WELCOME TO THE EARLY READING PACK!

storytime™ EARLY READING STARS!

Reading is a very important life skill, and it's never too early to instil a love of stories and reading in your children. That's what this pack is all about!



We created the ***Storytime*** **Early Reading Stars Pack** to provide inspiration for parents who want to share the joy of reading with their little ones. Preschool kids absorb a lot of knowledge from the world around them, and this time is when their linguistic skills develop. Reading to them at this age can enhance their development and benefit them for the rest of their lives.

This pack is full of facts, advice and activities that will help you turn story time into an exciting and enriching experience. It will also stimulate your children's minds and imaginations as you share brilliant times together. Follow the tips in this pack to inspire little ones to fall in love with reading and create wonderful memories!

It's time to start the reading journey of a lifetime!

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WHY IT'S GOOD TO START EARLY!

Reading to children before they can read by themselves has many benefits. Here are just a few of the reasons why starting early matters...

★ **WORDS AHEAD!** Young children absorb linguistic knowledge by listening to others, and the more words they hear, the better! **A child who is read to every day will hear approximately 169,570 words by the time they are five years old**, while a child who is never read to will only hear about 4,662 in the same period. Reading to children boosts their vocabulary and increases their understanding of grammar, which will benefit them at school and in adult life.

★ **SPEECH AND LANGUAGE SKILLS!** Reading aloud to young children helps develop **phonemic awareness**, or knowledge about the sounds that letters represent, which is a critical literacy skill. Early exposure to language patterns and vocabulary can enhance speech and language development.

★ **IMPROVED ATTENTION SPAN!** Regular reading sessions can improve a child's **attention span and concentration**, as they learn to focus on the story being told. This is an essential cognitive skill that supports learning in other areas as well. Neuroscientific research has shown that reading to young children stimulates the brain's language centres in the areas associated with narrative comprehension and visual imagery.

★ **BONDING AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING!** Reading together can strengthen the bond between parent and child, providing **a sense of security and comfort**. This shared activity can foster emotional development by helping children understand and express their feelings as well as develop empathy and understand different perspectives, which are critical components of social development.

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QUESTIONS TO START THEIR READING JOURNEY!

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Here are a few questions to ask when choosing stories that will appeal to your child! Pick the best tales to share with your child and make reading a part of your family life!



1 What are they interested in?

We have our own ideas about what kids 'should' like... but children are more likely to develop a love for stories if they are read ones that appeal to them. Do they like funny animals, dinosaurs or pirates? You could try flicking through issues of ***Storytime*** and let them pick tales that they like the look of! Doing this makes children feel that their opinion matters, which is very empowering.

2 Are the tales age-appropriate?

Look for books that match your child's developmental stage. For babies, focus on stories with simple, high-contrast images. Toddlers enjoy repetitive text, rhymes and bright, colourful pictures. Preschoolers might enjoy simple plots and clear illustrations. Ensuring the story is age-appropriate helps keep your child engaged!

3 Are the illustrations engaging?

For very young children, illustrations are just as important as text – if not more so! Look for books with clear, vivid images that match the story. Illustrations should be appealing and help to tell the story, even if your child isn't yet able to understand all the words. Pictures can capture their attention, help develop visual literacy skills and connect them with the characters!

4 Do you have a favourite place and time to read?

Creating a snug and comfortable environment for reading will help to make it a habit for you and your child. It might be a cosy corner with a cushion or a comfy armchair. A blanket could be handy in winter. When you and your child snuggle up together, you'll both feel it is time to enjoy stories. Choosing a time and creating a routine will help to make reading a habit for life!



5 Does the story encourage interaction?

Interactive books are excellent for young children as they help keep their attention and make reading a fun and participatory activity. Books with flaps to lift, textures to touch, or simple questions that ask your child to point out objects or repeat phrases can enhance their involvement. This interaction not only aids in comprehension but also builds a positive association with reading.

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TOP TIPS FOR READING TO YOUNG KIDS

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Are you all set? Here are some ways that you can make story time fun and engaging for your little ones!

READ IT *BEFORE* YOU READ IT!

If you have time, read through a story yourself before you read it to your child. That will make it easier to follow the steps below, as you will be familiar with the tale and can plan how you will tell it.

FIND YOUR RHYTHM!

The text in many books (and especially in kids' books) has a particular rhythm that makes it fun to read and listen to. Tune in to a story's unique 'beat' and emphasise it when you read.

MAKE THE STORY INTERACTIVE!

Reading (or being read to) needn't be a passive experience! You can pause sometimes to ask your child what a character in the story might be feeling, or what might happen on the next page.

USE YOUR SOUNDS!

As well as performing the story, you can provide sound effects. Why not add animal noises, engine sounds, rumbles or whooshes to the tale to make it even more exciting?

BRING THE TALE TO LIFE!

There is more to reading aloud than just reciting the words on the page. Put emotion into the story! You might even use different voices for different characters. If there are rhymes, put emphasis on them!

TALK ABOUT THE STORY!

When the tale is finished, ask your child what they thought about it. What did they find interesting, and what did they dislike? Can they think of another way it could have ended? Remember, the best stories live on in our minds long after we have closed the covers!

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WHEN? WHERE? WHAT?

In the previous activity, we recommended asking children things about the story you are reading them. This handy sheet has questions you can use for almost any tale!

There are no silly questions. Being curious is good!



Draw a picture of them in this frame!



A. WHO is the main character?

B. WHAT do they have to do?

C. WHERE do they go?

D. HOW do they get there?

E. WHY do they do it?

F. WHO helps them?

G. WHEN does the story take place?

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LET THEM BE THE AUTHOR!

Children love stories, so why not help them write one of their own by following these simple instructions?



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YOU WILL NEED

- several sheets of paper to write on
- stapler
- marker pen
- coloured pencils or felt tip pens

This story might become your child's favourite... because they wrote it!

If they don't feel like reading a new story one evening, you could suggest that you read their story instead. They can even add new chapters if they feel like it!

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

You need a subject for your book – why not choose a recent day out as a topic? It could also be about their holidays or even their last birthday party!

ASK YOUR CHILD TO TELL YOU THEIR STORY!

Help them to narrate what happened on their special day. Young kids can be very chatty, so pay attention to what they say. Note down what they tell you on a piece of paper.

WHAT WILL THEY CALL IT?

The two of you should come up with a cool title for the book! Write it on a sheet of paper in big letters, along with your child's name. This will be the cover. Your child can illustrate it or decorate it with stickers!

TIME TO WRITE!

Write one or two of your little author's sentences on each page and then put the pages in the right sequence. If there is a gap in the story, you can ask them to come up with some words to fill it in.

NOW GET THE PENCILS OUT!

Ask your child to illustrate each page. This can take a few days and be a really enjoyable part of the process as they revisit the tale and pick elements to draw. You can help if they are really little!

BINDING TIME!

When all the pages are finished, put them in the right order and staple them together to create a little book. You can add numbers to the pages with their help and show them how to count along the way!

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WONDERFUL WORD SPOTTING!

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This activity encourages your young one to focus on words while they enjoy a story! How many can they remember?

1. First, pick a story to read from an issue of *Storytime*. We suggest starting with a shorter tale, like a Famous Fable or a bedtime story from Short Stories, Big Dreams.

2. Read the story once, and when you finish, ask your child to list all the words that they remember from it. Write them in the box on the right.

3. Now, read the story out loud again and get your little one to call out when any of the words you wrote down appear in the story.

4. Cross out the words they spot! How many did they find in the tale?

Instead of crossing out a word, your child can put a fun sparkly sticker next to it!



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LEARNING EMPATHY AND RESPECT

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Reading doesn't just teach us about how to use words! Stories can also teach us important lessons about emotional literacy, which includes understanding feelings – our own *and* other people's!



★ **WHAT IS EMOTIONAL LITERACY?** *Emotional literacy* is being able to recognise, name and communicate about our emotions! *Empathy* is another aspect of emotional literacy – it is the ability to recognise and acknowledge the emotions of others. This is a very important skill to develop, as it helps us to get along with other people and understand our own feelings – which makes it easier to talk about them, too!

★ **HOW CAN STORIES HELP TO DEVELOP EMOTIONAL LITERACY?** Through stories, children meet lots of different characters who are going through a lot of different experiences and feeling lots of different things. Stories provide an environment in which kids can explore different emotions and how they feel.

★ **HOW CAN YOU APPLY EMOTIONAL LITERACY WHEN READING TO YOUR CHILD?** The easiest way is by asking them about how different characters might be feeling at different points in a story. They should pay attention to the facial expressions of the characters in the illustrations as well as the words of the story. Visual cues are very important when figuring out how others might be feeling!

★ **PLAY EMOTION BINGO! Go to the next page to try this fun game.**

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EMOTION BINGO!

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Print out these cards and keep them nearby when you read a story to children. Get them to point out emotions when a character in a tale experiences them!

 Happy	 Angry	 Disappointed
 Surprised	 Sad	 Scared
 Worried	 Disgusted	 Bored

 Relaxed	 Excited	 Angry
 Disgusted	 Overjoyed	 Upset
 Anxious	 Disappointed	 Surprised

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LETTER KNOCK-DOWN

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This activity combines letter recognition, hand-eye coordination and the fun of knocking things over! It can be played outdoors as well – make sure to keep score.

YOU WILL NEED:

- **1-4 players**
- **26 paper cups**
- **marker and paper**
- **foam or plush ball**
- **string to mark the throwing line**



HOW TO PLAY

1. Use the marker pen to draw a letter on all 26 cups, from **A to Z**. *(You can also stick the alphabet cards in this pack onto the cups instead!)*

2. Set up the cups on an area of floor. Some can be put on top of each other!

3. Place the string on the floor two metres away from the cups – this is where the players throw from.

4. It's time to play! Players take turns throwing the ball at the cups and trying to knock them over – the youngest player goes first!

5. When a player knocks a cup over, they have to shout out the letter on it. They also get to collect the cups they knock over.

6. Keep score on a piece of paper. Each player gets one point every time they knock over a cup **and** call out the letter on it!

7. When all the cups have been knocked over, the players can score extra points by using the cups they knocked over to spell out words. They get a point for each word they make!





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ACTIVITIES ON THE GO!

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Story time isn't the only time when children can build their language skills! Here are some fun and stimulating things you and your child can try while out and about!

1 Start a conversation

while doing errands together!

2 Ask questions

about what is going on around you, wherever you are!

3 Sing a song!

Make up the lyrics if you can't remember them!

4 Narrate your journey!

Turn a car or bus trip into an epic tale!

5 Bring a story!

Keep a book or magazine with you for when you have a spare moment!

6 Once upon a time...

Tell a tale about your childhood!

7 Play spotting games!

Ask the little ones to spot things in the world around them!

8 Name that word!

Ask them to come up with words beginning with a letter or sound.

9 PAPER AND PEN!

Instead of giving them a device, why not hand them pens and a notebook instead? They can draw and let their imaginations run wild!

10 GUESS IT!

Play a guessing game where you describe something you're thinking of!

11 READ IT ALL!

Read things you see while out and about: packaging, ads and signs!

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PLAY ALPHABET GAMES!

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Here are three games that will teach your children about letters and words while they have fun! Cut out the letter cards on the next page and pick a game to play with them.



Treasure Hunt

HOW TO PLAY:

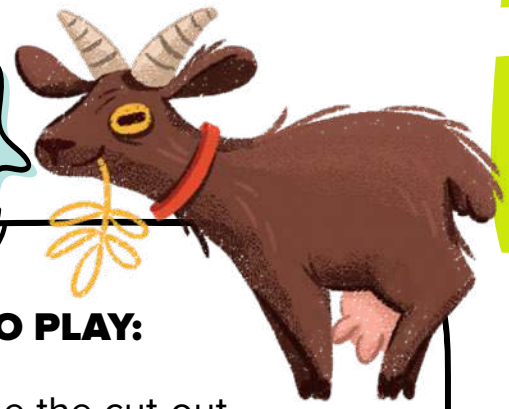
1. Print out the alphabet sheet and cut out the letters.
2. Put them in a bag or bowl and draw one at random.
3. Show them to the kids and challenge them to find something that begins with that letter. The first one to do so wins!



Spelling Wizard

HOW TO PLAY:

1. Jumble up the 26 letters on a tabletop.
2. Ask children to put them in the correct order, from A to Z!
3. You can also pick words from a story and get little ones to guess how they are spelled.



Word Jumble

HOW TO PLAY:

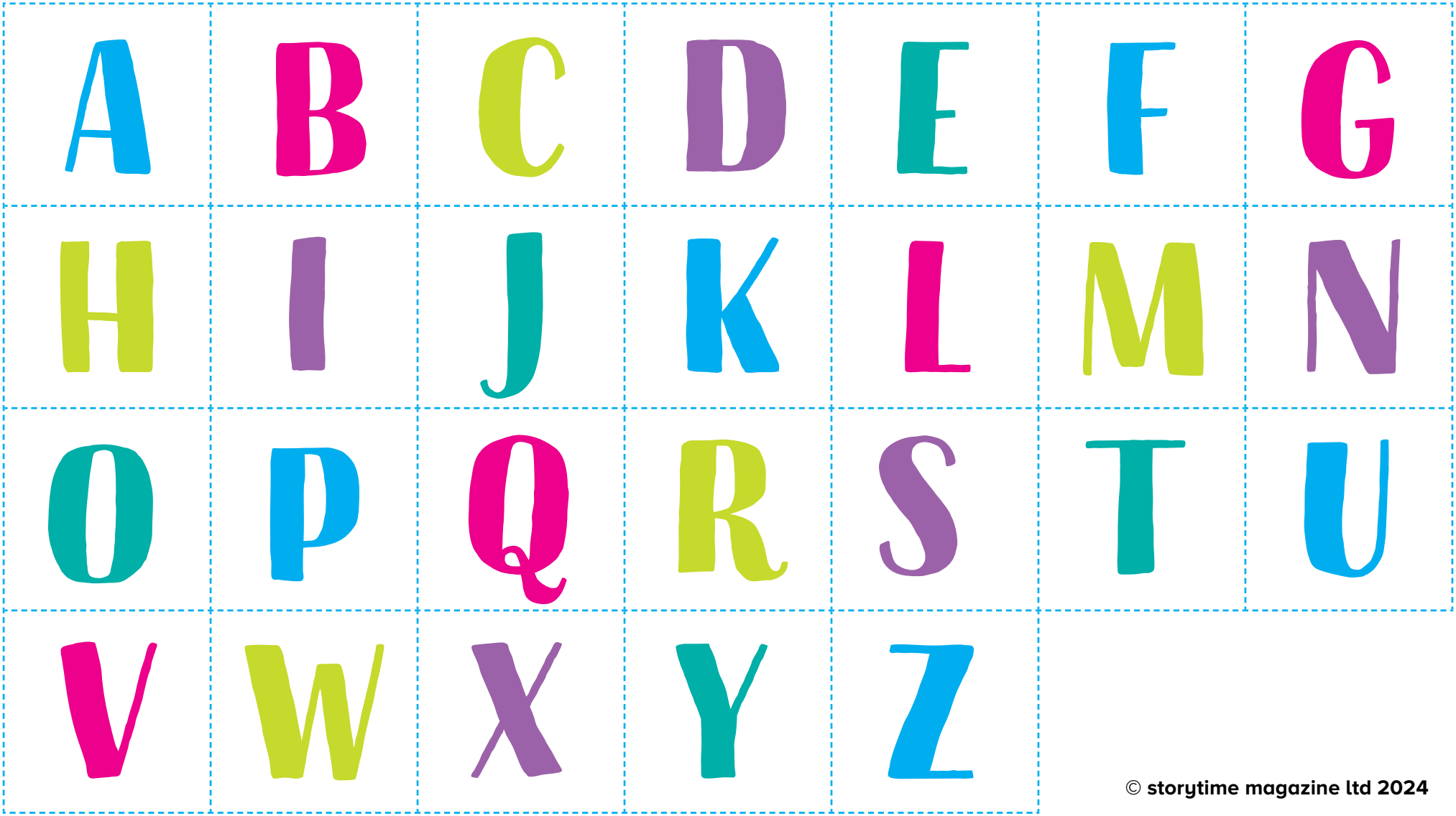
1. Shuffle the cut-out letters and then pick up eight of them.
2. Place them on a table in front of the kids.
3. Give the players a chance to make words using the letters. Challenge them to make as many words as they can! They can also try to make words from a story with the same letters.

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ALPHABET SHEET TO PRINT

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Print this as many times as you like and cut out the letters to play alphabet games!



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I WONDER...

Being read to doesn't have to be a passive experience – this activity will help little listeners to use their imaginations! Use these questions to stimulate and engage them before, during and after reading a story.



BEFORE READING THE STORY:

1. What is the story's title? Can you try to read it or sound it out?

2. Now you know the title, what do you think the story is about?

3. What type of story could it be? What kinds of characters might appear in it?

4. Why do you think you might like this story?

DURING THE STORY:

1. What words would you use to describe the main character?

2. How do you think the main character is feeling in the story? Why do you think this?

3. What has happened so far?

4. What do you think will happen next? How will it end?

5. Can you work out who is who in the illustrations?

AFTER READING THE STORY:

1. Did you like the story? Why or why not?

2. Who do you think was the coolest character? Why?

3. What do you imagine might happen after the story ended?

4. Did any of the characters or locations in the story remind you of people or places you know?

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MAKE STORY TIME A FUN TIME!

To spice up reading sessions, try doing these things while sharing a story!

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INVITE KIDS TO JOIN IN!

When reading a story with repeated words or phrases, encourage kids to join in when you get to those parts! This will help the little ones to feel involved in the story.

USE PICTURES!

Children's stories have lovely illustrations (like in Storytime!), and these can be extra fun. Ask kids to identify different characters in the illustrations, and get them to point out details in the art.

ASK QUESTIONS!

At appropriate points in the story, ask them about what happened, or what might happen next!



WORD SPOTTING!

Before you start reading a story, go through it and pick out an interesting word. Mention this word to your child and ask them to call out when the word comes up!

READ IN NEW PLACES!

We encourage you and your child to set up a special 'reading space' in your home, but there's no reason why you have to use it all the time! To keep things interesting, try reading a story in a park, a treehouse or a garden. The new location will make the experience unique and memorable.

HAVE A GUEST READER!

Establishing the habit of reading together is brilliant, but on special occasions you could invite a 'guest reader' to story time. It could be a grandparent or other relative or a family friend. They might tell stories in a new and inspiring way!

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WORD OF THE DAY CHART



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When you read a story with your child, choose a word that appears in it that they are curious about and write it down in the chart below. This is a great way to build your child's vocabulary!

WORD OF THE DAY	WORD OF THE DAY	WORD OF THE DAY	WORD OF THE DAY
_____	_____	_____	_____
Date: ____ / ____ / ____	**Date:** ____ / ____ / ____	**Date:** ____ / ____ / ____	**Date:** ____ / ____ / ____
Meaning: _____	**Meaning:** _____	**Meaning:** _____	**Meaning:** _____
_____	_____	_____	_____
WORD OF THE DAY	**WORD OF THE DAY**	**WORD OF THE DAY**	**WORD OF THE DAY**
_____	_____	_____	_____
Date: ____ / ____ / ____	**Date:** ____ / ____ / ____	**Date:** ____ / ____ / ____	**Date:** ____ / ____ / ____
Meaning: _____	**Meaning:** _____	**Meaning:** _____	**Meaning:** _____
_____	_____	_____	_____

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ABOUT STORYTIME

Storytime is the UK's favourite story magazine, loved by thousands of little ones around the world! It's created to appeal to young readers, making it the perfect way to start your child's reading journey.

It's an **ideal choice for kids aged 0-5** because it's full of wonderful stories that spark the imagination, with colourful illustrations that bring every tale to life. There are no adverts or plastic toys – just **pure storytelling magic**!

Many children **prefer to read magazines rather than books** because they're fun and easy to explore. With ***Storytime***, children can enjoy a variety of stories in each issue, making it a playful and engaging way to develop a love for reading. Plus, the stories come with extra activities to keep little hands busy and little minds active. The short-story format and variety of tales in each issue means it's also **perfect for reading together at home**.

Sharing these stories together is a lovely way to bond with your child. Just **10 minutes of reading a day** can also make a big difference in developing your child's literacy and linguistic skills. Reading them tales from ***Storytime*** regularly means you're giving your child a head start in discovering the joy and benefits of great storytelling!

Let ***Storytime*** be your child's first step into a world of reading fun!

DID YOU KNOW?

- There are eight short stories in every issue, including fairy tales, myths and legends, tales from other cultures, fables, and new fiction and real-life adventures.
- We include stories for children at different levels of reading ability! Each issue also has puzzles, games and activities, as well as illustrations that bring the tales to life.
- ***Storytime*** complements the National Curriculum and helps to develop reading, writing and comprehension skills.
- Younger children will typically read ***Storytime*** with an adult, but children aged seven and upwards may wish to read it independently. It's a wonderful resource for children who have English as a second language.
- It's printed on high quality paper, so each issue has great play value and children can enjoy their favourite stories again and again!
- Each issue arrives in a colourfully designed envelope, and children will love receiving their own post!

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