Learn to Love Reading with the Usborne Reading Program

Seven levels of reading

A guide for teachers and parents
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Illustration by Robin Lawrie from Napoleon
The Usborne Reading Program was launched in 2002, and has since sold over four million books worldwide. The program consists of seven levels, within which a wide variety of titles is designed to capture the imagination and build the confidence of beginner readers, and also to motivate and inspire those who find reading difficult or dull.

**Level by level**

From one level to the next, there is a gradual but clear progression in terms of subject, style, narrative length, sentence structure and vocabulary, giving children the satisfaction of mastering real books and making measurable progress without overstretching them and causing them to lose enthusiasm.

**Superb quality books**

The Usborne Reading Program combines vivid, engaging writing with captivating full-color illustration on every page, featuring the work of artists from around the world, together with superb contemporary and archive photography. From classic tales to lively non-fiction, and from exquisite watercolors to cartoons, there is something to appeal to everyone.
Supported by experts

The Usborne Reading Program has been developed in consultation with Alison Kelly, a leading expert in early years education, who helped to draw up the seven-level framework (see pages 8–11). Alison assesses and advises on all titles as they are prepared for publication. Many non-fiction titles also draw on the expertise of a range of specialists in their subject areas.

For children – for parents – for schools

The Usborne Reading Program is an outstanding success all round. Children are won over by fresh, engaging writing and illustration on perennially popular subjects. Parents can support their children’s reading in the vital early stages, knowing that the books are not only attractive and fun but underpinned by Usborne values and a sound framework. Schools can make use of the books in class, for homework and in the library, to stretch the able and engage those in need of support.
The Usborne Reading Program is a valuable addition to the English language teacher’s resources:

• Lively writing and superb illustration capture the reader’s interest, and motivate and encourage to read on and read more;

• The seven-level framework (see pages 8–11) allows students to progress and gain confidence level by level, not only in terms of overall length but also complexity of plot, sentence structure, vocabulary and grammatical structure;

• The wide variety of subjects and genres offers something for everyone, allowing students to pursue their own interests – a priceless motivational tool;

• Fluent, well-constructed prose provides a sound model for a student’s own writing;

• Audio packs offer top-quality recordings by professional readers, an excellent model for listening and speaking.
The Reading Program experts

Reading consultant Alison Kelly worked for many years as a primary school teacher in London. She is currently a Senior Lecturer in English Education at Roehampton University in London, teaching about all aspects of literacy. She is co-editor of the successful textbooks Reading Under Control and Writing Under Control, and has also written teaching materials for young children.

Alison helped us to establish the principles which underpin the Usborne Reading Program: exciting, engaging narrative that not only appeals to readers but provides a model for their own writing, and lively, detailed design and illustration that adds its own dimension to the text. She helped to set up a framework for the seven levels, covering themes, story length, language and grammar structures. Lastly, she reads all titles at draft stage and in their final version.
Specialist titles at all levels of the Reading Program draw on the advice of experts in the field, including:

**Matt Shardlow** of Buglife, the Invertebrate Conservation Trust
(*Bugs*)

**Alan Munson** of Viridor Waste Management
(*The Stinking Story of Garbage*)

**Eva Schloss**, stepsister of Anne Frank
(*Anne Frank*)

**Terry Charman** of the Imperial War Museum, London
(*The Story of Spying*)
<table>
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<th>The Usborne Reading</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>First Reading Level One</strong></td>
<td>Short single narrative followed by reading and comprehension puzzles</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>First Reading Level Two</strong></td>
<td>Single narrative plus character sheets and/or maps, and puzzles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Reading Level Three</strong></td>
<td>Single narrative with repeated elements, plus character sheets and/or maps, no puzzles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Reading Level Four</strong></td>
<td>Single narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young Reading Series One</strong></td>
<td>Several linked stories or one longer narrative in chapters. Direct and indirect speech, intertextual references</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young Reading Series Two</strong></td>
<td>Single narrative in chapters. Introduce irony and subplot, allow opportunity for inference and deduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young Reading Series Three</strong></td>
<td>Single narrative in chapters. Assume some relevant background knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of pages</td>
<td>Number of words</td>
</tr>
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<td>----------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>up to 150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>up to 250</td>
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<td>up to 450</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>up to 750</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>1,000–1,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>2,000–2,500</td>
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<td>64</td>
<td>4,000–5,000</td>
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continued
<table>
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<th>Themes</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>First Reading Level One</strong></td>
<td>Classic tales (e.g. Aesop’s Fables) and folktales</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>First Reading Level Two</strong></td>
<td>As Level One, including less familiar folktales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Reading Level Three</strong></td>
<td>As Level Two plus original fiction and non-fiction (natural history life cycles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Reading Level Four</strong></td>
<td>As Level Three plus classic fairy tales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young Reading Series One</strong></td>
<td>Fairy tales, fantasy, fiction, non-fiction (“the story of…”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young Reading Series Two</strong></td>
<td>As Series One plus adapted classics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young Reading Series Three</strong></td>
<td>History, biographies, classics</td>
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The elements above are intended as guidelines only, and while distinctions between different levels remain clear,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
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<tr>
<td>Present and simple past tenses; modal verb <em>can</em>, comparative adjectives</td>
<td>Simple everyday vocabulary, familiar items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As Level One plus future; modal verbs <em>could</em> and <em>must</em>; comparatives and superlatives</td>
<td>More descriptive and evocative vocabulary, always clear in context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As Level Two plus present and past perfect; range of modal verbs</td>
<td>Powerful verbs and adjectives, clear in context</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full range of tenses</td>
<td>More exotic elements and controlled use of idiom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past tense narratives; avoid passives, embedded clauses, semicolons and colons</td>
<td>Wide-ranging everyday vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce more challenging sentence structure, including embedded clauses</td>
<td>More challenging, building on Series One; specialist or technical terms explained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full use of grammatical range, comparable with mainstream contemporary fiction or general journalism</td>
<td>Building on Series Two, may assume knowledge of specialist or technical terms</td>
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exceptions may sometimes be made to individual specifications in the interests of narrative or style.
Level One titles are designed to be the first real books a beginner reader will tackle, with very light support from a parent or teacher. They are 32 pages in length, comprising the main story (up to 150 words) and 6 pages of fun, reading-related puzzles.

Subjects include classic fables and folktales, with rich and detailed illustrations designed to foster a lasting enthusiasm for books and reading.
Fox was always hungry.
Level Two titles stretch the reader a little more than Level One, with more advanced storylines, more text and more complicated sentence structure and vocabulary. They are 32 pages in length, comprising character pages or maps, the main story (up to 250 words) and reading-related puzzles.

Subjects include less familiar folktales from around the world, with lively, quirkly illustrations.

Illustration by Graham Philpot from The Dragon and the Phoenix
They landed on houses...

and fell right through.
Level Three titles encourage the reader to develop reading stamina, increasing to 48 pages consisting of character sheets or maps and the main story (up to 450 words). The story includes a strong element of reprise or repetition, with the familiarity of repeated language chunks helping the reader to gain in confidence.

Subjects include classic folktales from around the world and original fiction, with quirky and humorous illustrations.

Illustration by Georgien Overwater from *The Three Little Pigs*
Then the gingerbread man came to a river.

He wanted to cross it, but he couldn’t swim.
Level Four titles build readers’ stamina still further, and are 48 pages entirely devoted to the story (up to 750 words). The narrative is more developed, there is more text on each page, and sentence structure and vocabulary are more descriptive.

Subjects include classic folk and fairy tales and original fiction.
Percy was sinking fast. Just then, he saw a ship. “Help!” he yelled.

The ship came closer. “Please hurry!” he shouted. Soon it would be too late.
Series One titles are for children who have just started reading on their own, and are 48 pages (1000-1500 words) in length. They use fairly short, simple sentences and everyday vocabulary.

Typically, Series One books contain several short stories or one longer story divided into chapters. Subjects include classic fables and fairytales, original contemporary fiction and quirky histories.

Illustration by
Alan Marks from
The Little Mermaid
From that day on, Max was a perfect pupil. Soon he learned how to do spells properly. And when he grew up, he became a great sorcerer...

...although he was always a little afraid of broomsticks.
Series Two titles are for children who are reading more confidently, and are 64 pages (2000-2500 words) in length. They use varied sentence lengths, more complex sentence structure and more challenging vocabulary.

Most Series Two books contain a single narrative divided into chapters. Subjects include classic tales and myths, mystery stories and non-fiction.

Illustration by
Mauro Evangelista from
Alice in Wonderland
“I can’t risk Beauty’s life,” Pierre thought. With a heavy heart, he told the Beast he would return.

Before Pierre left, the Beast put a ruby bridle on the horse’s muzzle. “He’ll be able to find his way to your home and back,” said the Beast. “The bridle will guide him.”
Series Three titles are for fully confident readers who still need to gain the stamina needed for standard length books, and are 64 pages (4000-5000 words) in length. They use advanced sentence structure and vocabulary, and have more complex plots with subplots.

Series Three books contain one main narrative divided into chapters. Subjects include historical events, biographies and simplified versions of classic stories.
Only a narrow stretch of sea now lay between Hitler and the British Isles. He launched an aggressive bombing blitz on Britain, hoping the heavy casualties would force them to surrender. But the new British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, was determined to fight to the end.

Hitler watched, frustrated, as the British air force won the battle of the skies. Eventually, he gave up and turned his attention east. Recklessly breaking his pact with Stalin, he now sent his troops into Russia. The Russian troops were slow to respond, but mighty in number. By November, German forces were engaged in bitter warfare, as the temperature plummeted below freezing.

Hitler failed to conquer Russia before winter. His troops suffered in icy conditions.
Audio

Young Reading CD packs make the story come alive. Packs comprise a copy of the book with an accompanying CD.

Each audio CD contains two readings: first, a dramatic listen-along version, complete with specially composed music, sound effects and superbly characterised readings; then a more measured, read-along version – without sound effects but with a page-turn indicator – designed to be played as a child follows the story in the accompanying book.
Titles available

FIRST READING: LEVEL ONE $8.99 ea.

[H] 978-0-7945-1697-0  The Wish Fish
[H] 978-0-7945-1812-7  The Fox and the Stork
[H] 978-0-7945-1811-0  Sun and the Wind
[H] 978-0-7945-1813-4  The Fox and the Crow

FIRST READING: LEVEL TWO $8.99 ea.

[H] 978-0-7945-1880-6  How elephants lost their wings
[H] 978-0-7945-1879-0  Clever Rabbit and the Lion
[H] 978-0-7945-1882-0  The Little Giraffe
[H] 978-0-7945-1881-3  The Dragon and the Phoenix
FIRST READING: LEVEL THREE (H)$8.99 (L)$16.99 ea.

- The ENORMOUS TURNIP (H) 978-0-7945-1376-4
- The Little Red Hen (H) 978-0-7945-1375-7
- The Gingerbread Man (H) 978-0-7945-1377-1
  - (L) 978-1-60130-069-0
- The Goose that laid the Golden Eggs (H) 978-0-7945-1378-8
- Castle of the Jack Built (H) 978-0-7945-1599-7
- The Dinosaur Who Lost His ROAR (H) 978-0-7945-1547-8
- The Three Little Pigs (H) 978-0-7945-1598-0
- The Musicians of Bremen (H) 978-0-7945-1911-7
- The Leopard and the Sky God (H) 978-0-7945-1838-7
- The Magic Porridge Pot (H) 978-0-7945-1883-7
- The Fish that Talked (H) 978-0-7945-1915-2
- Bugs (H) 978-0-7945-1938-4
- Frogs (H) 978-0-7945-1937-7
FIRST READING: LEVEL FOUR

- *The Dragon Painter* (H) 978-0-7945-1275-0
- *The Ugly Duckling* (H) 978-0-7945-1274-3
- *Little Red Riding Hood* (H) 978-0-7945-1320-7
- *The Runaway Pancake* (H) 978-0-7945-1276-7
- *Percy and the Pirates* (H) 978-0-7945-1545-4
- *The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse* (H) 978-0-7945-1613-0
- *The Hare and the Tortoise* (H) 978-0-7945-1612-3
- *Emperor and the Nightingale* (H) 978-0-7945-1614-7
- *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* (H) 978-0-7945-1708-3
- *Princess Polly and the Pony* (H) 978-0-7945-1756-4
- *Butterflies* (H) 978-0-7945-1940-7
- *Penguins* (H) 978-0-7945-1939-1
- *Baba Yaga: Flying Witch* (H) 978-0-7945-2078-6

(H) $8.99 (L) $16.99 ea.
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**Stories of Dragons**
- (P) 978-0-7945-0446-5 $5.95
- (L) 978-1-58086-666-8 $13.95

**Stories of Giants**
- (P) 978-0-7945-0466-9 $5.95
- (L) 978-1-58086-614-9 $13.95

**Magical Animals**
- (P) 978-0-7945-0454-0 $5.95
- (L) 978-1-58086-673-6 $13.95

**Wizards**
- (P) 978-0-7945-0328-4 $5.95
- (L) 978-1-58086-789-4 $13.95

**Stories of Knights**
- (P) 978-0-7945-0755-8 $5.95
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**Stories of Gnomes & Goblins**
- (P) 978-0-7945-0407-6 $5.95
- (L) 978-1-58086-668-2 $13.95

**Stories of Princes & Princesses**
- (P) 978-0-7945-0449-6 $5.99
- (L) 978-1-58086-788-7 $13.99

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- (L) 978-1-58086-712-2 $13.95

**Stories of Mermaids**
- (P) 978-0-7945-0647-6 $5.95
- (L) 978-1-58086-630-9 $13.95

**Stories of Witches**
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- (L) 978-1-58086-614-9 $13.95

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- (L) 978-1-58086-660-6 $13.95

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- (L) 978-1-58086-608-8 $13.99

**Stories of Haunted Houses**
- (P) 978-0-7945-1221-7 $5.99
- (L) 978-1-58086-881-5 $13.99

**Stories of Dinosaurs**
- (P) 978-0-7945-1363-4 $5.99
- (L) 978-1-58086-940-9 $13.99

**Stories of Ghosts**
- (P) 978-0-7945-0876-0 $5.95
- (L) 978-1-58086-755-9 $13.95

*UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE*
YOUNG READING: SERIES ONE (P) $5.95 (L) $13.95 ea.*

*UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE

(H) 978-0-7945-1475-1 $8.99
(L) 978-1-58086-854-9 $13.99

(H) 978-0-7945-1216-2 $8.99
(L) 978-1-58086-642-2 $8.99

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(L) 978-1-58086-772-6 $8.99

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(L) 978-1-58086-740-5 $8.95
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*UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE
YOUNG READING: SERIES ONE (H)$8.99 ea.
SERIES ONE WITH AUDIO CDs $9.99 ea.
YOUNG READING: SERIES TWO (P)$5.95 (L)$13.95 ea.*

*UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE
YOUNG READING: SERIES TWO (P)$5.95 (L)$13.95 ea.*

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- The Canterville Ghost (P) 978-0-7945-0877-7 (L) 978-1-58086-781-8
- The House of Shadows (P) 978-0-7945-0929-3 (L) 978-1-58086-776-4
- The Midnight Ghosts (P) 978-0-7945-0930-9 (L) 978-1-58086-777-1
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- A Christmas Carol (P) 978-0-7945-0585-1
- A Midsummer Night’s Dream (P) 978-0-7945-1077-0 $8.95
- Romeo & Juliet (P) 978-0-7945-1240-8 $8.99
- The Snow Queen (P) 978-0-7945-0717-6 $8.99

- The Swan Princess (H) 978-0-7945-1133-3 $8.99
- Pinocchio (H) 978-0-7945-0887-6 $8.95
- Stage Fright (P) 978-0-7945-0927-9 (L) 978-1-58086-764-1

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YOUNG READING: SERIES TWO (H) $8.99 ea.
YOUNG READING: SERIES TWO (H) $8.99 ea.

SERIES TWO WITH AUDIO CDs $9.99 ea.
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<td>Winston Churchill</td>
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Learn to Love Reading with the Usborne Reading Program

The Usborne Reading Program is a collection of over 130 titles for beginner readers, graded in series. Lively writing and illustration across a range of subjects, both fact and fiction, help to build confidence and create a lifelong enjoyment of reading.