

# “Learning to Read” books online

## Concern:

Are students really reading (that is, are they applying decoding and comprehending strategies) while learning from home?

How do you know?

If you were a champion swimmer, but had not been in the swimming pool since January, could you win a competition? No amount of worksheets or demonstration videos will keep your swimming skills up to date. You need to “get wet”.

This is the case with reading.

While many students are getting the online experience of **being read to** by the teacher (reading aloud teaching strategy), what reading of texts are students actually doing? How are they “getting wet”?

- Are students practising reading strategies by using books they can decode and comprehend independently?
- Are students reading authentic texts?
- Are students reading texts at their level?
- Are students able to read aloud TO their teacher online or on video so there is:  
(a) a motivating purpose to practise reading  
(b) an opportunity for teachers to track progress?
- Are you explicitly teaching decoding and comprehension strategies on your online and video lessons to:  
(a) teach new skills  
(b) remind students of skills they need to practice?
- How will you build students reading aloud into lessons when students are at school for half days?
- Is reading aloud text a priority when students are at school for half days?

**Note:** An effective reading programme includes students reading in small groups, using books at their ability level (not the year level but their “reading ability” level).

Reading “**topic**” books can be frustrating for students who have lower reading ability. These books have their place in an English programme. But if we want to develop reading skills (like swimming skills) we do not throw students in the deep end. They need levelled books.

**Reading independently without teacher guidance** can only go so far. Most students have gone many months without books and explicit reading strategies guidance.

- How can we build that into online learning lessons?
- How can we help at school where books may not be used at the moment?

## Online books are an option:

Research shows that over 30% of Hong Kong homes do not have any books. So we must provide these somehow in these challenging times.

Books for reading and “**learning to read**” are different. But not all online libraries are useful for “learning to read”. We need levelled books where students can practice with success, given there is less teacher presence.

## Reading A to Z (RAZ)

Some schools have taken a one year subscription of **Reading A to Z (RAZ)** <https://www.readinga-z.com/>. These are excellent books, in black and white, and levelled for ability to the (RR 1-30 levels). The cheapest books you can get online.

Other online reading programmes with a focus on reading skills (and high frequency words and repeated syntactic structures) include:

### Sunshine online

There are two online series, each with different functionality and different subscription process. All books are levelled GUIDED READING books.

#### 1. *Sunshine Online*

All their guided / levelled reading books are online, accompanied by interactive activities.

#### 2. *Sunshine classics*

Teachers can create book collections for students to read and their book reading is tracked. Other functions too.

See **attached brochure** from Kiwik with subscription costs. And see URL for details:  
<https://sunshinebooks.com.au/online-resources/sunshine-online/>

### Keylinks

I have sent information on this NEW up to date series recently. They have online reading and digital activities for their GUIDED READING books as well.

<http://www.keylinks.com.au/>  
[http://www.keylinks.com.au/guided\\_reading.asp](http://www.keylinks.com.au/guided_reading.asp)

View all book titles on a colourful PDF poster:  
[http://www.keylinks.com.au/pdfs/Key\\_Links\\_poster.pdf](http://www.keylinks.com.au/pdfs/Key_Links_poster.pdf)

**EPIC APP** <https://www.getepic.com/>

30 days free trial.

This APP you can be put on all school tablets. Teachers LOVE it. To have **free access** to the library, you need to register using an email address with either 'gov' or 'edu' in the address

This site has over 20,000 books (I believe). They are of excellent "literary" quality (not designed for learning to read like guided reading books) though you will find a lot there that are similar. Many books have audio readings for students to track as audio reads aloud to them.

Some schools use these apps to:

- create a small collection of books for students/groups/class to work on (their reading is tracked into class lists)
- create a bundle of mixed texts around a topic (like the DTS schools use)
- independent reading during self-managing group time (when other groups are in guided reading)
- ECA
- English day
- library resource
- home reading - parents pay US\$7 a month

