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Waterstone's

# GUIDE TO CHOOSING DYSLEXIA-FRIENDLY BOOKS FOR KIDS



Assessment • Education • Training

[www.yearofreading.org.uk](http://www.yearofreading.org.uk)

[Waterstones.com/DA](http://Waterstones.com/DA)

[www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk](http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk)

# Waterstone's and Dyslexia Action:

## Working together to make reading enjoyable for all

At Waterstone's, we believe the joy of reading to be one of life's fundamental pleasures which should be able to be enjoyed by all. Waterstone's has supported Dyslexia Action since 2003 as our chosen charity because we both believe reading to be a vital and life-enhancing skill. Through our partnership we are able to raise much-needed funds and increase awareness and understanding of dyslexia, enabling us to reach many more individuals who otherwise would not have benefited from the correct help and support. .

Dyslexia Action is a national charity and the UK's leading provider of services and support for people with dyslexia and literacy difficulties. They are specialists in assessment and specialist tuition for children and adults, with services available from 26 centres and 160 teaching locations around the country.

As part of our work together we have produced this guide, designed to help you choose books that are more suitable for a young struggling/reluctant reader who has dyslexic difficulties. Further information and a downloadable pdf of this guide may be found at [Waterstones.com/DA](http://Waterstones.com/DA) or [www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk](http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk)

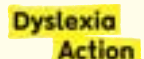
Dyslexia Action  
(England & Wales registered charity number:  
268502, Scotland: SCO 39177)

Dyslexia Action is the working name for Dyslexia Institute Limited.  
Waterstone's would like to thank everyone who contributed to this guide.

If you are interested in fundraising or would like to make a donation  
please contact Dyslexia Action's Fundraising Office.

T: 01784 222 353

E: [fundraising@dyslexiaaction.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@dyslexiaaction.org.uk)



# ENCOURAGING CHILDREN TO READ

As well as being a vital life skill, research shows that reading is the source of most of the new words that children learn once they are in school. The amount someone reads makes a difference not just to development of reading ability, but to the growth of vocabulary and general knowledge. Most of all, encouraging reading from a young age can start a child on a lifetime's journey of joyful engagement with, and exploration of, the world around them.

Children are generally taught at school to read using a mixture of phonics (working words out by sound-letter recognition) and 'look and say' (recognising and remembering words).

## ABOUT DYSLEXIA

Dyslexia causes difficulties in learning to read, write and spell. Short-term memory, mathematical ability, concentration, personal organisation and sequencing may also be affected. Dyslexia usually arises from a weakness in the processing of language-based information. Biological in origin, it tends to run in families, but environmental factors also contribute. Dyslexia can occur at any level of intellectual ability.

Dyslexia is not a disease and it cannot be cured. However, it is possible to help a dyslexic child learn to cope with, and manage their, difficulties, and reach their potential at school and beyond.

Dyslexia Action believes the best way to help a dyslexic learner of any age is through specialist tuition, with a trained teacher, that is tailored to meet the needs of the individual. What can be done will depend on individual circumstances and individual assessment is recommended.

# SIGNS OF DYSPLEXIA

Does your child:

- Make unexpected errors when reading aloud, miss words out or read the wrong word?
- Take ages to read something and understand it?
- Have difficulties with spelling?
- Have difficulties copying from the blackboard?
- Have slow and/or poor handwriting?
- Confuse, for example, 'b' and 'd', or '9' and '6'?
- Struggle to break words down into units of sound?
- Have difficulties with rhyming?
- Have difficulties learning a nursery rhyme/song?
- Spell the same word in a variety of ways?
- Excel at some things while having unexpected difficulties with others?
- Have difficulties learning times tables, days of the week or months of the year?
- Struggle to learn to tell the time?
- Find it difficult to remember a series of numbers, such as a telephone number?
- Find it difficult to remember a list of instructions?
- Confuse left and right?
- Appear to have miss-heard what you have asked him/her?
- Have similar difficulties to one or more blood-relatives?

If you think a child you know might have dyslexia or other reading difficulties, talk to their teacher, or contact Dyslexia Action.



# SUPPORTING DYSPLEXIC CHILDREN WITH THEIR READING

You can help a reluctant or struggling or reader who is dyslexic by:

**1. Reading to a child** - this improves listening skills, broadens interest in books and improves vocabulary.

**2. Shared reading** - whereby the adult reads and the child joins in - is very useful. Encourage your child to join in by:

- Discussing the book's content with them, including the pictures and what may be happening
- Running your finger along the line of print as you read
- Suggest your child joins in by reading some words
- Ask your child to retell the story in their own words

**3. Supported reading** - this approach encourages the child to read to the adult, and can gauge whether the child is able to read most of a book (nine out of every ten words). Encourage this by:

- Looking at the books and pictures together
- Selecting two or three words or main characters to talk about
- Allow a child time to work out words (it is recommended that you give the word after five seconds)
- Helping with accuracy
- Encourage your child to check guesswork by cross checking letters in a word
- Ask your child to suggest what the story is about

**4. Silent Reading** - children need the opportunity to read alone.

**5. Fun!** - reading should be a pleasure. If you seem like you are enjoying it your child will pick up on this.

- Make reading part of your children's daily routine
- Read favourite books over and over again
- Continually praise and encourage

# CHOOSING DYSLEXIA-FRIENDLY BOOKS FOR KIDS

Dyslexia is complex and affects different individuals differently; written text may not ever seem friendly for some, while others are avid readers! A good rule of thumb is, if a child is unable to read five or more words on a page of a book it is fair to assume that it is too difficult for them. They will spend all their time trying to read the words and not enjoying the actual story.

The specialists at Dyslexia Action use a grading system to assess the suitability of books which looks at the chronological age range for content that a child will enjoy matched to their reading age. Any recommendation is subjective - individual tastes are still paramount - and this isn't an exact science, but the books we've chosen for this guide all grade well.

Dyslexia Action recommends that you look out for the following:

- The **story is of interest** to the reader and relevant to his/her age.
- **Short sentences** and paragraphs - these help to maintain interest and encourage a feeling of progress.
- **Wide margins** and plenty of **white space** - these encourage a good reading flow and pace.
- **Right margins unjustified** as it is easier to distinguish between those lines read and those yet to be read.
- Books that have pictures or headings and other **signpostings where appropriate** as this helps navigation, and to break up text into manageable chunks.
- Books that are **printed on tinted paper** - this helps to reduce the resonance of black text on bright white paper.
- Books that are printed in a **clear sans serif font** that is kerned so that the letters are easily distinguishable, and in a clear print size of 11pt - but also not insultingly large for the intended age range.
- Books that are **well-structured** and easy to follow - simplicity of information and syntax make it easier to follow the story.



# OXFORD READING TREE



Oxford Reading Tree is used in over 80% of primary schools across the UK to teach children how to read. Much-loved Biff, Chip and Kipper stories are at the heart of Oxford Reading Tree. The stories are about a group of characters and tell an on-going story about the characters' lives which engages children and motivates them to read on. Early stories deal with simple incidents with which most children are familiar – such as their first day at school and a wobbly tooth! These move into the realms of fantasy adventures as reading skills progress.

It has been developed to teach children to read in finely graded, progressive stages with natural sounding language. The storylines, characters and humorous illustrations really engage children and provide children with something they can really relate to. These elements make Oxford Reading Tree really suitable for children with dyslexia and learning difficulties.

## BARRINGTON STOKE

Barrington Stoke specialise in publishing books for the reluctant, struggling or dyslexic reader of ages 8-18+. They have adapted the language, vocabulary, font, paper colour and layout of their books to minimise literacy difficulties. The books are gripping stories written by well-known authors and combine suitable language for the reading age with content appropriate for the numerical age.

Each book is read by struggling readers of the right age before publication to make sure it is accessible as well as being a great read. There is something for every age and interest, and the books are clearly labelled, to help you choose the right one for your child. The books will equally appeal to kids with no reading difficulties.

The series is highly recommended by Dyslexia Action for young dyslexic readers.

Here and on the following pages we've recommended a number of tried and trusted books that young dyslexic readers may enjoy. Not all of these titles will be suitable for all dyslexic children and, as with any choice, it is subjective, but by following the guidelines mentioned you and your child will soon discover together some great books to enjoy.

Do also ask a bookseller for further recommendations.

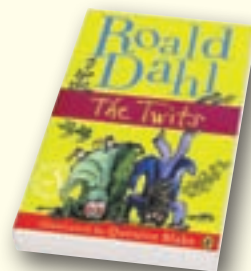
## FOR YOUNGER KIDS...

### **The Twits by Roald Dahl**

ISBN: 9780141322759 / rrp £4.99

Quentin Blake's unforgettable illustrations bring this hilarious tale vividly to life. Quirky, imaginative and very, very silly, this is perfect for reluctant readers.

**Sarah Greenberg**, Waterstone's Harrogate



### **Legend of Spud Murphy by Eoin Colfer**

ISBN: 9780141317083 / rrp £4.99

A fantastic book filled with humour and a brilliant place to start for reluctant readers. If you like this, follow the brothers' holiday adventures in 'The Legend of Captain Crows Teeth'.

**Rachael Bloxham**, Waterstone's Kirkcaldy



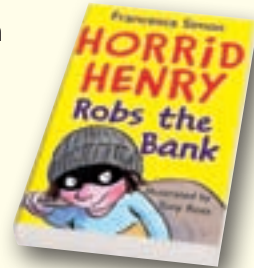


### **Horrid Henry Robs the Bank by Francesca Simon**

ISBN: 9781842551325 rrp £4.99

Absolutely hilarious; reluctant and struggling readers respond really well to the adventures of that most horrible kid, Horrid Henry. With short and easy to manage chapters, and brilliantly illustrated by Tony Ross.

**Jenny Lee**, Waterstone's Canterbury

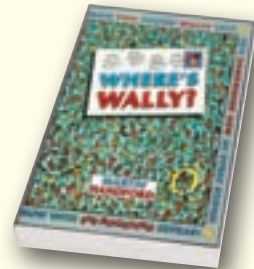


### **Where's Wally? by Martin Handford**

ISBN: 9781406305890 / rrp £5.99

The classic 'hunt the hidden character', the Where's Wally? illustrated books are excellent for engaging dyslexic children. You'll have hours of fun looking for the bespectacled one in the detailed pictures, while kids get used to the format of books.

**Justin Hutchison**, Waterstone's Children's Team



### **Clarice Bean, Don't Look Now by Lauren Child**

ISBN: 9781846165078 / rrp £6.99

Lauren Child's creation Clarice Bean has a hilarious and very definitely different take on the world... The humorous yet moving stories coupled with the engaging and expressive artwork ensures strong appeal for kids of all reading levels.

**Kate Phillips**, Waterstone's Oxford



## FOR OLDER KIDS...

Remember, when choosing for young dyslexic readers, look for:

- short sentences
- clear and bold fonts
- books and chapters that aren't too long
- for younger kids, engaging illustrations that break up the text
- brilliant stories

### **The Kick Off by Dan Freedman**

ISBN: 9780439944304 / rrp £4.99

Jamie Johnson wants to be a football star – but how is he supposed to succeed when even his mum and friends don't think he can make it? This is a fantastic book for the football-mad and really inspirational.

**Tina Everitt**, Waterstone's Harrods

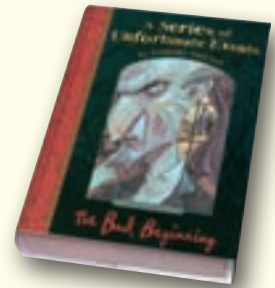


### **The Bad Beginning by Lemony Snicket**

ISBN: 9781405208673 / rrp £6.99

This is great! It has a fantastic opening paragraph, the narrator is involved throughout the gripping story which makes an interesting read, and it's well-written and action-packed. It's not a long book, so it's great for reluctant readers.

**Teresa Gormley**, Waterstone's Warrington



### **Framed by Frank Cottrell Boyce**

ISBN: 9780330452922 / rrp £5.99

Nothing ever happens in Manod. That's why it's got the lowest crime rate in the UK. Until a dozen vans go up the mountain but don't come down again. Very funny and very clever, there's a moral here for all who read it (and a few art lessons too!).

**Chantel Sulaiman**, Waterstone's Chiswick

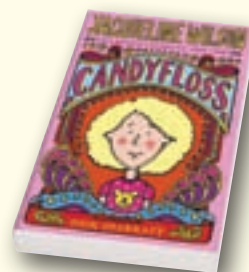


### **Candyfloss by Jacqueline Wilson**

ISBN: 9780440866459 / rrp £5.99

Jacqueline Wilson is one of the most popular kids authors ever. Her genius lies in getting inside children's heads, convincingly capturing their voices and feelings. Nick Sharratt's simple illustrations punctuate the chapters and help explain the story.

**Kate Phillips**, Waterstone's Oxford



### **Alone on a Wide, Wide Sea by Michael Morpurgo**

ISBN: 9780007230587 / rrp £5.99

Ace author of unique stories filled with warmth and poignancy, Michael Morpurgo is the perfect alternative to the numerous kids' fantasy and spy books. This tells the tale of orphan Arthur Hobhouse as he's sent to grow up in Australia after the Second World War.

**Jenny Lee**, Waterstone's Canterbury

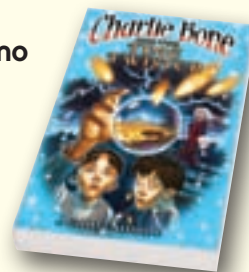


### **Charlie Bone and the Time Twister by Jenny Nimmo**

ISBN: 9781405225441 / rrp £5.99

Charlie, the boy who hears voices in pictures, stumbles across his missing Great Uncle Henry on his first day back at school. Fans of Harry Potter will adore this book.

**Tina Everitt**, Waterstone's Harrods

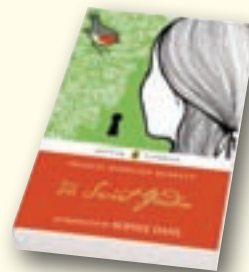


### **The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett**

ISBN: 9780141321066 / rrp £5.99

This is a touching story of how one girl interrupts the sad and lonely lives of a small group who have suffered tragedy and brings them together again, healing over old wounds and bringing new life to people and gardens alike.

**Claire Howells**, Waterstone's York



## FOR TEENS...

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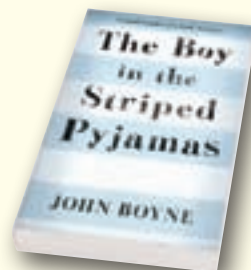
All prices correct at time of going to press (August 2008). Prices on Waterstones.com are online only and may differ from Waterstone's stores.

### **The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas by John Boyne**

ISBN: 9780099487821 / rrp £6.99

Set during the Second World War, this fable (as apposed to fiction) it is told by nine-year-old Bruno, a German officer's son. One day he finds out that his dad is very big with the 'Fury' and that they are moving to 'Outwith'. Short and compact, this book shoots straight for the heart.

**Ben Chandler**, Waterstone's Lincoln Exchange Arcade

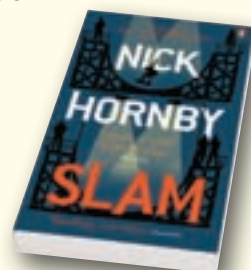


### **Slam by Nick Hornby**

ISBN: 9780141321400 / rrp £7.99

Sam loves music and skateboarding, regularly talks to his Tony Hawk poster... oh, and he's just met Alicia. This excellent story has some hilarious moments and is a good coming of age novel, especially for boys.

**Sarah Williamson**, Waterstone's Tunbridge Wells

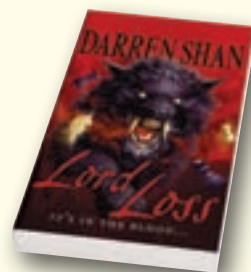


### **Lord Loss by Darren Shan**

ISBN: 9780007193202 / rrp £5.99

A fabulously gruesome book that has more than just guts and gore (though it has plenty of that as well!). Darren Shan weaves a scary tale of monsters and a young boy who witnesses terrible things but must confront them again if he is to save the life of someone close to him. Brilliant.

**Claire Howell**, Waterstone's York



### **Under the Skin by Catherine McPhail**

ISBN: 9781842994535 / rrp £4.99

Published by dyslexia-friendly specialists Barrington Stoke, 'Under the Skin' is a pacey, realistic and humorous book about Omar, a young asylum seeker, refusing to allow local boy Sam to victimise him.

**Claudia Mody**, Waterstone's Children's Team

