

Free Digital Reading Resources for Young Children

A Guide prepared for the National Reading Coalition Saide, October 2019

Are you looking for **FREE DIGITAL READING RESOURCES** to use with your own children or children in the classes you teach?

Are you interested in resources in **MULTIPLE LANGUAGES**?

Do you want to be able to **PRINT** the resources and not only view them online?

Do you need to be able to **DOWNLOAD** resources and then use them when you are offline?

Are you interested in apps that help you **MAKE** resources, **READ** them, and teach young children **HOW TO READ**?

Websites with storybooks for early reading in multiple languages

Check out [African Storybook](#), and [Book Dash](#) – these two sites have picture storybooks that are completely free and open.

The [Nal'ibali](#) site has multilingual stories, nursery rhymes, story cards, story seeks, and audio stories. Take a look at [Little Zebra Books](#) too – storybooks with a strong Mozambiquan flavour – and Bible stories as well.

FunDza is mainly for teens, but also has some children's books – you can access their books best from library on their [mobi site](#).

[New Readers Publishers](#) have books in all South African languages, mainly for adult basic education, but many also suitable for young children learning to read.

The [Global Digital Library](#) (GDL) has international languages as well as African languages. GDL shouldn't be confused with the [Global Storybooks Portal](#) which has 38 country specific sites with storybooks from the African Storybook website in the languages of that country. Many of these storybooks also have audio!

If you're interested in storybooks from another continent, try India's [Storyweaver](#) – high quality picture storybooks in Indian, African and other languages – also completely free and open.

Interested in print as well as digital?

Most websites with early reading resources allow print and digital.

Digital copies of Book Dash books are available on the Book Dash website (as both print-ready and PDF ebooks), on [a mobile app](#), and on the digital platforms of other organisations.



This is also the case with African Storybook – the website allows you to download and read offline, as well as download to print. The [African Storybook Reader App](#) is free to download from Google Play or Apple’s App Store.

International platforms such as StoryWeaver, the Global Digital Library, and Global Storybooks also let you download and print individual books.

Reading resources that help you teach reading

The [Vula Bula](#) series developed by the Molteno Institute consists of graded or basal readers in all SA African languages except siSwati. You can download and print the graded readers and associated support materials (big books, alphabet and phonics friezes, high frequency word cards, and reading record forms) from the Vula Bula website.

Many programmes that support teachers to improve their teaching of reading use the resources on the website of the [Department of Basic Education](#) – Big Books, and Graded Readers in all official languages, for home language and second additional language, as well as English first additional language.

There’s an amazing new Android App called [Bolo](#) just released by Google, and launched in South Africa in November. The purpose is to provide support to young children as they learn to read. They say the words out loud, and a virtual teacher praises or corrects them, or provides further support. It uses a lot of African content – mainly from African Storybook.

Websites with storybooks mainly in English or non-African languages

The biggest digital library of free books is [World Reader](#). They have an App with books for people of all ages and interests, but also a [Kids App](#) with storybooks in English, but also Arabic and Hindi.

[Free Kids Books](#) is an inspiring site, built by an aircraft pilot from New Zealand. It carries books from New Zealand, but also a good collection of Science, Maths and Technology titles from South African open licence publishers such as [Siyavula/Thunderbolt Kids](#) and Book Dash.

[Let’s Read Asia](#) has a Reading App with stories in English, as well as several Asian languages, and if you want storybooks in English from Australia’s [Library for All, try their App](#) which is in Google Play. Be careful, though, because their books though free are not completely open.

Apps that allow you or your children to make storybooks

There are two Apps we have identified. [Kids Story Builder](#) helps you work with children to make storybooks: the children say the sentences that go with the pictures: they are recorded, and written as sentences in the App. It works entirely offline.

The [African Storybook Maker](#) allows you to create storybooks with your own photographs, with photographs of drawings that children have made, or with existing images from the African Storybook website. There is space for a picture and text on each page. It works offline from a tablet or smartphone. When you are online, you can publish your storybook on the African Storybook website.