

PIXL Reading



Reading at Sixth Form

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT
YOUR CHILD

PiXL Reading

READING AT SIXTH FORM

DID YOU KNOW?

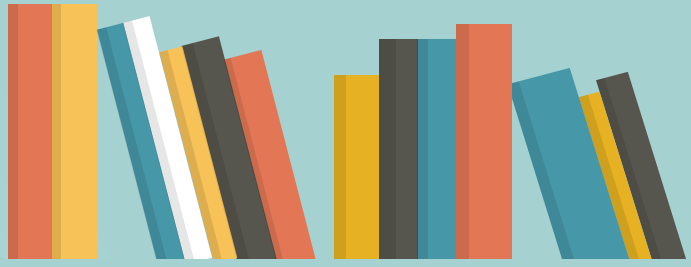
Reading at sixth form is just as important, if not more so, than at secondary school. Your child will be expected to read much more now. They should be independently reading around their subject to improve their knowledge and understanding, as well as reading in a much deeper and critical way.

As well as these two areas of reading that students will be expected to participate in, it is also important for other areas of their studies and life in general. For example, research shows that reading impacts upon:

- Vocabulary
- Understanding of grammar
- Spelling skill
- Writing attainment
- Attitudes to reading and writing
- Knowledge and understanding of the world and other people
- Achievement in other subjects, including maths
- Empathy and understanding of emotions
- Development of our sense of 'self' and identity

All of these things will be needed for either their studies at sixth form, or their life as they develop and journey forward.

“Excellence in almost any academic subject requires strong reading.” DOUG LEMOV



INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

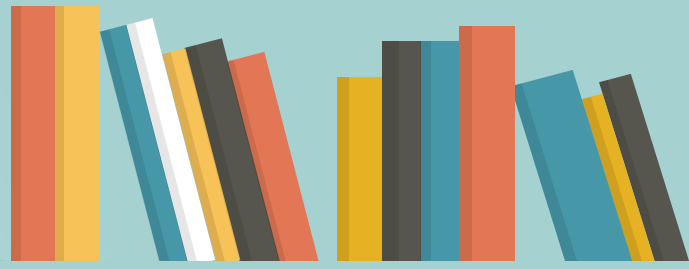
WHAT IS CRITICAL READING?

You might hear your child talk about critical reading, or reading critically, whilst they are at sixth form. This doesn't mean just looking for the important points of a text or being negative about a writer's work. It is about not just accepting what you read. Instead, it involves questioning what we read, weighing up the evidence writers provide and being able to establish our own arguments, ideas and theories as a result.

Regardless of the subject your child is studying, they will need to be able to read critically. Doing so enables them to:

- interpret evidence, data and arguments – questioning them and their relevance
- identify the significance of a theory or piece of work to their own work
- develop well-reasoned arguments and theories of their own
- use evidence to justify their own arguments.

There are a couple of really important ways you can support your child with this, regardless of whether they want you to take an active role in their education. Firstly, you can help them to set up a quiet location for their studies where they can avoid distractions. This will enable them to focus on the close reading required and not have their mind taken to other things whilst they are doing so. Secondly, encouraging them to take regular breaks; we all need breaks from studying or working at times, but critical reading is a very focused and intensive task. These breaks could involve having a drink and something to eat (some young people still need reminders or support with this!), a walk around the block – but it could also just be sitting back, reflecting on the prompt questions and thinking about what they've learnt from their reading so far. Finally, have a discussion with your child about what they feel they may need. For some, it may be equipment (a light to read by, or highlighters), it could be that they need a table/desk somewhere in the house, or support and understanding with visiting the library if that's not an option. Some students may just need you to be aware and mindful of what their studies involve and the importance of reading time so they don't get called regularly to do things – so a discussion about when they will do this focused time might be useful for both of you so you can agree on a set time where they can be undisturbed.



WHAT IF THEY STRUGGLE?

If students struggle to read, then the texts they encounter at sixth form could be off-putting for them. Indeed, even students who have read well throughout secondary school and achieved well can find the texts they encounter at sixth form to be difficult to access, due to the increased level of complexity in vocabulary and writing style. Understandably, this can result in lower levels of enjoyment and therefore demotivation – not just to reading, but sometimes also the course as a whole. If they do not participate in the required reading, or wider reading, their progress can stall and therefore moving through the course curriculum can become a struggle. This creates a vicious cycle: as they struggle and don't enjoy it, they read less – and because they read less, they don't progress and then find that they struggle to acquire the necessary knowledge. Wellbeing and behaviour can also be affected as a result of this.

YOUR ROLE AS A PARENT

Many sixth form students will approach their post-16 courses independently and willingly, bearing in mind they have selected these courses to continue studying. However, it is worth being aware of what your child will experience in sixth form and to consider ways in which you can support them through this journey as they study for these courses and prepare for life beyond sixth form, whether that be higher education or employment. This is what this guide aims to do for you.

Due to the importance of reading at sixth form, as well as life in general, it is vital that we help students not just with their reading skill, but their perception of it as an enjoyable activity. Research suggests that reading for pleasure makes the most difference to students' progress and attainment in reading. By encouraging your child to read and facilitating this activity in the ways suggested later in the booklet, you can support your child, even if they don't want you to be an active participant in helping them with their reading or learning.

FINDING TEXTS FOR YOUR CHILD TO READ FOR PLEASURE

WHAT IS CRITICAL READING?

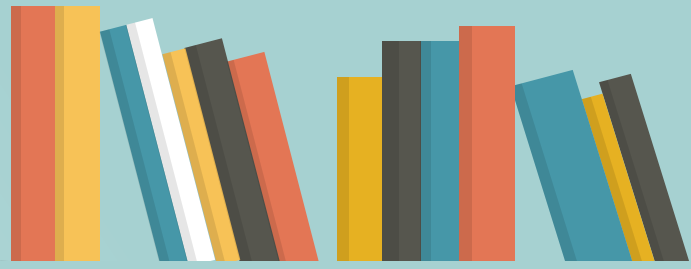
If your child struggles with reading, they may find it difficult to access certain texts that they need to read for their sixth form studies, or indeed books that would interest them and which explore issues relevant to their age. This can be a barrier to finding reading enjoyable, as well as hinder their progress in their studies.

We can help guide students towards finding a range of reading material they could be interested in, so that they can see the various options and have a selection to choose from. This could include non-fiction articles from magazines, newspapers or websites, novels, plays, or blog posts etc. It doesn't necessarily matter what they read; the important thing is to help them feel more comfortable with reading, in whatever form that may take.

Emerging research also suggests that audiobooks may be helpful for increasing interest in reading, as well as modelling good reading fluency and exposing them to more complex vocabulary than they would be otherwise able to read alone. Listening to texts read aloud by a fluent reader enables them to experience these more complex texts which may be more interesting to them than those written for their reading level, so you may wish to consider suggesting audio books to your child.

“Reading access, motivation and reading achievement act in a complex spiral - which can move downwards... or upwards.”

ALEX QUIGLEY



WHERE TO LOOK:

- School and community libraries not only offer free access to books, but they often also have audio books and e-books that your child could borrow.
- Book shops provide a chance for your child to browse and purchase books with support from staff, if they wish. Some book shops will have review cards with some of their top-picks too.
- Audio books can be purchased from devices such as phones, as well as on CDs or borrowed from a library.

HOW TO CHOOSE:

- Remember that it doesn't matter what they read: helping them to enjoy reading and find texts they want to read is the important thing. This might mean they find a book, collection of short stories or even a graphic novel, but it also might mean that they find a range of online articles, websites or magazines they enjoy reading.
- You could look at fiction books related to topics they are interested in, or encourage them to read about it online.
- If they've enjoyed a book before, encourage them to read another text by the same author.
- You and/or your child could spend some time browsing library or book shop shelves, speaking to the staff or reading book reviews online.
- If you are browsing in a shop/library/online, you could read the back of the books (blurbs) and a page from the start to help decide whether this feels like something they'd like to read more of.
- Ask your child's sixth form to send you the PiXL Half-termly Reading Newsletters to get ideas for texts your child may find interesting.

HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S READING AT HOME?

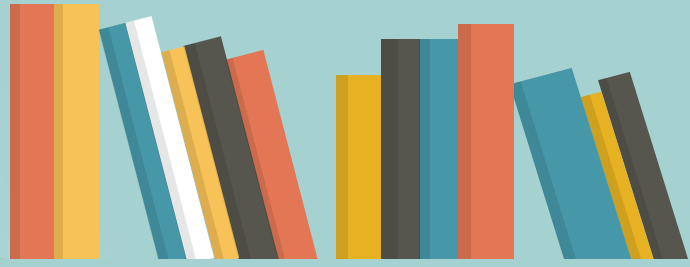
Your child may not feel they need your help, but they will appreciate your understanding and support. The tips below may provide you with some ideas for how to do this.

- Sharing your experiences about why reading is important for life and work, whilst being mindful not to add to any negative feelings, can help children to see that everyone struggles with certain things but it's worth persevering.
- Initially, many sixth formers find it hard to juggle all of their commitments and responsibilities such as independent study, hobbies, family time and reading. Help your child to balance their time by working with them to create a schedule.
- Take an interest in your child's wider reading by asking about what they're reading and studying at sixth form or by reading around topics as well so that you can engage in discussion about their texts/areas of learning, whilst modelling an interest in reading.
- Support your child with selecting age-appropriate texts for them to read for pleasure, rather than only encouraging them to read for their studies. You may wish to use the PiXL half-termly newsletters to see a wide selection of books, which your child's sixth form will receive.
- Remind your child that they could access audio books and take these on bike rides, walks or car journeys, if they don't want to pick up a book at first.
- Share your own reading with your child. For example, over dinner, you could mention you've been reading something and would like your child's opinion on the topic. Read an article to them whilst they eat and then discuss what you both think. Equally, they may also suggest books or articles to you, and if they do, try to follow up so that they can see you are genuinely interested.

“By sharing books, we can help our teens find their way in this crazy, mixed-up world.”

SARAH MACKENZIE

www.pixl.org.uk



- If you are due to drive for an extended period of time, you could put on an audiobook and share the text together at the same time.
- Research shows that reading can help to reduce stress and improve mental wellbeing. Linked to this, we know that there are numerous benefits to a good night's sleep, which can be significantly helped by a reduction in screen-time. At a time when we know students can feel under a lot of pressure to succeed, encouraging them to have a bedtime routine which includes reading could help with relaxing before they go to sleep.



“When we read, we can be inspired to want to build a better world and a brighter future. So keep reading and change the world.”

CHRISTOPHER EDGE

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