

READING · Y2 TO Y5

Peer Reading (PALS-style)

A research-backed setup pack

What this is and why it works

Peer Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) is a structured paired-reading programme with strong evidence. EEF-rated peer-tutoring approaches typically deliver +5 months of additional reading progress at low cost. The mechanism is well-understood: more time on task, more talk about reading, more accountability per child, and the act of explaining cements the explainer's own understanding. This pack adapts PALS for UK primary use. It runs 30 minutes, three times a week, over a 6-week block. Children work in pairs through four short reading routines. IT IS NOT: a substitute for adult-led guided reading. It runs **ALONGSIDE** — typically in DEAR slots, registration time or starts to literacy lessons.

What works vs what fails (the research)

Works	Doesn't work
Structured pair routines	'Read with your friend' (no structure)
Pairs roughly matched in age, with one slightly stronger reader	Wide ability gap — both feel awkward
Pairs change every 6 weeks	Permanent pairs (one role hardens)
Children explicitly trained in the routines	Routines explained once, never modelled
Adult monitoring + quick coaching	Adult absent — pairs drift
Brief sessions, often	Long sessions, rare
Same time, same days	Whenever-it-fits



The four core routines

Pairing rules

PAIRING DOES NOT MEAN: bottom child paired with top child. That is uncomfortable for both. THE RULE: Roughly the same age, with one child reading a 'half-step' ahead. So a child reading at lime band paired with a child at orange. Both children stretch a little. • Use most-recent reading data to make pairs (NC age in months, or current band level). • Where possible, pair children who get on. Friendship aids the routine. • AVOID pairing a child with significant SEND with a child who finds reading easy — both feel mismatched. SEND children can pair productively, just within an appropriate range. • EAL learners often benefit hugely from peer reading. Pair an EAL child with a friendly fluent reader. • Pairs CHANGE every 6 weeks. Refresh the data, repair, restart.

6-week launch plan

WEEK 0 (preparation): • Decide the time slot (typically 9-9.30 three days a week) • Use most-recent reading data to pair the class • Print the routine cards (page 7) and laminate • Choose books for each pair — slightly easy for the tutee level, both will read same book WEEK 1: • MONDAY: 30-min explicit teaching of the four routines. Demo each with a child or another adult. • WED/FRI: First sessions. Adult coaches actively. Don't expect smooth. WEEK 2: • Three sessions. Adult moves between pairs, coaching. • Mid-week check: which pairs aren't working? Why? WEEKS 3-4: • Routines should be flowing. Adult role moves to monitor. • If a pair has stalled, intervene quickly — usually a routine is being skipped. WEEKS 5-6: • Children running independently. Adult observes specific children. • Final session: brief feedback chat with each pair. What worked? What was hard? End of 6 weeks: re-pair. New 6-week block can start the following week.



Routine card — print, laminate, give one per pair

Common problems and fixes

Problem	Fix
Pair doesn't speak — just reads silently	Re-teach the routines. Model with one child publicly.
Tutor 'helps' by reading the whole word straight away	Coach: 'sound out the first letter — what do you think?'
Tutee gets bored	Book may be too easy or too hard. Swap the book.
Pair is loud and disturbs others	Move them to corners. Or split entire class to corridor + classroom.
One child always finishes before the other	Tutor may be skipping routines. Use the routine card explicitly.
Pair doesn't get on	Re-pair next half-term. Don't change mid-block — children see it as failure.

What 'success' looks like

