

Dear Dad, Uncle, Grandpa, Coach!

You have a superpower
that you may not know about.

You are an important example and role
model for your child. An important source
of attitudes, behaviours and habits.

Also, and perhaps above all, of reading.
So: read with your child! Reading aloud
has the power to build relationships.

You can even read aloud to your child
when it is in its mother's womb.
It's a great way to familiarise them
with your voice.

And then what?

You'll find the answer in this booklet.

Discover the superpower of books
and your own!

Read more
about the campaign at:
readingdad.com

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SUPERPOWER OF BOOKS

#Reading Dad

2026

The guide
for parents and
guardians



Maria Deskur, Edyta Plich | Illustration: Joanna Rusinek

Thank you very much to all parties involved!



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On the tram, in the waiting room, in bed; sitting, lying down, standing... read!

To yourself and, above all, to your child. At every stage of their development. By the age of three, children whose parents read regularly understand twice as many words as their peers! Reading promotes development, stimulates success in life. It helps to understand oneself and others; distances you from the difficulties of growing up. It provides knowledge which leads to empowerment.

The #ReadingDad campaign is an important call.

Today in many countries, boys and men read far less than girls and women. Certainly one of the reasons is the lack of a male reading role model – let's change this. **Dads, Uncles, Grandfathers, Big Brothers, Guardians, Coaches – READ!**

Every parent or guardian who reads regularly is a foundation of a child's future. In this brochure, we show you why.

If you are interested, please get in touch!

The authors

PS All the theses presented in this booklet are based on research.

A bibliography can be found at ReadingDad.com



SERVE AND RETURN

The human brain develops best in contact with another human being. A tiny baby needs nothing as much as contact with its loved ones. A book starts up by being a pretext for contact. It is the contact with the child that is most important.

How do you build up this contact?

By 'serving' (starting a conversation, asking questions) and waiting for the 'return' – asking questions and giving the child time to answer. It could be a nod, it could be a smile – it is very important to give the child the space to react, i.e., to return our service.

Elements

In doing so we lay the foundation for the most important things, such as:

- ▶ social competence (the child learns to respond from a young age),
- ▶ self-confidence (we signal from the start that his/her answer counts, because we are waiting for it!),
- ▶ emotional stability (because it comes from self-confidence and the ability to interact with people),
- ▶ cognitive competence (because we build it through contact, through spoken words, discussed pictures, content that we read and the child analyses).

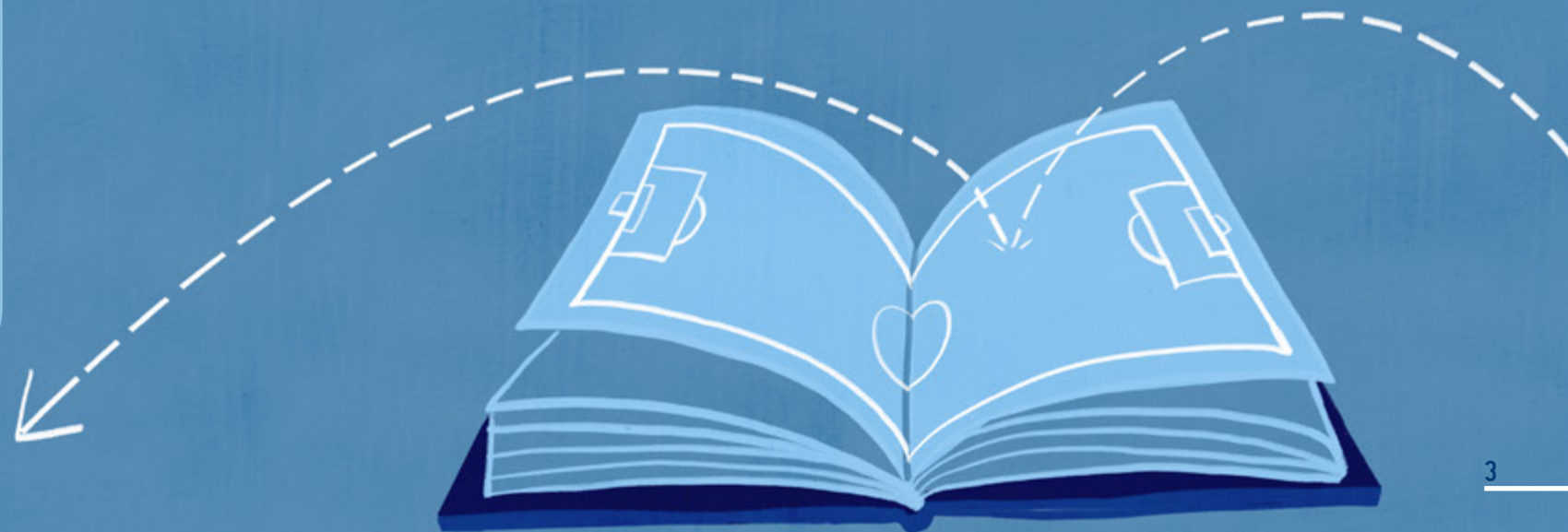
The child's brain will not develop as much if we leave it regularly alone with a toy or a screen.

Screens

You will find the slogan 'don't give your child a mobile phone' six times in this booklet. This is partly due to the structure of this publication: we assume that some readers will only glance at the page relating to their child's age – and if that page is about a child up to the age of approx. 8–9 years, the message must be there. Today already a great deal of research shows the enormous negative impact on children's development of too early and too intensive use of smartphones.

Every technology requires a certain maturity. Just as we do not give an infant a knife to play with or alcohol to drink, we should not leave him with a screen. Games, videos, fast-moving pictures – these are stimuli which are addictive (in the same way as alcohol, actually) and can disrupt the harmonious development of psycho-physical stability (just as a knife in an infant's hand impairs physical health).

It is fundamental today to support the development of skills for responsible use of smartphones - but to achieve this, it is first necessary to focus on the development of social, emotional and cognitive skills without a smartphone, and introduce it when the child is simply ready for it.



AGES 0-1

Yes

Start showing your child books no later than six months after birth. The aim is to share focusing your eyes and exchanging emotions between you – point to and name objects. With an infant you will be able to have these 'sessions' several times a day, but they will be short. Three to four minutes several times a day at this stage are enough.

No

Absolutely do not give an infant a mobile phone. You do not need to literally 'read'. At this stage it is not about reading texts together, but about looking at pictures together and building relationships through togetherness.

What

Cardboard books, large, simple illustrations, without details, colour contrasts, faces of babies, everyday objects.

Why

You will build contact with your child. But there is more. The first year of life is a period of a very dynamic brain development, which you can stimulate. Looking at books together, talking to your baby, provoking his reactions are the best, proven ways to stimulate the brain. Your child's brain will create more synaptic connections, will simply be better developed.



AGES 2–3

Yes

Read yourself, because we educate by example. Ask your child questions about books you read together. Comment on the illustrations, choose your favourite characters, read the same book many times – your child learns through repetition. Read wherever and whenever. At the bus stop, in the park, in the waiting room, in the library!

No

Don't turn on a fairy tale on TV to keep your child calm. Do not give a mobile phone, wait a bit longer to play audiobooks. Dad, don't abdicate, reading is NOT a task only for mothers.

What

Fairy tales, fables, stories, life stories, nursery rhymes. Colourful pictures, first search-and-find books.

Why

Your child will be happier. Children whose parents read regularly to them, understand twice as many words as their peers already at the age of three. They are emotionally stable and able to relate – they will be able to play with other children at school.



EMOTIONS / FRIENDSHIPS / LEARNING

Human development is holistic: we need to take care in parallel of all elements: emotions, brain, nervous system, physical and mental health. Contrary to appearances, all this is not so difficult, and a book is the most excellent support tool – because reading is a great social exercise, not just a cognitive one!

How?

Reading a story about characters who are experiencing something with a carer allows the child to practise certain situations, to tame risks, to ask questions, to feel emotions while remaining a little on the sidelines, in their comfort zone. In this way, they prepare themselves to experience real situations and learn to empathise, to understand the experiences of others.

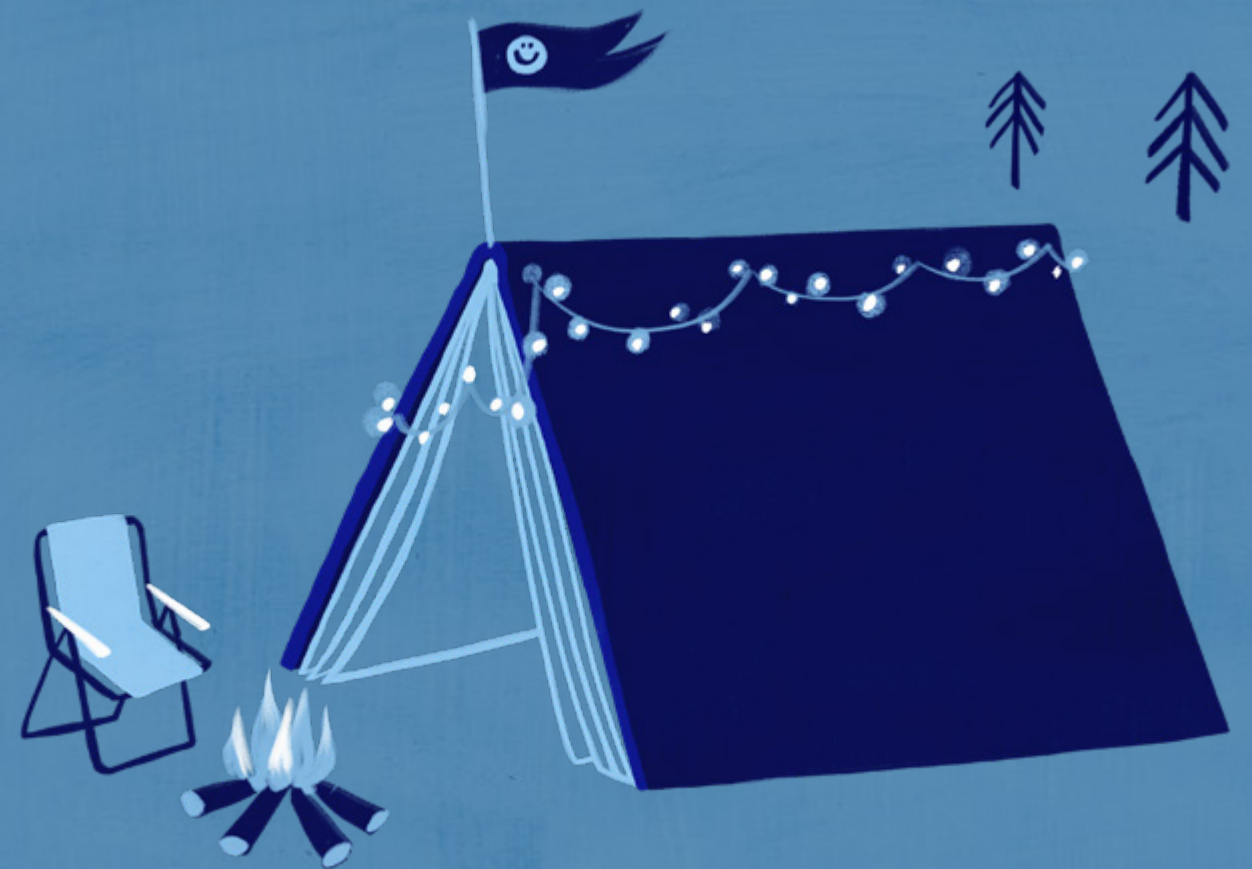


Social skills

Reading (and the necessary conversation about what we read!) is therefore the best preparation for social life, e.g., at school. Reading with a pre-school child is the best thing we can do for our toddler to help him cope in the classroom among twenty other children.

Emotional stability and coping in a group is the foundation of learning – if a child can't cope in a group, they won't be able to learn.

Giving a pre-school child a mobile phone is counter-productive. Apps, videos and games on a smartphone do not stimulate development, do not promote social competences.



AGES 4–5

Yes

It's high time to enrol your child in a library, show him/her the nearest bookshop, build their own library! Let your child choose his/her own books. Read favourite books, even dozens of times. Play with the book, ask questions, imitate voices, create alternative endings and new adventures.

No

Do not combine eating meals with watching TV. Do not give your child a mobile phone.

What

Listening to books and audiobooks. Simple plots around everyday life, poems, fairy tales, non-fiction books, richly illustrated.

Why

It will be easier for you later! Reading together and talking about books is the most important thing in preparing your child for school. In this way, children know more words, remember more, are emotionally more stable, find it easier to relate to their peers. All this ideally prepares a child for school success.



AGES 6–8

Yes

Provide opportunities for your child to practise reading on their own. Rapid success will encourage them to keep practising. Learning to read is also an extremely important concentration exercise. Continue to read aloud to your child, every day, read more complex books that your child will not yet be able to read on their own, but will appreciate.

No

Don't give your child a mobile phone.
Don't stop reading aloud!

What

Adventure, detective stories, mythologies, fairy tales, non-fiction, comics.
Fewer illustrations, more text.

Why

The first years of school are an extremely important time. The child learns to read in order to be able to read to learn. Reading is the most important and irreplaceable tool for all later education, including mathematics and technology. It is through reading that we are able to understand the content and concepts of technical sciences; reading exercises our understanding of cause-and-effect relationships, builds our critical thinking.



JOY / DEVELOPMENT / GOOD LIFE

We emphasise that a child should enjoy reading. Why is this so important?

The most significant research around reading has shown that children who read with pleasure, because they enjoy reading, will be more successful educationally, regardless of their socio-economic background.



Fundamental

The joy of reading naturally results in regularly reaching for books outside the school curriculum.

Regular independent reading builds all competences enumerated in various places in this booklet.

This child, then teenager, grows in a self-perpetuating positive harmony:

- ▶ The joy of reading fuels his/her hunger for reading.
- ▶ By satisfying this hunger for reading, he/she learns and develops:
 - achieves better academic results,
 - performs better in the labour market,
 - has enormous potential for a good and fulfilling life.

Reading and talking to a child beginning at a young age is a foundation for the whole lifetime.

Interestingly, in today's highly digital world, a statistically proven predictor of success is actually reading traditional paper books and a real, live conversation with another person.

AGES 9–10

Yes

Continue to read aloud together, but let your child read alone, too. Reading together creates common topics and an opportunity for conversation. A child reading on their own, for their own pleasure, is the foundation for educational and professional success. Chat with them, ask them what they are reading, and whether they want to go to the library or a bookshop to get a new book.

No

If you are able to, do not give your child a mobile phone yet. Definitely do not allow long hours of playing and scrolling on the phone. Don't turn on the TV at all times. Don't allow the use of mobile phones while eating. Don't do it yourself either.

What

Novels, humour, comics, Non-fiction. Favourite series or topics.

Why

A paradox: reading is about entering into a relationship. The child who reads learns emotions. If we read together with him/her and talk to them, we strengthen their social competence. At the stage just before puberty this is cosmically important – your child should have a strong relationship with you so that he/she is not afraid to bring up questions or problems. In this way, you reduce the risk of depressive states.



AGES 11-12

Yes

Encourage your child to choose books. Continue to read aloud to him/her. Borrow and buy books together. Talk about them. Don't limit yourselves to reading the books recommended at school! Look for texts your child enjoys just for the fun of it.



What

Deliberately chosen books for pleasure: novels, comics, educational books.



No

Don't stop reading aloud; don't let go, even if it seems there is no time because there is so much schoolwork.



Why

Children's reading fluency helps them do better in school in many dimensions: they communicate better, they understand information and concepts, work much better in teams, are more open to other views, while at the same time being better grounded in their own cultural identity.



AGES 13+

Yes

Continue to read together. When reading becomes a ritual, the child reads more. Reading on paper exercises the deepest understanding of meanings. Reading children pass exams better, also in mathematics.

No

Don't let go of conversations about books, it's a great way to keep in touch with your growing teenager!



What

Books for pleasure.
According to interests.

Why

Reading is a great technique for preparing for exams. 20 minutes of daily reading means 1,800,000 new words a year and a 90th percentile in exams. Reading improves self-awareness, nurtures problem-solving skills, teaches critical thinking and empowers for efficiency and leadership.

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Campaign coordination:

Maria Deskur, Magdalena Kosch-Mačkowiak, Agnieszka Nyc, Aleksandra Strzelecka

Text: Maria Deskur, Edyta Plich

Illustration: Joanna Rusinek

Graphic design: Dorota Nowacka

Editor: Agnieszka Bettlejewska

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Marcin Perfuński „supertata.tv”

Magdalena Kordaszewska „Zabawkowicz”

Piotr Kniota „Pigout”

Łukasz Orbitowski

Dr Tomasz Rożek

Łukasz Dominiak „Who's your Daddy”

Jan Dąbrowski „JDabrowsky”

Łukasz „Juras” Jurkowski

Dr inż. Adam Mirek

Krystian Hanke „Tatowanie”

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