

Using the Internet for...

# Reading for young people and parents



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by Clare Kelly, Wexford County Library.

Lifesteps offers you a range of online and printed guides. Written by staff from Irish public libraries, each guide contains easy to follow, step by step explanations of how to use the Internet to achieve a specific goal or 'life step'.

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For updates, news on the project and for a full listing of all the guides, log on to [www.lifesteps.ie](http://www.lifesteps.ie)

You can contact the Lifesteps team at [lifesteps@librarycouncil.ie](mailto:lifesteps@librarycouncil.ie)

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*Note: words in red appear in the glossary at the end of this module.*

## Introduction

The **Internet** has a wealth of information on the subjects of reading, literacy achievement, and books. By using the many **online** resources on book reviews, authors, bookshops, kids clubs and educational resources, parents and kids have access to writers and books that they would never have read before. One of the greatest benefits of the **web** to readers is being able to read reviews of a book by other individuals, who are not publishers and are not trying to sell the book.

This guide is for children and teenagers who are looking for a good read, for parents who want to help their children learn to read, and for those parents who want to encourage their children to continue reading and develop their communication skills.

Some **websites** are geared specifically to parents and other sites are created just for kids.

I have categorised the sites listed but some sites have sections for kids as well as parents and educators. The site will be listed in the most appropriate category. I have written brief notes on the content of each site.

**Although some sites are made for kids, children still need help and supervision because no site is absolutely secure. Some links may not be child friendly or indeed adult friendly and it is important to monitor your child's viewing, just like television.**

Many sites get their funding from advertising, which can be irritating when you are visiting them. Do not let it put you off if the material on the site is good. Some sites offer to sell the book at a discount. You can of course make use of this and purchase. If you are unsure about shopping online please look at the shopping online guide in this series. Remember if you do not wish to purchase, your local library will have many of the books you want and will take requests for books that are sometimes difficult to find.

## Step-by-Step Guide

There are a lot of really good sites out there and some of them are listed in this guide. As an example of what is on offer I am going to concentrate on [www.ala.org/greatsites](http://www.ala.org/greatsites) and a site that is linked to it, [www.dawcl.com](http://www.dawcl.com)

When you connect to [www.ala.org/greatsites](http://www.ala.org/greatsites) by clicking into the **URL** address box and typing in the above address, take your time to look in the left-hand side column.



The first option is **Search Great Websites for Kids**. This search allows you to search by **Intended Audience, Keyword** or by **URL**. Intended audience refers to the age group for which you are searching. Keyword is obviously that and it is important that you be specific in your search terms to get the best results. URL refers to Unique Resource Locator which is the actual **web page** address.

The second option is **Great Websites for Kids Selection Criteria**. This information is very useful for anybody surfing the net and I would recommend that you take a look at it.

Other options included on this site are a users survey which, if completed, helps the web page administrators keep up with clients' requirements; an option to suggest a good website (if you have come across or if you have created a good reputable website you can suggest it and it will be vetted by the committee and given the seal of approval); and there is also a **link** to the current committee with contact addresses and telephone numbers. The members are all based in the U.S.

The main page content is categorised by subject headings: **Animals, Literature and Languages, Sciences, The Arts, Reference Desk, History and Biography, Mathematics and Computers, Social Sciences** and there is a link in the bottom right hand corner to **Sites for Parents, Caregivers, Teachers and Others**.

If you click on **Sites for Parents, Caregivers, Teachers and Others** you will see that sites have been colour coded appropriate to age group.

Appropriate for PreK aged youth refers to 0-4 year olds.

Appropriate for Elementary aged youth refers to 5-10 year olds.

Appropriate for Middle School aged youth refers to 10-14 year olds .

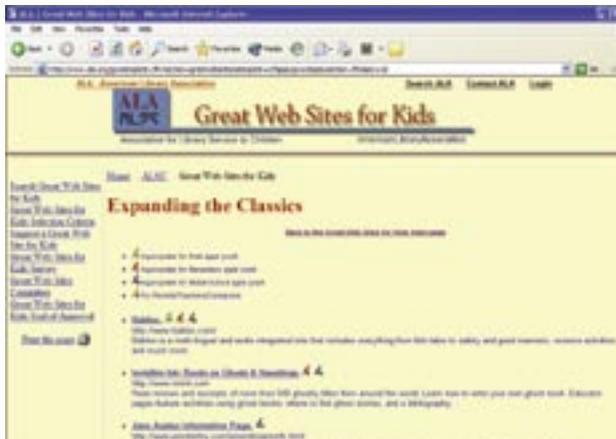
For Parents/Teachers/Caregivers is self explanatory.

There then follows a list of recommended sites, some are coded but most are not.

If you click on **Literature and Languages** there are links to sites about Authors and Illustrators, which are all colour coded for age suitability.

There are a lot of sites listed but the list is not definitive.

Another heading in this section is **Expanding the Classics**. This is colour coded with sites about Shakespeare, Jane Austen, Hemingway, Charles Dickens, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Snow White* and others.

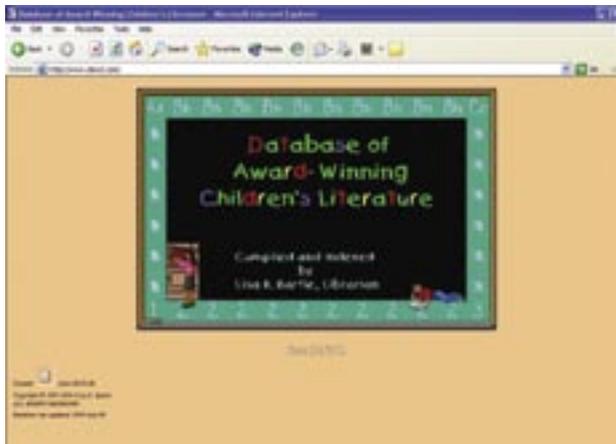


**Writing By Children** has links to four interactive sites for young readers and writers. The links are fairly self explanatory. Parents might want to look at these as well.

**Favourite Children's Stories** is another heading in this section and includes links to Animorphs, Babysitters, Come Home to Little House (Laura Ingalls Wilder companion site), Guysread (which is a site for guys) and many more links to sites related to popular book series for young readers.

All of the above categories fall under the heading **Literature and Languages** and the final one we will look at under this heading is **Children's Book Awards**. This category has just four links and all of the sites listed here concentrate on award winning literature for kids.

The **database** of award winning children's literature, [www.dawcl.com](http://www.dawcl.com) is created by Librarian Lisa R. Bartle. It is clear and well laid out and quite simple to use. The purpose of the site is clearly defined and geared towards parents and teachers and other carers.



There is an explanation for the awards, when you click on **Explanation of Awards** on the home page. The awards are worldwide and the list includes the Irish Bisto Book of the Year Award.

Click on **Search** DAWCL

You can limit your search by using Age of Reader, Setting, Historical Period, Ethnicity/Nationality of Protagonist, Gender of Protagonist, Multicultural, Languages other than English, Keyword/Phrase, Format, Genre, Year of Publication, and Award Achieved. There are very good explanations for all of these search terms to be found when you click on **Instructions**.

One word of caution here, do not use all the search fields together. They may limit your search too much and you will not get results. Keep your search relatively simple, using age and genre for example, or one or two other fields. Just keep in mind that all of the books listed in this site have won awards so finding something suitable is relatively easy.

The **database** has records of books published as far back as 1921. Some of these books would naturally be out of print and therefore would have to be purchased second-hand. The site has recently linked with Barnes and Noble and details of availability and purchase options are available when you click on **Order through Barnes & Noble**. But do keep in mind that you can take the publication details and check with your local library, they may have the book or may be able to get it for you.

**For a full list of websites on reading, publishers and authors please visit our website at [www.lifesteps.ie](http://www.lifesteps.ie)**

## Sites for Parents and Educators

[www.gaeilge.ie](http://www.gaeilge.ie)

Foras na Gaeilge is the body responsible for the promotion of the Irish language throughout the island of Ireland and it supports Irish language education. This site gives information on organisations, groups, schools, summer camps, Irish courses and classes, Gaeltachts and more.



[www.ala.org/greatsites](http://www.ala.org/greatsites)

This site was developed by the American Library Association and provides a detailed list of great sites for children.

[www.dawcl.com](http://www.dawcl.com)

This is a database of award-winning children's literature.

[www.booktrusted.co.uk](http://www.booktrusted.co.uk)

For teachers, parents, librarians and young adults, this site allows you to search by author, title, children's publishers and more. There are tips for parents and links to Book Trust and other organizations involved in children's literature such as Book Aid International, the British Dyslexia Association.

[www.rif.org.uk](http://www.rif.org.uk)

Reading is Fundamental is an initiative of the National Literacy Trust (U.K.). It involves volunteers and families in reading projects. This is a U.K. based site and the reason it is listed is because it gives good advice to parents about choosing books for kids, it has a FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) page and tips of giving help with reading and dealing with different age groups.

[www.picturingbooks.imaginarylands.org](http://www.picturingbooks.imaginarylands.org)

This site is informative and educational. It explains what picture books are and how they work. The site has good links and resources and is well worth a visit.

[www.cdipage.com](http://www.cdipage.com)

This is the Child Development Institute website. It has sections on reading and how to improve your child's reading and learning ability; dyslexia, its causes and how parents and teachers can deal with dyslexia. This site also has links to other pages related to learning difficulties.

[www.childrensbooksireland.com](http://www.childrensbooksireland.com)

Children's Books Ireland (CBI) is the national children's book organisation of Ireland. The aim of CBI is to promote quality children's books and reading throughout the country. It runs a number of events each year including the Children's Book Festival in October.



[www.teenreads.com](http://www.teenreads.com)

This is part of the book report network which is a group of websites founded in 1996, that share thoughtful book reviews, features, author profiles and interviews, excerpts from new releases, literary games and contests.

## Sites for Older Children and Teen Readers

[www.skool.ie](http://www.skool.ie)

This is a collaboration between AIB, *The Irish Times* and Intel Ireland. It focuses on the Irish Junior and Senior school cycle and it helps students learn and revise for their exams. In particular the English section helps with literature, media studies and grammar.



[www.scoilnet.ie](http://www.scoilnet.ie)

Developed by the Department of Education & Science in conjunction with the National Centre for Technology in Education, this site is geared towards primary and secondary students, with pages for parents, teachers and school managers also. It has interactive games and stories as well as exercises in comprehension, looking at all areas of the curriculum.

[www.cool-reads.co.uk](http://www.cool-reads.co.uk)

Created by Tim and Chris Cross in 2001 when they were 11 and 13 respectively, this is a site for teen readers and it is really good. It has over 2,500 reviews by young readers for young readers. Subjects are listed from a teen perspective. Other subjects include school, racism and discrimination, sports, computers, time-travel, magic and witchcraft, bullying, friends and family and lots more. It really is a great site with recommendations from writers, teachers and kids.

[www.redhouse.co.uk](http://www.redhouse.co.uk)

Redhouse is an online bookseller and sponsor of the Redhouse Children's Book Award, [www.redhousechildrensbookaward.co.uk](http://www.redhousechildrensbookaward.co.uk), which is apparently the only children's book award decided by children. The site has a number of good features and cheaper prices than the recommended retail price. But always keep in mind that books at your local library are free.

[www.ms-society.ie/msreadathon](http://www.ms-society.ie/msreadathon)

MS Ireland's Readathon takes place every Autumn. Children collect their sponsorship applications either from school or the local library, and they are sponsored to read as many books as they can during the allotted time. The scheme is very successful and raises money for the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland.

## Reading Fun for the Very Young

[www.ladybird.co.uk](http://www.ladybird.co.uk)

This site explains the Ladybird Reading Schemes and Keywords. It is colourful, and simple, with interactive games for kids and it has links to other sites such as [www.funwithspot.com](http://www.funwithspot.com) and [www.peterrabbit.com](http://www.peterrabbit.com) and [www.puffin.co.uk](http://www.puffin.co.uk)

[www.bookhive.org](http://www.bookhive.org)

This is a guide to children's literature and books. It has book reviews, quizzes, and colouring pages for all levels of young reader. There are featured storytellers for which you would need RealPlayer plug in, which is freely available for download.

[www.starfall.com](http://www.starfall.com)

The Starfall Learn To Read website helps parents to teach their very young children to read. The lessons are for emergent readers, teaching phonemic awareness.

## Publishers and Authors

[www.childrensbooksireland.com/links](http://www.childrensbooksireland.com/links)

This site offers a list of websites for Irish publishers and Irish authors of children's books.

[www.dk.com](http://www.dk.com)

The Dorling Kindersley site is categorized first by age and then by subject. DK has a large selection of non-fiction stock for young children of all ages. Dorling Kindersley is part of the Pearson publishing group and has links to other Pearson sites, e.g. Penguin UK and Puffin, Ladybird, Peter Rabbit and Spot. [www.prim-ed.com](http://www.prim-ed.com), [www.carrollheinemann.ie](http://www.carrollheinemann.ie)

These are two educational publishing companies that specialise in providing resources for primary schools. These sites are geared to parents and teachers.

[www.booksarecool.com](http://www.booksarecool.com) (Stephanie Dagg's website) Stephanie Daggs writes for younger independent readers and emergent readers.

[www.roalddahl.com](http://www.roalddahl.com) (Official website for the life and work of Roald Dahl)

This official website of the famous children's author is an excellent site for kids; as it is full of fun, games, quizzes, and interesting facts.

[www.redwall.org](http://www.redwall.org) (Brian Jacques' official website) The Redwall series – from Brian Jacques - is geared to young readers aged 9 to 15.

[www.philip-pullman.com](http://www.philip-pullman.com) (Official website of Phillip Pullman) Phillip Pullman has written many books that are popular with young readers.

[www.jkrowling.com](http://www.jkrowling.com) (Official website of J.K. Rowling) This website is full of news, rumours, and useful information on the author responsible for the Harry Potter series.

[www.darrenshan.com](http://www.darrenshan.com) (Darren Shan's official website) Darren Shan is a very popular Irish author for older kids.

[www.kidsatrandomhouse.co.uk/jacquelinewilson](http://www.kidsatrandomhouse.co.uk/jacquelinewilson) (Jacqueline Wilson's official site) This site is full of information, news, and fun stuff on the popular children's author, Jacqueline Wilson.

## Glossary

- Database:** A database is a collection of information stored on a computer. The database is made up of records – each product record might include a name, a price, a description and a picture. Databases are structured – they contain the same sorts of information for a collection of similar items. Databases are an essential element of most computer systems, including large websites, e-shops, etc.
- Internet:** A large collection of computers, connected together to allow them to share information with one another.
- Link:** A link, or hyperlink, is a part of a web page that, if clicked with a mouse, opens a different web page. Links are usually shown in blue and underlined on a webpage.
- Online:** A word used as shorthand for ‘on the Internet’ or ‘connected to the Internet’.
- Search:** Searching is the process of finding a particular word or topic within a website or on the Internet. When you search, you type in one or more words which describe what you are searching for, and a search engine program looks up a database and shows a list of links to pages that may match what you are looking for. When you search, it is up to you to have some idea of what you are looking for – you have to type in the words to search for. Searches vary in scope – many websites allow you to search the site and all its pages; bigger search engines such as Google allow you to search the whole Internet. Typing CTRL-F lets you search the web page you are looking at.
- URL:** The Uniform Resource Locator, or address, of a web page. Like the phone number of a particular person, this is unique and goes direct to the web page it is associated with.

- World Wide Web:** Also called the WWW or the web. A service that sends information over the internet from web server programs to web browser programs. The browser then displays this information to the user on his computer screen.
- Web page:** A web page is a computer file which typically includes text, pictures, links and perhaps forms.
- Website:** A website is a collection of web pages which displays information on a particular topic. Common types of websites include company websites (information about the company), online shops (where you buy goods and services and pay by credit card) and personal websites (where individuals share their interests). A website may consist of just one page of information, but will usually contain several pages, all linked together. All the pages in a website usually share the same 'domain' name. For example, all the pages in the large online shop Amazon have an address (URL) that starts with 'www.amazon.com'.