

Improving reading skills and discovering joy of books

Books allow us to experience the pleasure of reading, opening up a world of fun, enjoyment and learning for children, young people and adults.

Libraries

Public libraries are obviously a great source of books. If you're not currently a member of a library, think about joining.

They have a large selection of books for all ages, including eBooks, large print books, and audio books on CD.

But as well as books, libraries also offer a wide range of free services, including:

- loaning of magazines and eMagazines
- local history resources
- computer use
- internet access and Wi-Fi

You can find out more information on the [libraries page](#).

Reading to your child

Parents are advised to do what they can to encourage their children to develop their reading skills. Taking the time to read to a child can help them to discover the joy of reading.

Whether it's reading a story to little ones at bedtime or enjoying a novel together with an older child, parents and families can help boost children's reading ability and, in turn, their learning potential.

Parents can also encourage children to put the computer games aside for a while, pick up a book instead and get their child to read out loud to them.

You can get useful tips and advice in the following section:

Parental involvement and encouragement, no matter how small, can have a direct and long-lasting effect on a child's educational achievements.

More useful links

Stay safe when mixing slurry

Date published: 06 February 2019

Farmers are being urged to take extra care when mixing slurry. It's vital to follow recommended safety advice and stay out of the mixing building for at least half an hour. Just one breath of slurry gas can cause serious injury or even death.

Dangerous gases

Slurry gas is a mixture of gases, including the extremely poisonous hydrogen sulphide.

Even a low concentration of hydrogen sulphide can knock out your sense of smell, so you won't even know it's there.

At higher concentrations you will quickly find it harder to breathe and become confused – and at certain concentrations, just one breath can kill.

When mixing slurry you should:

- keep children away from the area at all times
- if possible, mix on a windy day
- open all doors and windows
- take all animals out of the building before starting
- use outside mixing points first
- if slats are removed, cover exposed areas of the tank beside the pump/mixer to stop anything falling in
- after starting the pump/mixer, get out and stay out of the building for as long as possible – at least 30 minutes
- make sure that another adult knows what you are doing, stays outside and can get help if needed if you have to go into the building,
- if you have to re-enter the building to move the pump or change the direction of the pump, leave as soon as this is done – do not go back in for as long as possible (at least another 30 minutes)
- never rely on filter-type facemasks
- never use gas monitors as a substitute for working safely
- never allow naked flames near slurry, as the gas mixture is flammable
- never stand close to the exhaust of a vacuum tanker when it is being filled

Find out more about working safely with slurry, contact the helpline on 0800 0320 121 or find useful information at the following link:

The advice is clear: stop, think and stay safe when working with slurry.

More useful links

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[Avoiding accidental fires in the home](#)

There are basic fire safety measures you can take at home. Following some simple steps and being aware of obvious dangers can help to reduce the risk of an accidental fire and prevent damage and potential loss of life.

Causes of accidental fires

The top causes of accidental fires in the home are:

- cooking or cooking appliances (cookers, ovens, hotplates, grill pans, deep fat fryers, microwaves and toasters)
- electricity supply or other electrical equipment and appliances (plugs, lighting and cables, washing machines, dishwashers and tumble dryers)
- smoking or smoking-related materials (cigarettes, matches and lighters)

Cooking

Fires from cooking and cooking appliances can be avoided by:

- never leaving cooking unattended
- turning off hobs and ovens when finished cooking
- keeping flammable items such as tea towels and oven gloves away from the cooker
- keeping oven and grill pans free from a build-up of oils and grease, which can easily catch fire
- never throwing water onto an oil-based fire

Electrical equipment

Fires from electrical equipment can be avoided by:

- never overloading sockets
- never leaving electrical appliances such as dishwashers or washing machines running overnight or when you leave the house

Smoking

Fires from smoking materials can be avoided by:

- never smoking in bed or when feeling drowsy or tired
- always stubbing cigarettes out fully in an ashtray

'STOP' fire

'STOP Fire' is an easy to remember fire safety tool for everyone to use. It's an instant checklist focusing on fire safety basics:

- [smoke alarms](#) – make sure you have at least one working smoke alarm on every floor
- test weekly – test your smoke alarm weekly or ask someone to check it for you
- obvious fire safety dangers – look out for obvious fire safety dangers, stub out cigarettes, and never leave cooking unattended
- planned escape – have a planned escape, keep access routes clear, close all doors at night and have your keys at the ready

You can find out more about fire safety at the pages below:

Be responsible and protect yourself, your family and your home from fire.

Home Fire Safety Check

Those most at risk from death or injury from accidental fires are:

- people aged 60 or older
- people who have a disability, impaired mobility or a health condition that would affect their ability to be aware of or respond to an emergency in the home
- people who get assistance from a visiting agency on a regular basis to help with day-to-day tasks

That's why [Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service](#) is offering anyone who falls into one of these categories a [free Home Fire Safety Check](#).

Firefighters will install or check that smoke alarms are working, help to identify any obvious dangers, and advise on an escape plan.

More useful links

Helping the environment by recycling

Date published: 28 September 2017

Everyone is being encouraged to help the environment by recycling more material, including food waste. Reduce, reuse and recycle where possible as part of the household daily routine.

Food waste

Food waste makes up a significant amount of the household waste we throw out each week.

Making the effort to recycle this food waste can greatly help to improve the environment.

Even small bits of food, like tea bags and coffee grounds, can be recycled.

It is important that everyone uses the recycling services provided by [councils](#) throughout the year.

Locally-produced compost from recycled food waste is being used within our local parks and community gardens, keeping them in good condition for the growth of flowers, fruit and vegetables.

More useful links

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Students urged to be aware of fire safety

Students and their parents are urged to be aware of the dangers of fire. Fire safety advice could be one of the most important lessons for students during their time at university or college.

Smoke alarm and fire escape plan

Living away from home, especially if it's for the first time, can be very exciting and it's easy to get caught up in student life and forget about fire safety.

As parents inspect student accommodation to make sure it's suitable, they should also:

- make sure that premises are fire safe
- remind their children that fire safety checks should always be part of their routine

All students should take personal responsibility for looking after themselves and their housemates to protect them from the dangers of fire.

It's important to have a working smoke alarm fitted on each level of accommodation and to test them once a week. This will alert students and their housemates to the earliest stage of a fire, giving vital extra time to escape.

Students should follow a good fire safe bedtime routine – checking a few things before going to bed can reduce the risk of fire. It only takes a minute and could save lives.

Also, take some time to agree a fire escape plan to make sure everyone is clear what to do in the event of an emergency. This means knowing where the fire exits are and making sure furniture or stored items do not block them.

If there is no fire exit, plan an alternative escape route other than by the main entrance door.

A lot of students go home at weekends, so they should make sure that accommodation is safely secured and protected from the risk of fire. Make sure all electrical appliances not designed to be left on are disconnected, fully put out cigarettes, and close all doors.

You can find out more about fire safety at the pages below:

Student fire safety advice

Students should:

- test their smoke alarm every week
- prepare a fire escape plan
- carry out a night-time check
- turn off all electrical appliances not designed to be left on
- put a guard on open fires
- put out all cigarettes and empty ashtrays into a non-combustible container
- put out all candles
- close all internal doors

- don't leave cooking unattended
- not cook when under the influence of alcohol

Students should also check that the fire alarm system in their accommodation is working. If it is showing a fault, contact the landlord or the Estates Officer at the university immediately.

More useful links