

Scaffolding Children's Reading in Irish

Learning Outcomes

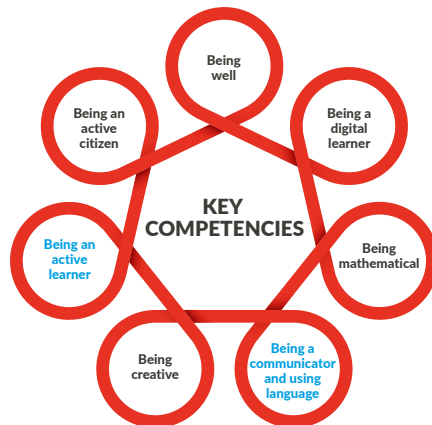
Children develop concepts, dispositions and skills in relation to:

Oral Language: Engagement, listening and attention, Vocabulary, Demonstration of understanding

Reading: Engagement, Motivation and choice, Vocabulary, Comprehension

As the children are supported with these strategies, they are also developing key competencies such as:

- Being a communicator and using language through developing an understanding and enjoyment of words and languages.
- Being an active learner by developing metacognitive skills and transferring skills, strategies and knowledge across languages.



This Support Material offers suggestions to scaffold children as they engage with Irish texts, fiction or non-fiction in an English-medium setting. Drawing on children's background knowledge and vocabulary, and selecting texts that align with their interests enhances motivation and engagement.

There is a wide range of texts available in Irish, for example picture books, stories, reports, articles, songs, sketches or poems.

Not all texts require the same level or type of scaffolding and the teacher can facilitate this without revealing the entire text. The suggestions below help children to build familiarity with the main points, key vocabulary, characters or events in a text before and during reading using the following methods:

- Activate prior knowledge
- Tell the story in different ways
- Preview the text
- Vocabulary instruction

Activate Prior Knowledge

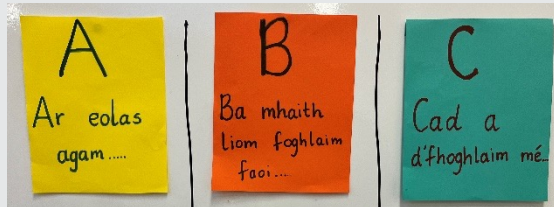
- **Choose texts relevant to the children's lives and interests:** There is a wide range of child-friendly texts available in Irish to suit a variety of interests and abilities. It may be useful to browse the local library and many texts can also be found online, for example on the [Léigh Anois](#) website.

- **Watch a short video on the topic:** Short videos relating to the topic of the text provide visual context and natural pronunciation. This can support children in understanding the vocabulary and language patterns that may appear in the text. [Cúla4](#) offers a variety of short video clips on topics relevant to children's lives, and occasionally these include Irish subtitles. The combination of listening and reading supports pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension.
- **Discuss the topic in other curriculum areas:** Drawing on children's background knowledge of the topic and / or vocabulary in a text through whole-class, group or pair discussions can enhance comprehension and engagement. For example, before reading a text set in a zoo, children could discuss what they already know about animals and zoos in Science or English.
- **Read the same text in English and Irish and / or other languages known to the children:** Many stories and folklore or non-fiction texts relating to the same subject are available in Irish, English and other languages. Reading these can help children deepen their conceptual knowledge of a plot, characters, setting, events, facts and vocabulary as they transfer skills, strategies and knowledge across languages.



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- **ABC Chart** (similar to a KWL Chart): **ABC** Chart stands for: **A**r eolas agam... **B**a mhaith liom foghlaim faoi... **C**ad a d'fhoghlaim mé? An ABC Chart can be completed as a class or in small groups. Divide the whiteboard/page into three sections (A, B, C). Discuss the topic and have children fill Section A. Encourage the children to think about and record questions in Section B. After reading the text, fill in Section C, adding to the chart with each reading.



Tell the Story in Different Ways

- **Picture Walk:** When introducing a text, walk through it, page by page, describing each picture orally. In fiction texts, explain in your own words what is happening and emphasise the names of the characters, the main events and the key vocabulary. In non-fiction texts, the emphasis could be on important facts and information as well as the key vocabulary.
- **Tell a simpler version of the text:** The teacher reads aloud using short sentences, gestures or simple drawings. Children can mime gestures as the teacher reads. This strategy is useful in fiction texts depicting a

character making a journey, or in non-fiction texts, such as life cycles or directions to be followed. The use of sound effects such as playgrounds, doorbells, animal sounds or a storm wailing can support vocabulary development and comprehension.

- **Sequencing images:** Using fiction and non-fiction texts, children can become familiar with the main events or facts. Select three key images from the text, explain what is happening in each one, and have children arrange them in order. Explain what is happening in each image again in the correct order. The teacher can describe the images orally and the children respond with coloured cards, e.g. green for true or red for false.

Preview the Text

- **Sneak peek:** Give the children the title of the text with one accompanying image (this could be the cover of a book, or an image relating to the content of the text) and ask them to infer what the text might be about. The teacher can make statements and the children respond with thumbs up (true) or thumbs down (false), e.g. *Baineann an scéal seo leis an zú. Tá an téacs seo suite i mBaile Átha Cliath.* This strategy works for both fiction and non-fiction texts, helping the teacher assess prior knowledge and provide additional vocabulary input.

- **Scanning the text:** Children explore a text as a whole class, in pairs or alone. Using their understanding of the topic, as well as text structures, children's prior knowledge is activated.
 - Highlight key characters, topics and events or keywords.
 - Scan the text to see if there are clues about the setting, the time of year etc.
 - Explore the structure of the text by examining headings and subheadings and the opening and closing sentences.
 - Seek familiar words or words similar to English or other known languages, for example carr, campa, crosta, caife etc.

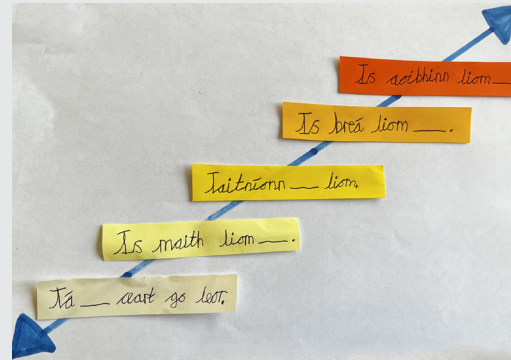
Children share their initial interpretations of the text, and this enables the teacher to assess understanding and provide feedback.



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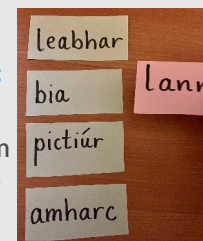
Vocabulary Instruction

- **Explicit vocabulary instruction:** Select words or phrases for explicit instruction that are key to understanding the text and can be applied in different contexts. The teacher may choose a sample sentence or an excerpt from the text containing the target vocabulary to show the word in context.
 - Assess the children's conceptual understanding of the target word or phrase. Children may know the vocabulary in another language. Use multiple representations of the new vocabulary (image / real object etc.) to support children to match the new vocabulary in Irish to the concept.
 - Discuss the meaning of the target word and provide a child-friendly definition.
 - Provide opportunities for children to apply the word to a range of contexts through activities such as matching words with images or definitions, labelling images, finding synonyms or antonyms, word clines, charades, word searches, cloze tests, bingo cards or flashcards that contain the word in context. Review the word/phrase frequently throughout the day / week.



Graphic organisers such as word clines can support rich vocabulary instruction. Encourage the children to arrange words or phrases on a scale that shows a range from weak to strong or positive to negative.

- **Display key vocabulary and phrases:** Create a space, such as a living chart, word wall or a vocabulary notebook, where children can see vocabulary and phrases in context and add new vocabulary they encounter in texts.
- **Share key vocabulary and phrases with others:** Encourage children to use new words or phrases in a variety of contexts e.g. in the yard, with peers, or by teaching the word or phrase to someone at home. This ensures ample opportunity to practise using the phrase/vocabulary.
- **Teaching word-learning strategies:** Teaching children to use specific word-learning strategies helps them to independently infer the meaning of unfamiliar words.



Léigh leat!

- ✓ Irish is a morphologically rich language and drawing attention to word parts (including prefixes and suffixes) can help unlock the meanings of unfamiliar words, for example: néata – **mínéata**, **bia****lann**, **leabhar****lann**. See [Léitheoirí Líofa](#) for suggested activities to explore morphological awareness in Irish.
- ✓ Encourage the use of a dictionary or thesaurus to discover a word's multiple forms and meanings. There are resources available online to support dictionary work such as [teanglann.ie](#) (words used in context and with pronunciation) [téarma.ie](#) (for terminology) and [potafochal.com](#) (thesaurus).
- ✓ Encourage children to make connections between Irish words and words in other languages, for example a dó, deux, dos etc. See [Sceitimíní](#) for suggested multilingual activities.
- ✓ Explicitly teach how to use context cues to infer the meanings of unknown words. The teacher models this with examples, thinking aloud and showing how to use the context, re-reading or reading ahead to infer meaning.

Further support on vocabulary development can be found in the [PLC online toolkit](#).