

Picture books for games

Picture books reinforce the social and emotional learning that takes place when we play.

We learn turn taking, how to cope with winning and losing, sharing, patience, negotiation, hearing and responding to instructions, manners and all the social skills we are so worried that our kids may be forgetting while they are isolated from other big groups of children.

One of the best things to do is to let children work out their differences and objections and only intervene when things escalate. Learning to share toys, the swings, time, ideas and attention is so important to let your children learn and to encourage at home. The books outlined here may help you in negotiating this with your small children.

Books are where young children learn all these skills before and after engaging in play. Sometimes, in reading the book and exploring the ideas in it through questioning and discussion as you read through the book and afterwards. In school, we will often say 'Do you remember how..... felt in the book?' This reminds children of how to behave in a given situation and helps develop their empathy and social skills.

Mr Men books

Mr. Men books are very good books to read for children. The problem or worry is clear and the path to resolution is really well described. The books are incredibly popular in classrooms every year and you will often see them in Aldi in the middle aisle. Look online in book shops for the set – you can sometimes get a box set very reasonable.

Mr Jelly is a great book to discuss fears in a really funny and enjoyable way. His stopping, thinking and counting to overcome his fears is similar to the approach in Mr. Noisy. There are always lots of resources like colouring in pages; mazes etc. online if your child liked a particular character.

Mr Jelly read aloud <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHuRRckaPKc>

Mr Jelly cartoon <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6B5EB9fulz0>

Mr Happy read aloud <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RTqZ9OCR00k>

Mr Happy cartoon <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FMYzPBn63Ic>

Mr. Happy book for children to make their own <https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/mr-happy-i-am-happy-6172189>

Templates for lots of Mr. Men characters (great for practicing simple cutting skills)

http://www.mathematicshed.com/uploads/1/2/5/7/12572836/make_mr_miss_characters.pdf

Video of 'How to draw Mr. Men characters' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YV_b1bMvbl0

Printable Mr. Men colouring in pages http://www.coloring-book.info/coloring/coloring_page.php?id=147

Books about worries

Children's worries may manifest in different ways – they may be quiet; they may lash out verbally or physically; they may cry...it is important to discuss any worries children may have. On the other hand, some children may not be worried. They may love being at home and not having school and you may see worries come as the stages of lockdown are relaxed e.g. when people start visiting or when you take them to shops and playgrounds again. They may have worries about Covid 19 or someone in the family getting sick. Picture books can be great to encourage children to verbalise their feelings or to understand why other children may be worried or anxious when they are not experiencing those feelings.

The Owl Babies and The Kissing Hand books may be useful for when we start to return to work/crèche or school. Children might have concerns about leaving home and caregivers and there may be issues with bring blankies, teddies and other comforters into these places so the Kissing Hand is a great resource to reassure a worried child.

Ruby's Worry

Read aloud of the book <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IhhCq44ar8>

Dramatic performance of the book <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQNGM6hc9dE>

Some ideas for questions and activities around the book

<https://clpe.org.uk/sites/default/files/Ruby%27s%20Worry%20by%20Tom%20Percival%20LPE.pdf>

Play charades based on emotions e.g. happy; sad; cheerful; angry; scared...

It's really important that you don't label emotions as good or bad. Emotions are. They just are. It's how you react to emotions that counts. For example, anger started wars but it also led to Greta Thunberg trying to change the world. It's how you react to the emotion that counts. It's very important that we don't label our children's feelings as good or bad. Please, remember your own reactions to emotions and don't be afraid to allow your children to see you working through emotions and problem. As teachers we model approaches to emotions and problem solving every day and you talking through your approach and how you are managing your own feeling is a fantastic gift to your child.

Choice of activity helps children feel in control of their day. Allow children every day to choose an activity that makes them happy (Just like Ruby) – it's fine to put a timer on it so they don't stay on the iPad or in the paddling pool for four hours but offering them a choice of preferred activity every day helps to make their day a little better, which will help them feel better.

Owl Babies

The classic! Owl babies is always read at the beginning of junior infants and why? It talks very gently about owl babies who are worried they Mammy will not come back. If your children are worried about you returning to work or themselves returning to crèche/school/childminders it is a great book to read with them. There are loads of resources online based on this book. I have included some here.

Owl Babies read aloud <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/books-and-reading/have-some-fun/storybooks-and-games/owl-babies/>

Owl babies cartoon <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPQRiSTYFH0>

Lots of resources for supporting the book here <https://www.twinkl.ie/book/owl-babies>

More ideas here <https://www.worldbookday.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Early-Years-Teaching-Ideas-Owl-Babies.pdf>

The Kissing Hand

A book I read in the first week of junior infants and my first piece of art is always based on this book. Again, this is a great book to reassure children who may be worried about school/crèche/childminder return. We may not be allowing parents to accompany children to classroom when we return so having a little routine in a designated drop off point when we return to schools etc. may be very beneficial. I have seen children really loving the routine in this book and engaging in it with caregivers in the morning when they say goodbye.

The Kissing Hand read aloud <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPUW1t9Gu4s&vl=en>

Activity pack based on the read aloud https://www.storylineonline.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/KissingHand_ActivityGuide.pdf

The Kissing Hand cartoon <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-G5okff-nw>

The Kissing Hand art Paint your child's hand with poster paint and make their handprint on a piece of paper. If you have pre cut coloured hearts allow them to choose one and stick it to where you kiss their pals. If not, cut out a heart and stick it. Simple piece of art but children of all levels should be able to participate, even with hand over hand support.

Making a book video based on 'The kissing Hand' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ky-5YTVHLcI>

Teaching your child how to 'belly breathe' to help them to cope with big feelings and emotions <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KB-qAWMp8bE>

The Kissing Hand activities for children with moderate to severe learning difficulties http://www.ric.edu/sherlockcenter/dsi/kissing_hand.pdf

Resources for slightly older children <https://www.thewiseowlfactory.com/free-printable-for-the-kissing-hand/>

Generic games based on any picture book

You can make games out of any picture book!

Role play/charades/puppets: you can 'be' any character from a book and play with your child as that character. Reverse it and have your child play with you as a character. If you have any old socks lying around can you make a sock puppet into a character? You may only need to add paint to make it a character or glue some feathers on or draw eyes with a marker. You can also photocopy or print or trace a character from a book and use these little paper characters to create your own story or recreate the story with your child. I stick them on lollipop sticks sometimes to aid the child to play with them. Twinkl is free to sign up to and has lots of these types of resources for you to use.

You can also buy puppets of most popular stories online but these can be expensive. Ebay is your best bet for cheaper puppets.

An envelope can also make a good puppet and is very easy for small children to decorate. A letter sized one can be recycled and is the perfect size for a small child's hand.

Letter/word/text/picture games: Find letters on the page. Show me 'a' etc. Write out or type out a phrase or words that occur in the story. Get your child to hold up that word or phrase when you come to it in the book. Or open the book to a page and see can your child match that word or phrase to the text. Can your child find colours on the page? Can they name the colours? With older or children who are further along in their literacy, can they find small words in big words in the book?

Imagination games: As you go on your daily walks, ask your child questions about how characters they have explored in their books might fit into their area e.g. would the baby bears like that house? Who might live under that tree? Who would like to play on those swings? Who might live in that house? Who loves the colour red?

House games: Throw a sheet/blanket over some chairs/a table – who lives there? Be the big bad wolf coming to 'blow the house down'. You can add clues if you want like three bowls and three spoons..... Or you can leave it open-ended and try to link the child's choice of house/ship/rocket/forest to a book you have read already.

Activities for Granny and Grandad or other video callers: Maybe Granny or Grandad can tell a story to your children over Zoom or whats app or your children can tell Granny or Grandad the story back? A lot of grandparents are giving caregivers five minutes of peace by reading a story to their grandchildren.

Perhaps they can play **charades** with the children based on fairy tales? Or have a quiz based on familiar stories?

Play I Spy based on characters from a book?

Kim's Game (lay out three/four.... Items on a tray and ask the child to look at them. Then take one away and ask the child which one is missing. Build up the items on the tray to make it more challenging).

Guess the story/rhyme: You could also put items from a story on a tray or on the table and encourage your child to guess the story e.g. a wand, a high heeled shoe and a party invitation = Cinderella; a pea, a doll mattress and a doll = The Princess and the Pea; a bucket; a boy and girl

doll/picture; vinegar; brown paper = Jack and Jill; Get your child to put things like this out and have you or someone on a video call guess the story/rhyme?

I went to the shop and I bought... can be great to play also. Someone begins 'I went to the shop and I bought bread.' Player number two must say 'I went to the shop and I bought bread and eggs'. Player number three must say 'I went to the shop and I bought bread, eggs and milk...' and so on. You can also point to items in sequence if your child has verbal difficulties. You could also modify this to be a character from a story going to the shop e.g. I am a little pig and I went to the shop and bought wood...

Guess who: Give clues to help guess a character e.g. I am brown with purple prickles all down my back? Or print a picture of a character from a well loved book and fold it so that only the feet are visible. Then slowly unfold it and see if your child can guess that character or point to the book/find it in their room before you completely unfold and reveal the character. You can do this on your phone/tablet too by taking a photo of the character, going into edit mode on the photo and make the photo big on the screen so only the feet are visible. Then slowly reduce the size of the photo to allow the entire photo to be seen on the screen.

Sometimes it can be hard to think of things to say on video chats (especially for smaller children) and some literacy based games may help everyone to chat and engage with each other for longer. There is great fun for children in 'beating' granny and grandad in a game!