

# Reading Ahead



## **Programme Guidance for Coordinators**

**July 2025 - July 2026**

## What is Reading Ahead?

Reading Ahead is an annual programme that can be delivered throughout the year and takes place in libraries and learning settings. It is designed to engage people in reading for pleasure, often for the first time, which in turn helps them to improve their language and literacy skills. Reading Ahead asks participants to choose six reads; these can be books, magazines, recipes, letters – anything! After completing each read, participants can share their thoughts on what they've read by filling out a review and work towards receiving a certificate for completion. The programme includes a unique reading database to search for reads at the right reading level and a hub of supporting guidance, learning resources and promotional materials on The Reading Agency website.

## Who is it for?

Reading Ahead is mainly aimed at young people and adults who are less confident readers, who want to improve their literacy and language skills or get back into reading. It is run in prisons, public libraries, colleges, adult community learning centres and workplaces.



## How to take part

**Core materials** Reading Ahead is delivered with print materials. All materials are available to order from The Reading Agency [online shop](#). You will need to order one of the core packs to get started.

The print pack contains:

A4 foldout reading diaries

A5 flyers

A3 posters

Bookmarks

A4 certificates



In addition to the printed materials, programme coordinators will have access to supporting materials on The Reading Agency website. This includes:

### Reading Ahead resources database

A hub of downloadable learning resources including social media and promotional assets, author content, booklists, and toolkits.

### Incentives for participants

We sell rewards and incentives such as pens, tote bags, water bottles and sticky notes, available to order from The Reading Agency shop.

## Prison partnership with Give A Book

Thanks to our partnership with Give A Book, coordinators running Reading Ahead in prisons can apply for free dictionaries to award completers, following return of organisation evaluation forms. Contact [readingahead@readingagency.org.uk](mailto:readingahead@readingagency.org.uk) for further details.



## Getting started

### Target audience & partners

The first step to getting started with Reading Ahead is to establish your target audience and plan for reaching and supporting them throughout the programme.

- Could Reading Ahead support other programmes such as a regular literacy class or reading group, or engage parents visiting the library with children e.g. for baby rhyme time?
- Could it be a way to attract new audiences to your services?

Making connections with potential partners can be a great way to reach those who will most benefit from the programme and to share resources and expertise. These may be organisations with whom you already work, or this may be an opportunity to set up new links. They could include:

- Public libraries
- Further education or sixth form colleges
- Trade union learning reps in local workplaces
- Family learning providers and children's centres
- Voluntary sector groups
- Housing associations, homeless groups, neighbourhood groups
- Adult Community Learning, ESOL tutors and conversation classes
- Prison library or education departments
- Sports organisations

### Partnership aims & outcomes

Agreeing clear aims and outcomes will be crucial to the success of a partnership. These might be:

- To encourage more learners to get into the reading habit
- To help learners improve their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills
- To increase library membership
- To start a reading group or shared reading activity

## Reading Levels

Reading Ahead is used to support a wide range of reading levels. This includes:

- Adults at pre-entry and Entry Level 1-2 'emergent readers'
- Adults who can read but who have yet to build reading enjoyment and experience (Entry Level 3/ Level 1)
- ESOL learners (English as a second or other language)
- GCSE students
- Competent readers who may not have picked up a book for several years, especially where a wider reading culture would benefit a whole organisation such as a workplace, college or prison.

Your readers are likely to vary in reading level so make sure you're prepared with a wide range of engaging reading materials available at your first session. Ensure that staff and librarians are confident giving recommendations at the right reading level for your participants. If you are running Reading Ahead in a library, think about how you can introduce new users to the space in a supportive way. The library can be an intimidating space for new readers! If you are running Reading Ahead in a workplace or learning centre, get in touch with your local library and arrange an induction for your learners. The library is a space to access reading for free - including books, magazines, newspapers, audiobooks and online options.

## Reading Materials and Quick Reads

Reading Ahead aims to spark engagement in reading.

This may be achieved through exploring poetry, magazine or newspaper articles, recipes or through other formats such as e-books, audio, websites, or digital games. Share and let us know on social media what your readers are enjoying! #QuickReads #ReadingAhead

Quick Reads are a great way to get new readers engaged. They are accessible, short reads written for young people and adults. The books are written by bestselling authors and can be a great entry point to that author's other books or to a genre or subject. Quick Reads are available to order from your library supplier, book retailers and local bookshops and e-retailers.

## Launch

Most organisations choose to launch Reading Ahead in September, in line with the academic calendar, but you can start at any time. Our programme 'year' runs from July to July. Here's how you can raise interest in the programme and get everyone excited about taking part:

- Share some quotes or short videos from people who have taken part before (ensuring you have collected appropriate permission from participants in advance)
- Use the promotional materials on the Reading Agency website to spread the word on social media, by displaying posters and distributing flyers
- Think about how you can communicate with those taking part: in person, via email or Whatsapp, a Facebook group or other social media
- Invite a local author to help launch the programme by visiting the library, sharing a video or joining in on social media

## Register participants

Get participants registered and ensure you have a clear plan for record keeping. This will allow coordinators to keep in touch with participants and make it easy to feedback on progress in the end of delivery evaluations. Set up a simple system for signing up to take part, for example using the downloadable registration forms on the Reading Ahead Resources page.

Use social media, noticeboards, local news and intranets to keep everyone up to date and maintain momentum. Engage nationally on social channels using #ReadingAhead @readingagency



## Evidence: Reach and Impact

You will need to provide evidence about reach and impact at the end of your programme delivery. We ask that each organisation submits an evaluation form that includes the number of people who registered and completed Reading Ahead. Completer numbers show us how many people you've reached through your work. No number is too big or too small! Every setting is different, and we want to count everyone reached through the programme and celebrate your success. Decide at the outset how you will record this information safely and securely. **The evaluation forms are available on the Reading Ahead website. Please anonymise all data for GDPR purposes and let us know if you have any questions about how we use data.** We also ask participants to fill out a short evaluation to tell us how they found the programme. Printed sign-up forms will be included in your core materials. Please photocopy and distribute this form to everyone who takes part, even if they don't finish. A digital version of the form will also be available on the Reading Agency website in the Resources section.

## Completion

When you have finished delivering the programme, fill in the organisation evaluation form and encourage your participants to do the same. Hold a certificate presentation ceremony! For many participants receiving a personalised certificate for their achievement is one of the best parts about Reading Ahead! We encourage you to make the most out of the celebration. This could be in person or online. Invite a guest speaker to hand out certificates or record a message. Invite the family and friends of participants, senior management and all those who worked on the programme. It is a time to celebrate the achievement of participants and your team! Share your photos with @readingagency #ReadingAhead #QuickReads

**Reading  
brings us  
together**

