



Early Reading Together®:

Suggestions for Implementation of Virtual Workshops

Introduction

These suggestions have been compiled by Biddulph Education Trust for educators, librarians and others who are seeking information about the adjustments required for virtual implementation of the *Early Reading Together®* workshop programme i.e. when in-person workshops are not possible or safe.

This document is a supplement to the 2019 edition of the *Early Reading Together®: Workshop Leader's Handbook* and needs to be carefully considered, step-by-step, alongside the detailed information in the *Handbook*. Workshop Leaders who have not read the *Handbook*, or who have not recently implemented the programme effectively, are advised to read all sections of the *Handbook* before beginning to read this document.

Please note that, as well as being prohibited by law, the unauthorised copying, publication, adaptation, translation or reproduction (e.g. on websites) of any of the *Early Reading Together®* programme materials and resources may also undermine the future of the programme.

Some important considerations for a virtual approach

Implementation since 1983¹ has been in-person (in school, early childhood, library and community settings). In-person workshops ensure the full benefits of *Early Reading Together®* and are the optimal form of implementation.² However, when bringing groups together face-to-face is not safe or feasible, a compromise can be adopted i.e. a virtual approach.

Effective virtual implementation of *Early Reading Together®* is especially relevant during a pandemic when support for children in the home is paramount. It will help mitigate the negative impacts of ECE and school disruption on children and families/whānau, and will help to increase children's engagement, confidence and competencies in language and literacy learning.

Special considerations during these circumstances include:

- Workshop Leaders, as for in-person implementation, will need to understand and identify with the theoretical perspectives and principles on which *Early Reading Together®* is based, and implement the workshops as scripted to maintain the integrity of the programme.
- Virtual implementation of *Early Reading Together®* is likely to be more effective, manageable and enjoyable when there are no more than eight parents/whānau participating.
- Particular care will need to be given to personal, strength-based invitations to parents/whānau to participate in the *Early Reading Together®* virtual workshops, taking care to find a time to run the workshops that works well for the participants.
- Careful and detailed preparation and planning in advance of the workshops will be essential, particularly as participants will need resources covering all three workshops provided to them in advance.

¹ Please see the [Message regarding Early Reading Together® from Jeanne Biddulph](#)

² Please see the [Benefits of Early Reading Together®](#) and [Participants' Comments about Early Reading Together®](#)

- Workshop Leaders are best placed to make decisions about the technology which is most appropriate for virtual implementation for their school/ECE/community context and participating parents and whānau.

Feedback about your virtual implementation of *Early Reading Together*® would be welcome.

Organising and Preparing for Virtual Workshops

Section 2 (pp 25-33) of the *Early Reading Together*®: *Workshop Leader's Handbook*³ provides detailed suggestions for organising and preparing for the workshops. The adaptations for virtual implementation below are additional to the *Handbook*.

Engaging and supporting parents' participation in *Early Reading Together*® (pp 26-28)

To support the distribution of appropriate reading materials to families/whānau, it will be important, when inviting participants, to establish the age range of their children.

It will also be important to find out from each parent what times would be suitable to hold workshops.

Discuss *Early Reading Together*® with your colleagues and seek their support (p 29)

Colleagues can assist with your virtual implementation of *Early Reading Together*®, particularly in accessing and compiling the resources required and with personal approaches to parents.

Provide relevant, meaningful and good quality resources for families (p 30-32)

Virtual implementation of the workshops will require the following resources to be compiled and made available to families in plenty of time before the workshops begin:

1. *Early Reading Together*® Packs (programme resources for all three workshops).
2. *Early Reading Together*® Family Library.

Here is the detail for each of these resources:

1. *Early Reading Together*® Pack

- Compile the programme resources listed below into separate A4 envelopes (i.e. one for each of the three workshops).
- Include a message on each envelope as follows:
Please do not open until Workshop [specify which workshop i.e. 1, 2 or 3] 😊

Note: Parents/whānau will need to have their *Early Reading Together*® Pack beside them during each workshop.

Workshop One envelope:

- The *Early Reading Together*® *Suggestions* booklet.
- A timetable and summary of the Workshop Programme (p 36).
- *Di Tri Berrese* (Appendix B, p 54).
- The first two pages of the *Set of Rhymes and Songs* (2022 Edition⁴).
- *What Joyce learnt from her mother* (Appendix C, p 55).
- A printed copy of information about the local library and mobile library service, if relevant.

Workshop Two envelope:

- *Boz: A 'reading book' for adults*
- *English* (Appendix D, p 56), if you have decided to include this activity in Workshop Two.

³ For information, please see [Early Reading Together® resources](#)

⁴ Please see [Revised Rhymes and Songs for Early Reading Together®](#)

- The next two pages of the *Set of Rhymes and Songs* (2022 Edition).

Workshop Three envelope:

- A copy of the *Feedback sheet* (Appendix E, p 57).
- The last two pages of the *Set of Rhymes and Songs* (2022 Edition).

2. *Early Reading Together*® Family Library

Early Reading Together® Family Libraries, preferably containing at least 20 books, are very beneficial for families. The *Early Reading Together*® Family Library consists of books for reading **to** and **with** children in the family/whānau.

The books listed in the *Early Reading Together*® *Suggestions* booklet (pp 8-9) have particular appeal for families with younger children, including children who are emergent readers.

Research indicates that readers are able to make better sense of hard copy materials than digital text.⁵ Hard copy resources for children, parents/whānau and educators play a critical role in the success of the *Early Reading Together*® programme, whether the workshops are implemented in-person or virtually.

The Children's Librarian at your local library may be able to assist in providing a range of appropriate and relevant resources for participating families (pp 29-30). The National Library might also be able to assist. If you are implementing the workshops in a school, then the teacher responsible for the school library (if any) might be willing to help too.

Add a note to the *Early Reading Together*® Family Library to say:

Please wait until Workshop One to use this. 😊

Workshop Content and Processes

Workshop processes and activities are described in detail in Section 4 (pp 36-52) of the *Early Reading Together*®: *Workshop Leader's Handbook*. The Appendices (pp 53-58) contain additional information for Workshop Leaders.

Suggestions about some adaptations for virtual implementation of *Early Reading Together*® are outlined below.

Please note that some of the processes which are very effective during in-person workshops will not be possible when implementing *Early Reading Together*® virtually.

- For example, parents will not be able to 'help each other to read' *Di Tri Berrese* in Workshop One (p 39), *English* (if included in Workshop Two, p 31 and pp 45-46), and *Boz: A 'reading book' for adults* in Workshop Two (pp 44-45).
- Therefore, additional care will be needed to:
 - introduce each of these activities to the group (as explained in the *Handbook*), and
 - allow time for the parents to look through the page/booklet by themselves.
- Then, please read each of the texts **to** the group, chatting briefly about what you are doing/thinking, and encourage discussion when you have finished reading.
- This will help to engage parents in ways which are as supportive, manageable and meaningful as possible.

⁵ See, for example:

- Clinton, V. (2019) [Reading from paper compared to screens: A systematic review and meta-analysis](#). Journal of Research in Reading, May, Vol 42, Issue 2.
- O'Callaghan, T. (2014) [Digital technology is transforming the way we read and write: Does it matter?](#) New Scientist, 1 November, pp 41-43.
- Blundell, S. (2018) [Dear Reader](#). NZ Listener, 13 October, pp 12-19.

Workshop One (pp 36-43)

- Before the workshop, it is particularly important to consider the detailed suggestions (including the notes) under the heading '*Ideas about how language and reading develop and how children learn*' on page 39.
- As part of your introduction to the programme, check that parents have received their *Early Reading Together*® Pack and the *Early Reading Together*® Family Library.
 - Discuss *Early Reading Together*® Family Libraries briefly, and encourage parents to read and enjoy the books with their children.
- An essential component of *Early Reading Together*® is the demonstration during which the Workshop Leader supports a real child in real time (p 31-32, 40-41).
- This demonstration needs to be unrehearsed and as realistic as possible, not practised and/or recorded prior to the Workshop (unless conditions make a 'live' demonstration too problematic).
 - Pre-recorded demonstrations are less compelling and less convincing, and therefore generally less meaningful and effective for parents.
 - Participating parents need to feel that they **can** support their child as the Workshop Leader does i.e. by using the 'ways of helping' in the *Early Reading Together*® *Suggestions* booklet which have just been discussed with the group.
- Towards the end of the workshop, talk briefly about the local library information (if available), which is in the Workshop One envelope. Mention that the librarians are looking forward to meeting the parents and children, and helping them to borrow resources.
- Information on using the school library can also be covered, if borrowing books from the school library is possible at the time.
- At the end of the workshop, briefly outline Workshop Two, and ask the parents to have the second envelope and the *Early Reading Together*® *Suggestions* booklet ready.

Workshop Two (pp 44-49)

- Before the workshop, it is particularly important to consider the detailed suggestions (including the notes) under the heading '*More ideas about learning language and learning to read*' on pages 44-46.
- At the end of this workshop, outline Workshop Three and mention that parents will need the resources in their Workshop Three envelope.

Workshop Three (pp 50-52)

- Carefully follow the suggestions about gathering feedback (p 50).
- It would be helpful if a colleague could participate in this workshop, and make notes of parents' oral feedback about their experiences supporting their children's language and literacy learning. See *Feedback sheet* (p 57).
- Parents might like to provide some written feedback via email or online. Explain that their comments will help you to support other parents/whānau in future implementations of *Early Reading Together*®.
- Section 3 (pp 34-35) of the *Handbook* outlines suggestions for gathering information and preparing a brief report.
- Workshop Three, when implemented in-person, is held in the local library whenever possible. However, for virtual implementation, you could invite the local children's librarian (if available) to join you briefly towards the end of the workshop to:
 1. 'Meet' the parents.
 2. Offer their support.
 3. Answer any questions parents might have, including about how they can access resources from the local library or mobile library service.

- Explain to the parents how and when they can return the *Early Reading Together*® Family Library.
 - If possible, refresh and extend the use of the *Early Reading Together*® Family Library. Some New Zealand publishers of children's books, booksellers and charitable trusts donate books or funding for *Early Reading Together*® Family Libraries and *Reading Together*® Mini-libraries, which are given to participating families to keep at the conclusion of the workshops. [Please see the information here for an excellent example of a *Reading Together*® Mini-library.](#)
- If awarding Certificates of Participation in the *Early Reading Together*® programme⁶, perhaps show one of these to the parents and tell them that you will send them hard copies.

⁶ Please see ['Graduation' certificates](#)