

READING CULTURE · WHOLE SCHOOL

Drop Everything And Read

Starter pack for schools

What DEAR is, and why it works

Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) is a school-wide initiative where, at a set time each day or week, every adult and every child stops what they're doing and reads silently for 15-30 minutes. Phones away. Marking down. Computer off. Just reading. The research base is solid: regular sustained silent reading is one of the strongest predictors of reading attainment, particularly for less confident readers. The mechanism is partly direct (reading mileage), partly cultural (it signals reading is a valued adult activity, not a 'school chore'). This pack covers the practical setup — what to send to staff, what to send to parents, how to time it, common pitfalls, and a 6-week launch plan.

Timing options

Option	Pros	Cons
Daily 15 mins, fixed time (e.g. 9.00–9.15)	Routine, becomes automatic, no diary needed	Hard to fit if curriculum is tight
3x weekly 20 mins (e.g. Mon/Wed/Fri 1.30–1.50)	Manageable, gives time to settle into a book	Easier to drop when busy
Weekly 30 mins (e.g. Friday 2.30–3.00)	Easy to schedule, becomes a treat	Children may not get into a book
Surprise / 'spotted' DEAR — rung at random times	Energy and novelty	Disrupts curriculum; harder to embed habit

Staff briefing — read aloud at staff meeting

GOAL: Every adult and every child in the building reads silently for 15-30 minutes at the agreed slot. No exceptions for staff. The teaching assistant reads. The headteacher reads. The school



secretary, if she can, reads. A child whose parent is visiting? They both read. The goal is NOT comprehension testing. NOT recording books. NOT reading levels. We are not 'doing literacy' during this time. We are READING. PRACTICAL: • Children who haven't brought a book? Have a class basket. Borrow. • Children who 'finish' / can't focus? Whisper-confer. Pick another book. We don't move on to spelling or maths. • Children at very early reading stages? Picture-book picture-walk is reading. • Adults: model the behaviour. Sit with your book. Don't sneak marking. They'll notice. • PLAYTIME announcement / bell to start and end.

Parent letter (template — adapt and send home)

Dear families, From [DATE], our school is launching Drop Everything And Read (DEAR). At [TIME], everyone in the building — every child, every teacher, every member of staff — stops what they are doing and reads silently for [DURATION]. The research is clear that children who read for pleasure regularly become stronger readers, stronger writers, and stronger learners across the curriculum. DEAR builds the habit at school. Your support at home is what makes it stick. HOW YOU CAN HELP: • Make sure your child has a book at school each day. Any book they want to read counts — fiction, non-fiction, comics, magazines, audiobooks (with a paper copy if possible). • Read with them at home, even briefly. Your reading is the strongest signal. • Don't worry about 'level'. A book is the right level if your child wants to read it. • Ask: 'What did you read in DEAR today? What was it like?' We are happy to lend books from the school library. If your child needs help finding something, please let their class teacher know. Thank you, [HEADTEACHER]

Six-week launch plan

WEEK -2 (before launch): • Senior leadership decides time, day, duration • Staff briefing — share this pack • Letter goes home to parents • Library audit — does every class have access to enough books? • Class baskets stocked (10-20 mixed-level books per classroom for children who forget) WEEK 1: • Whole-school assembly explaining DEAR • First DEAR session — keep it 15 mins, work up • Headteacher visits each class during the slot — visible commitment WEEK 2: • Continue daily / per schedule • Note: which children are struggling? Are they not bringing books? Is the slot too long? WEEK 3: • Reading Passport launches (use our free Reading Passport download) • Children begin to log books read WEEK 4: • Mid-half-term review — what's working? What needs tweaking? WEEK 5-6: • Embed. By now, the routine should be automatic. • Celebrate informally — 'I noticed five of you reading the same author this week!'

Common pitfalls and fixes

Pitfall	Fix
Children pretend-read or zone out	Slot is probably too long. Shorter and consistent beats longer and patchy.



Pitfall	Fix
Same children always 'forget' their book	Class basket. Don't make it a punishment — make it easy.
Staff use it for marking	Headteacher walks through during the slot. Public modelling matters.
Reluctant readers visibly hate it	Comic books count. Audiobooks count. Picture books count at any age.
Teachers feel pressured to 'check' reading	DEAR is not assessment time. The Reading Passport is the only record needed.
Parents complain it's 'wasted time'	Send the research summary on the next page. Keep sending it.

The research — one-page summary for parents

