



Easy-to-read and learning

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1. Reading and learning

School is based on the **presumption** that all have learned to read after the first grades. Most of the teaching materials are **written**, although visual methods and materials are increasingly used in classrooms.

For a person with dyslexia, school can be complicated when reading is **difficult** and slow and letters change places and jump on the line. Is reading the only way to learn or are there other possibilities?

Reading challenges and **learning difficulties** are not the same. They are often mixed and therefore it is important to emphasize the differences.

A person with dyslexia can have difficulties with **reading**, but no problems with learning, if the materials can be learned in another way than through reading.

A person with **learning** difficulties may have problems with memory (short- or long-term), disabilities, difficulties focusing and concentrating or other challenges making learning difficult.

Reading and learning difficulties should therefore not automatically be joined together, but reasons should be studied and challenges identified.

For those with dyslexia, a solution could be to use more **visual** and **audio materials**. If family member(s) read **together** with the learner or the text is read aloud, knowledge can be acquired without the learner spending several hours in trying to decode a single page.

But it is not enough to read aloud and use various materials. People with difficulties need to **train their own** reading and writing **skills** and their memory. Reading which causes stress and tiredness in the beginning gradually turns less challenging. **Perseverance** and **patience** increase and they learn to handle both the texts and their own challenges.

Multimodality and multiliteracy

Multimodality and multiliteracy remind that communication is not only based on speech and text, but also on other forms of transmission of content or information. When a learner finds it difficult to understand a written text in standard language, an Easy-to-read book could support the acquisition of knowledge.

Easy-to-read books are not only fiction.

Pedagogical Easy-to-read books combine a specific form of text and picture, and often there are also extra materials such as tasks, questions about the text or games. By working with text and content in various ways, learners can acquire both language and information provided in an Easy-to-read book.

When a learner succeeds in reading an Easy-to-read book and solve tasks, reading appears more **manageable** and the **interest** in reading more increases. Someone who has succeeded in reading and understanding one Easy-to-read book can perhaps soon succeed in reading also a book in standard language.

2. More fun learning with Easy books

Sometimes schoolbooks can be difficult to understand.

All pupils nod in recognition. But we know that if you read an Easy-to-read book about the same topic, for example about blood circulation, digestion or nervous system, you understand better how our bodies function.

Team Bokpil has created books for **all ages** from pre-school to high school. They support the school curriculum and learning. Our books are suitable also for adults, and for **elderly** persons and persons with memory issues.

Natural science, geography, biology, environment and artificial intelligence are only some of our topics. We have also books on ethics and morale, migration, bullying and dementia. Our book about internet bullying (*Philip and the net*) answers to a need for discussion in schools and families.

Easy-to-read books can be read by everybody. They are compact information packages and at the same time adventures, which makes learning fun and thrilling.

3. Easy-to-read books teach resilience

Reading about how other people manage **crises** provides new tools to handle a situation.

Books telling about difficult situations and how various fictive or real persons **solve** them offer new models and possibilities to understand and process our experiences.

No crisis lasts forever. Even if a personal or global crisis maybe feels hard right now, there is always a possibility for **change**.

In Bokpil's pedagogical Easy-to-read books, **resilience** and **processing** complicated situations are common topics. The books contain both creative solutions and suggestions for your own activities and discussions.

The language in the Easy-to-read books is easy to understand, but the events always happen on **many levels**. Easy-to-read books are not necessarily simple stories. Therefore they **train** the reader both for resilience in reading and thinking in new ways. The reader is encouraged to find their own solutions and to learn to **manage in everyday life** also in extraordinary situations.

Reading suggestions: *The quest for Kraken, Chased by wolves, Follow the bird, Hugo's history, Find in the earth, Fly in the wind, Float on the wave, Philip and the shadow, Philip and the snow, Philip and the net, Philip and the fog* by Sabira Stahlberg with illustrations by Maria Viitasalo

4. Critical thinking and Easy-to-reads

The person who reads learns to think critically, researchers assert. Reading supports **reading comprehension** which in turn improves critical thinking.

The need for critical thinking is increasing parallel with fake news filling the internet. Now one must be critical of the text and the source and ... but also a **dialogue** between reader and text created by the author is required.

Many read only **superficially** today, to kill time or to enjoy entertainment or for excitement. More serious literature often feels especially for pupils too difficult or hard to read. But Easy-to-read books with the “right” thickness (read: sufficiently thin) for them are not considered to be “real” literature.

Team Bokpil has looked into Easy-to-read literature and noted that there is a greater concentration of books **promoting reading comprehension and critical thinking** among Easy-to-read books than among books in general in the standard language.

It is not surprising, really.

Easy books often aim to create and support **interest in reading** and reading comprehension and to offer topics activating the thinking. We create in our books also various levels and encourage in different ways readers to find out more by themselves.

Easy-to-read books can therefore function as an **effective tool** to create motivation for further readings and to ask questions – and in the future also to critical thinking.

5. Creating interest in reading

We often receive the question: How do you create interest in reading in pupils?

There is not only one answer to the question, but many. Two common traits have been identified by researchers: **Long perspectives** and **secure financing**. Only short projects are not enough.

Many years of work and collaboration between various actors are required to create a **change** in the increasingly chilly attitudes towards reading among pupils. A **sustainable collaboration** between schools, libraries and municipalities, and involving learners’ parents and relatives can increase the interest for reading. A **change of attitude** in society is also needed – about reading and books, and about mobile phone use.

Further, there is a need for exciting, **stimulating** books and materials which can be integrated in education.

We as authors and illustrators of Easy-to-read books can contribute by creating exciting, funny and **multidimensional** books with good linguistic quality and interesting contents, by supporting the work of teachers by preparing extra materials and keeping a constant dialogue with schools about readers’ needs. Inspiring and challenging!