

# Story Power

A guide to  
reading clubs



# Welcome!



All over South Africa people are starting reading clubs to get young people reading! Some of these clubs have been running for a number of years, while others are just starting – but what they all have in common, is that they have caught the story-bug and they don't want to let it go!

Are you thinking about starting a reading club? Or do you already have one but you're looking for tips and ideas? Then this Story Power guide is for you! In it you can find out what a reading club is, how to start one and how to keep it going so that children want to keep coming back to your club.

Did you know that your club can be part of the Nalibali network of reading clubs? Register your club at [www.nalibali.org](http://www.nalibali.org) or [www.nalibali.mobi](http://www.nalibali.mobi).

We're glad that you have joined us in reading to children regularly!

## The Nalibali team

**PS:** This guide is available in eleven South African languages. Look out for other guides in the Story Power series! Go to [www.nalibali.org](http://www.nalibali.org) to find them.



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# What is a reading club?



People start reading clubs because they know how important telling stories, reading and writing are in our lives. They want to provide regular opportunities for children to enjoy reading, writing and listening to stories. They know that when children experience the joy of stories and books regularly, they will grow to love reading and also become better at it. So, what is a reading club?

## Reading clubs in a nutshell

- ★ A reading club is a place where children go by choice to enjoy books and stories. Nobody is forced to go – it's something you choose to do.
- ★ It's a relaxed environment that is more like home than school.
- ★ It's a place where people who love stories and books meet regularly to read, tell stories and talk about what they are reading with children of all ages. Sometimes they also do other fun activities related to stories and books. And often there's time for club members to write too ... because reading and writing go together.
- ★ All of these things can happen in any language – in fact, lots of clubs tell and read stories in two or more languages!

## More about reading clubs

- ★ A reading club can be a place to learn to read if you can't read at all or to improve your reading if you don't read very well.

Find more information on reading clubs in the special "Reading clubs" section of our website and mobisite – [www.nalibali.org](http://www.nalibali.org) and [www.nalibali.mobi](http://www.nalibali.mobi).

- ★ Anyone can be involved: toddlers, children, teenagers, moms, dads, grandparents, volunteers and other caregivers.
- ★ Some clubs are big, with up to 50 children and five or six adult volunteers. They meet in large venues like the ones you will find at schools, libraries and community centres. Other clubs are smaller, like ones where adults host small reading groups in their homes for five or six children who live with or near them.
- ★ Most clubs are run by adults, but some clubs have been started and run by children and teenagers in their homes, or at school during break or after school.
- ★ All clubs meet regularly – at least once a week. Some clubs meet as part of the regular programmes run for children at church, temple or mosque, or as part of the after-school care programme at school. There are even clubs especially for babies and toddlers at libraries!



# Starting a reading club

So you're inspired to start a reading club? There's no single correct way of doing this. You need to do what is easiest for you because that way you are more likely to be able to keep the club going and growing! Here are some ideas to guide you.



- ★ **Who?** Reading clubs are best run by people who love stories and books and want to help children grow to love stories and reading. You don't have to know a lot about stories yourself – you'll learn about the wonderful world of children's stories by getting involved in a club. Most reading clubs are run by volunteers, so you don't get paid money. Your payment is in the fun you have and the satisfaction that you are making a difference!
- ★ **How many?** Decide how many volunteers you can find to help you organise activities at your reading club. Use this to help you decide how many children you can accommodate: five children per adult usually works well. The fewer children you have, the more attention you can give each of them. It's a good idea to start small – even five children with an adult is a reading club. Then you can grow your club over time, if you want to.
- ★ **Where?** A reading club can happen anywhere that is quiet and safe – at school, aftercare, a library, a community hall or clinic. Start one in someone's house or garage, at Sunday School or your mosque or temple – wherever is easiest for you!
- ★ **When?** A reading club can meet anytime that is convenient. It can last for half an hour, or two hours. It's up to you! Most reading clubs take place once a week. You could meet more often, but it shouldn't be less!
- ★ **What?** Reading clubs need an open space to meet in. Something to drink and eat is always good, if possible. And cushions and carpets are more comfortable than desks and chairs. But reading can also happen under a tree, lying on the grass, or anywhere else that feels right. Mostly, you need good reading material to keep everyone interested – picture books, novels, information books, poetry, rhymes and songs, newspapers and magazines.

To register your reading club with the Nal'ibali network, visit [www.nalibali.org](http://www.nalibali.org) or [www.nalibali.mobi](http://www.nalibali.mobi).



# What to do at a reading club

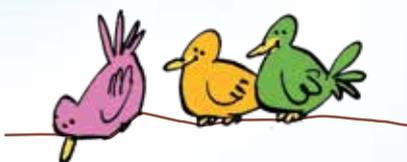
Do you need some help with reading club activities? Here are some suggestions. Certain activities are great to do each time you meet. Choose from the other activities depending on how they link with the books and stories you are sharing and how much time you have. Change some activities each week to help keep your reading club sessions fresh and interesting and to encourage the children to attend regularly!

- ★ **Games and songs:** These are fun ways to start a session. Teach the children the games and songs that you used to play and sing as a child and play ones they know too. Sing songs in the home languages of all the children and also in other languages.
- ★ **Reading aloud and storytelling:** Read aloud and tell a story in each session to share adventures and experiences that real life doesn't offer. Children will become excited and curious about new topics so they'll be eager to learn ... and their vocabularies will grow too!
- ★ **Reading together and alone:** Let children who can already read, share books together in small groups or pairs. They can also read to other children in the club who are not yet reading. Join in by letting a child read to you or by reading to a small group of children. Sometimes also let children spend time alone with a book, reading silently or looking at the pictures and telling their own story. Spending time with books in these ways encourages children to choose and share books they are interested in.
- ★ **Talking about books:** Introduce new books by showing them to the children and telling them a little bit about each one to get them curious and keen to read.



- ★ **Writing:** Give children different opportunities to write. They can make their own books to read themselves and share with others, or write about books they have read, or make greeting cards for friends and family. Offer to help children who do not yet have the confidence to write on their own by writing down what they tell you.
- ★ **Art, crafts and drama:** Encourage the children to paint or draw pictures, or to make puppets or other objects related to the story you have read or told. Or, allow time for the children to act it out.

Visit our Facebook page  
([www.facebook.com/nalibaliSA](http://www.facebook.com/nalibaliSA))  
every day for more reading club  
inspiration and activity ideas – or  
share your ideas with us!



# Finding reading resources

Children learn to read by reading! Once the seed of reading has been planted, you need to keep nurturing it so that their love of reading grows stronger. This means making sure that your reading club has lots of interesting things that children will love to read. Here are some ideas to help you do this.



## 1. Buy books

Organise events, like a braai or cake sale, to raise money to buy books for your club. Then, look for cheaper books at bargain bookshops, second-hand bookshops and charity book sales.

## 2. Borrow books

Your public or school library is a great source of free reading material. Get all your reading club members and volunteers to join up so that you can borrow lots of different books.

## 3. Get books as gifts

Ask everyone you know to donate a book to your club on their birthday.

## 4. Book collection drives

Ask all the schools or churches in your area to collect books for your club. Remember to make sure that all donated books are appropriate for the children at your club!

## 5. Get the Nal'ibali newspaper supplement

Create your own bilingual books using the cut-out-and-keep books in the Nal'ibali newspaper supplements. Cut out the longer stories in the "Story corner" section. Paste these onto a large sheet of cardboard. Cover this with plastic or clingwrap to protect it.

## 6. Find free stories

Visit websites where you can download stories for children and teenagers. Nal'ibali ([www.nalibali.org](http://www.nalibali.org), [www.nalibali.mobi](http://www.nalibali.mobi)), Bookdash ([www.bookdash.org](http://www.bookdash.org)) and African Storybook ([www.africanstorybook.org](http://www.africanstorybook.org)) have a wide variety of books and stories for children in different languages that you can download and print (or read online) for free. Fundza ([www.fundza.co.za](http://www.fundza.co.za), [www.live.fundza.mobi](http://www.live.fundza.mobi)) offers exciting free stories for teens on their cellphones.

## 7. Become story writers

Write your own stories for and with children. Children are a talking, living resource, with their own rich stories just waiting to be told, written down and read.

## 8. Be story miners

Look for stories in newspapers and magazines that you think would interest members of your reading club. Cut them out and use them to create story cards.

Children who like reading are motivated to read and are more confident and better readers than children who do not like reading.

*Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), 2011*



# Creating a print-rich environment



How much print is there in your children's environment? Do they see signs, notices, advertisements, magazines, posters, books, letters, emails, newspapers and magazines around them as they go about their daily lives? And how many languages are these things written in?

Children learn to read more easily when they are surrounded by print because print-rich environments show them what reading and writing can be used for. Here are six ideas to help you make your reading club venue a print-rich environment.



## 1. Create posters

Think about what interests the children who attend your club and make your own posters on these topics. Draw your own pictures or use ones from newspapers and magazines. Then write information, slogans or messages in one or more languages to complete the posters. Display the posters where it is easy for the children to read them, and replace them regularly to keep the children interested!

## 2. Make rhyme, song and riddle posters

Write rhymes, songs and riddles in different languages onto large sheets of paper. Ask the children and their family members for suggestions and use the ones you know as well.

Spend time saying the rhymes or riddles, and singing the songs together with the children – remember to point to the words as you read or sing. Encourage the children to read and re-read the posters by themselves or with friends. If they want to, allow them to copy the posters and make their own small versions to take home and share with their families.

## 3. Make an alphabet washing line

Together with the children, write the letters of the alphabet on separate sheets of paper and draw a picture for each letter. (Children love to draw a picture of themselves to go with the first letter of their name!) Put a piece of string across the

room and use pegs to hang up the letters in alphabetical order.

## 4. Overflow with print

Collect different types of writing that you think would interest the children. Try to find take-away menus, old greeting cards, train or bus timetables, information pamphlets, advertisement flyers, newspapers and magazines. The children may enjoy reading some of these, but they can also use them as props when they act out stories, or cut them up when they make their own cards, posters, pictures or books.

## 5. Use the library

Borrow books from your library – it's an endless supply of free reading material! Remind the children about how to look after books so that they can be enjoyed by lots of other children too!

## 6. Be a role model

Read to and with children. Talk about your own reading habits – what you are reading, where you like to read, who your favourite authors are and why. You can also write for and with the children.

When reading feels good to  
children, they become readers.  
We all repeat things that  
are pleasurable.

*John Monfredo*

# Connect with Nal'ibali

Become part of the Nal'ibali network and use the power of stories to inspire children to want to read and write.

Visit our different platforms for reading-for-enjoyment resources and tips, and children's stories in 11 languages.

## Nal'ibali supplements

Get your bilingual reading-for-enjoyment newspaper supplement in the *Sowetan*, *Sunday Times Express*, the *Daily Dispatch* and *The Herald*. For more information, visit [www.nalibali.org](http://www.nalibali.org).



## Nal'ibali on radio

Tune in to Nal'ibali's radio programmes on SABC's public stations and enjoy children's stories in all 11 official languages. Visit [www.nalibali.org](http://www.nalibali.org) for the Nal'ibali **radio schedule**.

## [www.nalibali.org](http://www.nalibali.org)

Visit the Nal'ibali **website** for free tip sheets, literacy blogs, reading tips and children's stories.



## [www.nalibali.mobi](http://www.nalibali.mobi)

Get storytelling and reading tips, reading club support and stories in 11 South African languages – on your **cellphone!**



## Social media

Join the conversation on **Facebook** and follow us on **Twitter** and **Instagram** for inspirational reading-for-enjoyment tips and updates. You can also visit our **YouTube** channel, [www.youtube.com/user/TheNalibaliChannel](http://www.youtube.com/user/TheNalibaliChannel) for useful reading club tips.



Contact us by calling our call centre on **02 11 80 40 80**, or in any of these ways:  [www.nalibali.org](http://www.nalibali.org)  [www.nalibali.mobi](http://www.nalibali.mobi)

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