

# Digital audio players in Key Stage 1

Recent National Literacy Trust research on the role of interactive audio in building literacy skills identified as key findings that:



- There is a strong appetite for hearing stories, with almost all children in the survey (95.6%) saying they enjoy hearing stories read to them
- The use of audiobooks in the classroom to complement teachers reading aloud can help maximise the benefits of hearing the same content over and over, and can expose children to a wider vocabulary
- The inclusion of multiple voices, sound effects and music can help enrich the experience of a story in audio form
- Strong and recognisable characters can build children's love of stories, with many young children recalling favourite characters
- Audiobook platforms help extend a story across different media and give children opportunities to engage in a multitude of ways

## Bringing the benefits of audio in to the Key Stage 1 classroom

In Years 1 and 2 using audio to support learning can help optimise these benefits identified in research, and provides access to stories, enriched vocabulary, comprehension and dialogue in a direct way that their developing reading skills may not yet facilitate.



In addition to the important power of enjoyment of story, using audio can support autonomy and choice, can enable pupils to find their own voice and develop confidence through performance, can expand word knowledge, and can help them to understand key elements of stories such as structure and character that will support independent reading, writing and listening.

## Ideas for using digital audio players in the classroom

### 💡 Build a listening den! 💡

Identify a quiet corner or location that can be set up as a story den, – whether for a longer period, or as needed with a transformational addition of cushions or a rug. Here, children can build the foundations of a love of story through choice, connection with favourite characters, and the autonomy of repeat listening, or discovery of new options, as they themselves decide. This underpinning of a personal connection with the enjoyment of stories can support a wide range of literacy skills, as well as general wellbeing.

### ★ Sustained and focused listening ★

Try a character challenge to help grow children's ability to sustain their focus and extract key information. First, have children listen to a story (or extract). Pick out a character – perhaps the main character initially, or add challenge by choosing a less prominent character or a place. Provided with materials for drawing or writing, listen again, to find particular references to this character, their appearance, personality or emotions. Children draw the character as (or after) they listen, adding features and written labels. Consider building up a repertoire of characters in a working wall display.

### 🌸 Re-enactment and role play 🌸

Audio, in contrast to print or video, allows children to be immersed in a story, activating kinaesthetic learning through physical activity. With drama props, and characters (puppets, toys, etc.) children can listen and act out the story, helping to embed the vocabulary they hear, and the key events and structure of the story.

Children can then re-tell and perform the story in this activity that supports curriculum expectations for children to participate in performance and role-play, and to speak audibly and fluently. Listen out for how they may use language to see if they are repeating vocabulary learned from the story, following language patterns and refrains they have heard, or expressing themselves through improvisation.

If the original recording includes dialogue and character voices, encourage children to incorporate these in their own performance.

With the recording facility on your audio box or device, they can record their performance to be shared with the class. Talk about how what is different in their performance, and how they have adapted the story.



### Exploring the features of story – sequences and story maps



For children to understand how stories work, and to be able to go on to create their own stories, story mapping can scaffold their understanding of story structure and features.

Provide story map template with several boxes. Listen to a story in full, and discuss key events with the class or group. Children can then record the key elements, in pictures, or perhaps with added key words.

Your story map could be pre-labelled with headings such as title, characters, places and perhaps key connecting words to put the story in order, such as 'first, then, next, later, at last'.

For a simplified sequencing version provide pictures and as children listen, they can order pictures to match the story. Talk about story features of introduction, setting, characters, plot, and ending, how the pictures show these features, and why they chose the order they did.

What words did they hear that help put the story in in order – first, next, then, after.

### 🔊 Vocabulary 🔊

Listen together, and think together to find any new language, or wow words. Ask children if they heard any great describing adjectives. Add new words – with children's definitions or synonyms – to a Wow Word display. Each time children listen to a new story, encourage them to add more words to the board.