



fun
palaces



MAKING A READING FUN PALACE

READING FUN PALACES

Let's start by saying your reading-related Fun Palace doesn't need to look anything like a traditional "reading event". You may want to focus on books, writing or stories, but you can also start with **whatever the people in your community already love doing** (cooking, music, football, knitting, gaming, gardening...) and weave in reading and literacy in playful, unexpected ways. Comics, graphic novels, magazines, gaming narratives, sports programmes, oral storytelling and more – getting creative with words shows that reading is part of everyday life, and a complement to your passions, not their competition.

Why include reading in your Fun Palace? Our changing world has made it harder to fit reading into day-to-day life, and people in the UK now read for pleasure less than ever before, especially children and young people. This matters because reading builds the skills and confidence people need to access opportunities and participate fully in society, helping to reduce the impact of structural inequalities such as income. Research also demonstrates that **reading makes people less lonely**¹, **happier**², and more **connected to their community**³.



*Getting crafting inspiration at
Wolverhampton Fun Palace*

How it works

Reading grows richer when linked to real passions. Whether your community loves gardening, science experiments, craft, sport or music, there's always a story to explore. Fun Palaces can make reading social, hands-on and joyful, and celebrate sharing knowledge - recipes, maps, patterns, oral stories, lyrics and more.

A Reading Fun Palace might grow from:

- baking → sharing recipes, food writing
- gardening → making seed packets, plant labels, writing nature poetry
- sport → chants, commentary, journalism
- crafts → pattern reading, making zines, sewing story quilts
- music → lyric writing, sound storytelling
- local history → map making and reading, searching archives, sharing family stories



*Zine making at Launceston
Fun Palace in Cornwall*

What your fun palace can achieve

An event created by you and your community on your own terms that celebrates the things you love to do, your reading Fun Palace can:

- Spark confidence in people who have felt excluded from reading
- Strengthen community identity and intergenerational connection
- Shift power by centring community voices and expertise
- Create meaningful, joyful experiences that build literacy naturally
- Celebrate reading as something active, embodied, social and creative
- Leave a legacy of curiosity and collaboration

Most of all, it helps people see that reading is a way of exploring the world - together.



*Tree identification at
Grays Library Fun Palace*

Footnotes

- 1) Regular readers report fewer feelings of stress and depression than non-readers (Billington, 2015). Compared to non-readers, regular readers are 32% more likely say they don't feel anxious or depressed (Spaulding, et al. 2025)
- 2) Neuroscience research shows that reading fiction can significantly reduce feelings of loneliness (The Queen's Reading Room, 2025).
- 3) Reading is linked to feelings of community belonging and trust. Higher reading skills are associated with a range of positive societal benefits, including having a stronger sense of belonging to society and being more likely to trust others (OECD, 2013).



*Dungeons & Dragons at Westminster
Reference Library Fun Palace*




If you're into it, read into it

Over the years, Fun Palaces have included a huge range of interests. Here are some short reading menus for all ages inspired by just two of them:

Beekeeping

-  The Bumblebear (Nadia Shireen)
-  Operation Honeyhunt (Jennifer Bell)
-  The Beekeeper of Aleppo (Christy Lefteri)
-  Grey Bees (Andrey Kurkov)

Further insect-related reading...

-  The Very Hungry Caterpillar (Eric Carle)
-  Marnie Midnight (Laura Ellen Anderson)
-  Extraordinary Insects (Anne Sverdrup-Thygeson)

There's also a huge amount of non-fiction about insects, including bees – why not look in your local library?

“Where there are bees there are flowers, and wherever there are flowers there is new life and hope”

(from **The Beekeeper of Aleppo**)



Smell and tell activity at Bedford Fun Palace



Community singing at Stratford East Fun Palace



Reading info boards at Fun Palaces



Exploring jobs at Sydenham Fun Palace




Community recipes & rhymes at Fun Palaces




Trading card game at Lancaster Fun Palace

Science and Invention


 Izzy the Inventor and the Princess Plot (Zanna Davidson)

 The 13 Storey Treehouse (Andy Griffiths & Terry Denton)

 The Millicent Quibb School of Etiquette for Young Ladies of Mad Science (Kate McKinnon)

 The Big Book of Useless Science Knowledge: 250 of the Coolest, Weirdest, and Most Unbelievable Science Facts You Won't be Taught in School (Neon Squid)

 The Martian (Andy Weir)

 Oryx and Crake (Margaret Atwood)

Science Homework (Kenn Nesbitt)

*"I hope that you believe me
for I wouldn't tell a lie.
I cannot turn my science homework in
and this is why:*

*I messed up the assignment
that you gave us yesterday.
It burbled from its test tube
and went slithering away..."*

You can find the full poem online!

Activity – Story Chain

A story chain is a simple, collaborative way to create a unique group story.

Gather – Bring people together in any format: in person, online, all at once, or adding contributions throughout an event. It works for all ages and can include multiple languages with interpreter support.

Begin – Someone starts with an opening sentence. You can set a theme, prompt or time limit, or keep it completely open. Try prompts like: *“Many years ago, in a time of...”*, *“At night, the library was not quiet anymore...”*, or *“There was a knock at the door...”*

Build – Each person adds a sentence (or a word for a challenge!). Encourage “yes, and” thinking to build on what came before, even if it gets surreal - follow the fun!

Finish – End the story whenever it feels right. It can wrap up neatly, stop suddenly, or end on a cliffhanger.

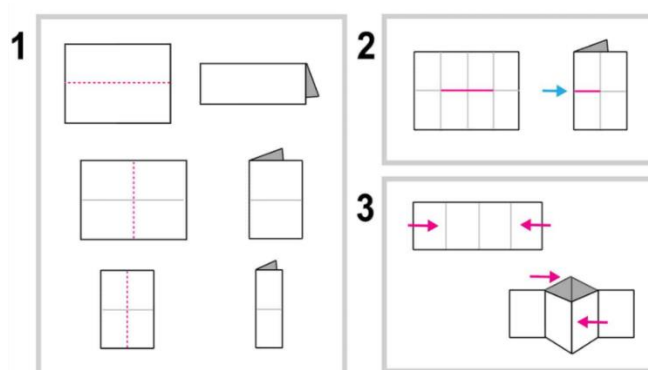
Share – Record it through writing, audio or video, and display or share it with the community - there will never be another story exactly like it.

Activity – Zine Making

A zine is a small, DIY, self-published booklet that shares personal ideas, stories, art or information in a creative, informal way.

Collect Materials - Paper (any size), scissors, pens, pencils, glue, magazines/newspapers for collage, and anything else to decorate.

Fold & Create the Base - Take one sheet of paper, fold it in half, then into quarters, then again—so you have eight small sections. Cut one slit along the centre fold and refold to create a mini-booklet.



Choose a Theme – you could focus on the theme of your Fun Palace, or just encourage people to follow their passions.

Fill the Pages - Add drawings, short texts, collages, jokes, top tips, or tiny stories. Each page only needs a few words or images.

Personalise & Play - Encourage people to doodle, stamp, tear, stick and remix. There’s no “right way”—zines celebrate DIY creativity and are meant to be unique and messy!

Copy & Share - Photocopy the finished zines so everyone can take one home or add them to a community display.

WHAT DO I DO NOW?

Ready to make a 'Reading' Fun Palace on the first weekend of October? Even if you don't know exactly what you might do on the day, just the intention to make something happen in your local area is all you need to get started.

To make a Fun Palace this October visit <https://funpalaces.co.uk> and sign up with us, following these steps:

1. Click on the "Make a Fun Palace" button.
2. Create an account by entering your name and email:
 - You'll be sent an email confirmation to confirm your account - check your spam folder if you don't see this in your inbox.
 - Be sure to tick the 'Maker Newsletter' box to receive a regular email with useful tips and announcements for Fun Palace Makers.
3. Once you've created your account, you can register your Fun Palace on the official map by entering the following info:
 - Give your Fun Palace a name
 - Enter brief details of what might happen on the day
 - Enter the address of your Fun Palace (if you don't have a confirmed address you can enter your own and change it later.
 - Upload a photo that describes your Fun Palace idea or your local area (optional).
 - Save your details, then go to <https://funpalaces.co.uk/find-a-fun-palace> to check that your Fun Palace has appeared on the map.
4. You can edit or update your Fun Palace as your idea progresses by logging back into your account at www.funpalaces.co.uk/login



5. Be part of the National Year of Reading 2026



Fun Palaces is proud to be part of the National Year of Reading 2026 campaign, encouraging everyone across the UK to read more, read together and discover the joy of reading in all its forms.

Here's how you can get involved beyond your Fun Palace:

Go All In for Reading: Visit goallin.org.uk to find out more about the national campaign and how you and your community can take part.

List your Fun Palace on the National Year of Reading What's On page:

Once you've registered your Fun Palace with us, you can also add it to the national events calendar at [National Year of Reading What's On](#) so even more people in your area can find you. The more places your event appears, the more people you'll reach.





Need any help? Email hello@funpalaces.co.uk or leave a message on 0208 692 4446, ext 203 and we'll get back to you as soon as we can.

***This toolkit was produced in partnership with the
National Year of Reading 2026
with support from the National Literacy Trust.***

