone has enough time to read it before the next session.

### Step 3: Decide on the structure of the session

It is up to you how the session should run; you will know your group best! You might like to just let the discussion of the book flow naturally, but below are some ideas as to how you could structure the session.

1. Catch up with members and enjoy snacks and a drink.
2. Ask for everyone's views on the book: did they like it or not?

3. Chat about aspects of the book, from plot and characters to themes and style.
4. Rate the book out of five, giving reasons for your rating.
5. Allow time for any further discussion; you might find some interesting reading group questions to discuss in the back pages of your book or online.
6. Plan the next session and choose the next book.

You can find a planner to help you organise this activity [here](#).

You can also discuss the following aspects of the book:

- **Plot.** Were there any twists?
- **Themes.** What were they? How were they shown in the book?
- **Characters.** Did they like the protagonist? What about the antagonist? Were there any shocks?
- **Style of writing.** How did the author write? Was it in a style you liked and found easy to follow?
- **Ending.** Was it a satisfying ending? Were there any plot details that weren't wrapped up?

## Set up a writing group for adults

Writing groups are a great way to encourage and inspire the people around you to get writing and build their confidence as you all share your writing and offer advice.



### Step 1: Decide on the type of group

You might want to think about the following things:

- Will you welcome all types of writing or focus on a specific one such as poetry, short stories, novel writing or scriptwriting?
- Will you focus on specific genres or themes (e.g. children's stories, fantasy, personal reflection, seasons), or take the opportunity to try a different one for each session?
- You might like to set a certain skill level for your group. It could be for beginners, more advanced writers, or open to all.

### Step 2: Recruit members and choose a time and place

Ensure that you have recruited enough members to start your group. We'd recommend a minimum of two, and a maximum of six. Keep a list of members with everyone's contact details to keep track of attendance.

Consider the following things:

- Choose a convenient meeting space such as a library, café, workplace or community venue where you'll have enough room and be confident to share your writing.
- Be clear about the type of commitment you are expecting.

### **Step 3: Decide on the structure of the session**

It is up to you how the session should run; you will know your group best! Discuss with your members what they want to get out of the sessions. Do they want to work on a particular piece at home then continue to improve on it with support from the group? If they are looking for motivation to write more often, the group could choose a theme for each session, with members bringing along a new piece each time you meet.

Writing groups encourage members to share their writing with each other to grow confidence and improve their writing. If your members are a bit nervous to share aloud, think about different ways you could do so, such as sharing a written version to read individually, or having one member of the group read another's piece aloud.

Once someone has shared their writing, you might like to take the opportunity to discuss together. Keep things positive and constructive, and do take into consideration what the writer is looking to achieve. If they lack confidence, they might not want to discuss too much, but more confident writers might want lots of feedback.

At the end of the session, plan when and where the next one will be and – if you're experimenting with themes – what the next theme will be.

You can find a planner to help you organise this activity [here](#).

# Encouraging literacy in your workplace

*Did you know...? Children and young people who have strong literacy skills are less likely to experience unemployment, poverty and poor health as adults.*

By signposting colleagues to resources and encouraging reading for pleasure, you will raise awareness of the importance of developing literacy skills, and help share the joy of reading.

You can find out how to organise these activities by going to the following pages in this guide and using our tips below to adapt for your workplace. Be sure to get permission from your managers and organisation before setting up your activity or event.

## Set up a bookshelf or book swap spot

page 4

Consider the best location for easy access, such as your reception or canteen. You could also set up a comfortable quiet reading area!

## Hold a book swap event

page 5

Consider when and where to hold your event, perhaps over a lunch break in the canteen, or even at a staff conference or party. You could use any leftover books for your book swap shelf.

## Hiding books

page 7

Consider making an event out of hiding books for colleagues; this could be at a staff away day or even as a driver to engage colleagues and their families at a holiday event. The books can be for adults or their children to make it family-friendly.

## Run a book collection drive to donate to a good cause

page 6 and 8

Ask your colleagues to raid their personal bookshelves and donate pre-loved books to support your activity or for a local organisation to distribute. You can always put a call out for particular genres or book categories depending on your audience!

## Spread the word on literacy and share resources

page 14

Share resources through your company channels and encourage people to use with their families and pass on to friends. If you decide to set up a book swap, you could print out resources and include them in the books. Our [wordsforlife.org.uk](http://wordsforlife.org.uk) website has lots of family-friendly resources and activities.

## Celebrate national literacy moments

page 16

Hold an event or activity to celebrate national moments such as our #Take10ToRead campaign to support mental wellbeing. Use your internal channels to spread the word.



# Spreading the word on literacy

*Did you know...? 1 in 6 adults in England have very poor literacy skills, meaning they may not be able to read a book or newspaper, read instructions on medicines, or make sense of a train timetable.*

## Share key messages and resources

You can support your community by chatting to the people around you – online and in person – about the importance of literacy, and by sharing fun resources and top tips.

You can use our **‘Talking about literacy’ conversation starters** on page 7 of your handbook to encourage people to get reading and writing, and point them towards local and online resources they can use for further support.

Please be aware that you must follow the safeguarding guidance outlined in our handbook.

### Step 1: What resources are available in your area?

Research the resources and literacy support available for people in your community. This could include your local libraries, community events, community groups, arts spaces and charities.

### Step 2: Use National Literacy Trust resources

Take a look at the following resources and decide which to share with your local community.

- Our [wordsforlife.org.uk](https://www.wordsforlife.org.uk) website is full of free tips, guidance, book suggestions, activities, games and more for parents of children aged 0-12.
- Our website for young people (age 13+) - [wordsforlife.org.uk/zone-in](https://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/zone-in) – is full of tips on boosting reading, writing, speaking and listening skills.
- You can find our **‘Talking about literacy’ conversation starters** on page 7 of your handbook.

### Step 3: Spread the message

Share resources with family, friends and colleagues, encouraging them to have a go with their own families and share with other people they know.

You can highlight activities and ideas that you’d recommend, and why not use holidays and moments to share themed activities that might interest families, such as Halloween activities in autumn?

You can also reach out and share this information with local organisations you are part of. This might include your local supermarket, library, GP surgery, parent groups or your place of worship.

## Share National Literacy Trust posts on social media

You can follow the National Literacy Trust on the channels below:

- Facebook: [fb.com/nationalliteracytrust](https://www.facebook.com/nationalliteracytrust)
- Twitter: [@literacy\\_trust](https://twitter.com/literacy_trust)
- Instagram: [@literacy\\_trust](https://www.instagram.com/literacy_trust)
- TikTok: [@literacy\\_trust](https://www.tiktok.com/@literacy_trust)

Please re-share any of the posts you think are relevant with your own online community to encourage reading and writing!

## Write your own posts on social media

Create posts on your personal social media channels. You can use our '**Talking about literacy conversation starters**' on page 7 of your handbook to help you write posts.

You could use social media to:

- Share the activities you've been doing as a Literacy Champion
- Encourage parents and young people to use Words for Life and Zone In for tips, advice and activities; you could share particular pages or activities that you've found interesting or fun
- Demonstrate how to access your local library and promote any upcoming events
- Discuss why literacy is important to you, and why you chose to become a Literacy Champion
- Share what reading and writing activities you and your family get up to, to show how easy and fun it can be
- Celebrate national literacy moments, encouraging everyone to get involved (find out more on page 16)
- You could post on community or interest groups you belong to on social media
- Encourage others to become Literacy Champions too!

Remember to tag the National Literacy Trust and use **#LiteracyChampion** to help us see what you're sharing and celebrate the work you are doing.



# Celebrating national literacy moments

*Did you know...? In 2019, 1 in 4 11-year-olds in England left primary school unable to read well.*

By promoting national moments created and supported by the National Literacy Trust, you can inspire the people around you to engage with literacy and help raise awareness of its importance.

## Annual moments include:

- **World Book Day.** Occurring annually in March, **World Book Day** – hosted by the charity of the same name – is a celebration of books and reading aiming to encourage young people to discover the pleasure of reading.
- **Where's Wally? Fun Run.** At this **annual fundraiser** for the National Literacy Trust, every runner taking part is dressed up as the beloved adventurer from the Where's Wally? books. The main event takes place in London, but everyone across the country can get involved by running their own **local Where's Wally? Fun Run**.
- **Summer Reading Challenge.** The **Summer Reading Challenge** hosted by the Reading Agency, in partnership with public libraries, encourages children aged 4-11 to enjoy the benefits of reading for pleasure over the summer holidays.
- **Take 10.** Our annual **#Take10ToRead** moment happens on or around 10 October, World Mental Health Day, and encourages everyone to take up the challenge of reading for 10 minutes every day to improve their wellbeing and support their literacy skills.

More information about key dates and how you can get involved will be shared throughout the year on our newsletter, but below are a few suggestions on what you can do to get involved and inspire others.

## Promote activities, news and resources

Raise awareness of upcoming activities and encourage participation - in person or online - by doing the following things:

- Share National Literacy Trust resources and social media posts about national moments such as the Where's Wally? Fun Run and Take 10.
- Research and share what is happening in your community for events such as World Book Day and the Summer Reading Challenge.

## Organise activities in your local area

Get your local community involved by organising an event.

- Organise a local **Where's Wally Fun Run** for a group of friends in a nearby park.
- Organise a Take 10 moment with friends or colleagues where everyone stops what they are doing to read for 10 minutes. This could even be a daily thing you do every lunch time.
- Hold activities and celebrations in your workplace, such as on World Book Day.

If you would like to plan an event, we can provide additional support and guidance, so please speak to our team at [literacy.champions@literacytrust.org.uk](mailto:literacy.champions@literacytrust.org.uk) before getting started.



## Share posts and videos online

Before a national moment, we will send round suggestions of videos or posts you can create and post on social media to encourage others to get involved. The types of videos might be:

- Recommending your favourite podcasts for Storytelling Week
- Showing how easy it is to register with your local library for the Summer Reading Challenge
- Sharing why you think reading is good for your mental wellbeing during Take 10

Remember, if your photos or videos include anybody else, you must have their consent before you upload them.



# Little literacy ideas make a big difference

Think about more fun and easy things you could do to encourage the people around you. Here are some suggestions.

**Are you part of a knitting group?** Reach out to your local children's centre, nursery or community centre; you could knit a character such as the Hungry Caterpillar for their toy boxes or [Story Sacks](#).

**Are you a parent, grandparent or carer?** Get a group of fellow guardians together and *go on a bear hunt* with your little ones! Use our [We're Going on a Bear Hunt activity pack](#). Or how about trying these fun [writing prompts](#) to get your children writing stories or a diary?

**Fundraise for us!** Whether you're taking on a physical challenge like a marathon, or you're crocheting bookmarks, please consider us as your nominated charity. You can find [fundraising activities and ideas here](#) or you can [donate directly via our website](#).

**Feeling creative?** [Create a crossword or wordsearch](#) for children to complete. You could share this with your family and friends.

**Are you an environmentalist?** Make an online booklist or quiz with an eco-theme to share with friends, family and colleagues.

**Are you part of a parent group?** Take your group to the library during a school holiday and show how easy it is to register and borrow books. This is also a great opportunity to model talking to librarians to find books of interest.

**Do you enjoy listening to audiobooks?** Share our [tips](#) for how to listen to an audiobook and how to access them at your local library with your friends and family.

**Interested in storytelling?** Celebrate storytelling at home by using these [activities](#). Remember to share how you are getting on with these activities with your friends and family.

**Are you interested in poetry?** Share your favourite poem with a friend, family member or work colleague, and suggest that they do the same!

Remember to share how you're doing by tagging us the National Literacy Trust on social media (see page 14) and use **#LiteracyChampion**.

If you have any questions about these suggestions, please do get in touch at [literacy.champions@literacytrust.org.uk](mailto:literacy.champions@literacytrust.org.uk)

# Contact details

Please contact the team at [literacy.champions@literacytrust.org.uk](mailto:literacy.champions@literacytrust.org.uk) if you would like to:

- Ask a question about planning one of the activities in this guide
- Share how you're getting on with your chosen activity
- Suggest a new idea for this activity guide



Changing life stories

E: [literacy.champions@literacytrust.org.uk](mailto:literacy.champions@literacytrust.org.uk)

W: [literacytrust.org.uk](http://literacytrust.org.uk)

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