National Literacy Trust

Change your story

Book choice bistro

Teacher Guide

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Create the atmosphere of a bustling book bistro and support your pupils to choose a book they'd like to read.

Why is supporting book choice important?

For many young people choosing a book can be challenging, especially for those who don't often visit the local library or bookshops. Our research shows that providing choice empowers young readers, but structure is important (Clark & Phythian-Sence 2008).

Most (80.6%) children who took part in our Young Readers Programme in 2022 told us that they liked being able to choose books for themselves and, after taking part in the programme, where teaching book choice strategies is key, 1 in 2 (47.0%) told us that they were better at choosing books as a result (Teravainen-Goff, Clark & Brown, 2023)

What is a 'book choice bistro'?

A book choice bistro is a fun book tasting event to support pupils to 'taste', explore and discover new books, all while practising book choice strategies to better equip them in choosing books they'll enjoy and be able to access independently.

The idea provides a fun way to empower pupils to practise their book choice skills, and choose a book based on their interests. By openly teaching book-choice strategies and regulating the number of books on offer, you can help pupils who are easily overwhelmed, and avoid children choosing a book just to 'get the job done'!

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How to run your book choice bistro

Allow **at least** an hour altogether. First, teach the book choice strategies (20 -30 mins), followed by running the bistro itself (30 mins +). We recommend timetabling the session so that after the book choice teaching input, a playtime or lunchtime break follows to allow you time to set up the bistro for when pupils return to the classroom.

What you need:

- A 'menu' of books for pupils to peruse– you can use the book bistro menu template we have created
- A curated selection of books (from your menu)
- Book choice strategies PowerPoint slides for your teaching input
- Book chat prompts– for pupils to refer to whilst exploring the books
- Paper plates and cups
- An apron and/or tea-towel for each staff member
- A notepad and pen for each staff member
- A YouTube or Spotify soundtrack of a tinkling restaurant atmosphere
- Tablecloths, bread baskets or breadsticks, napkins – anything to make each table look more like a restaurant

Step one: create your book menu

You can use the template provided or create your own and print copies for pupils. Ensure there is a broad selection of non-fiction and fiction including picturebooks, comics and graphic novels. Ensure a diverse spread of authors and genres.

Step two: teach book choice strategies

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Before break or lunch, pre-teach the book choice strategies using the slides provided. These strategies may seem obvious to adults but by deliberately going through each technique, you will support children who find choice overwhelming or challenging.

Step three: turn your classroom into a bistro

While the children are out for break or lunch, set up your classroom like a bistro. You could lay checked tablecloths, play restaurant music, put out breadsticks, and place a paper plate and cup for each child. Ask each staff member to wear an apron or carry a tea towel over their arm as the 'book waiters'. Lay out a 'book menu' for each child. Have a 'kitchen' area in your classroom to display the book selection (pupils will order their books from you after reading the menu). Having the books on a display table for pupils to see will add to the excitement!

Step four: welcome pupils to your Book Choice Bistro and take their orders

Show the children to their seats, give them time to peruse the menu, and proceed to take their 'book orders' on your notepad. You could even offer them a starter in the form of a poem or short story! Let them know they can request a taster of a book before ordering, dipping in to read a few pages. 'Serve' each child their chosen book. You could serve it to them on a paper plate for an extra flourish.

Step five: allow pupils to 'tuck in'

Allow the children time to 'tuck in' to their book trying out the book choice strategies discussed earlier. If they don't enjoy their book, pupils can swap with a friend or 'return their book to the kitchen' and choose another one. Encourage informal book talk using the book chat prompts. You want a 'book buzz' in your café full of children talking about their reading choices rather than silent reading! Children can share what they have read with their group, and make recommendations to each other. Allow time for pupils to taste at least

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two books each. At the end of the session, give pupils the option to select a book to 'take away'.

Step six: reviews

After the session, allow time for pupils to talk about their choices.

- *Did they discover something new today?*
- *Which book was the most interesting to them and why?*
- *Which book choice strategy did they find the most helpful?*

You might want to invite pupils to review one of the books they chose at the bistro today. If so, ask pupils to use their paper plates to write their review , giving their first impressions of the book and their rating out of 5 stars (note, they don't have to like the book they chose from the menu – this is all part of exploring books and discovering preferences!) These could form a display – you might ask pupils to draw a character from the book or even a new front cover design.

A note on parental engagement

You could repeat your book choice bistro as a parental engagement event in the school hall or library. Invite parents for a book tasting coffee afternoon to choose a book to read with their child.

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