

Free Reading Resources

by Ben Shearon

Reading is now widely believed to be the foundation for a solid EFL program, and is the natural continuation of a phonics program. However, it can be expensive and time-consuming for a small school to put together a decent reading library. Students require variety, both in subject matter and difficulty levels. Multiple copies are necessary for class work, and students tend to progress through books quickly, especially at lower levels.

There is a wide range of excellent commercial reading material available for EFL students, but the cost can be prohibitive, especially when setting up a library for the first time.

Fortunately, there are a number of online resources, many of which are freely available for teachers to use with their classes. These could be a valuable resource, not just for schools, but also for teachers working within an organization that does not provide a book budget (like public junior or senior high schools).

Each entry below includes a brief introduction to the site.

The Beginning Reading Instruction Yahoo Group (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Beginning-Reading-Instruction/>)
Has advice and materials on teaching beginners to read, including over 50 beginning readers available free for download.

EFL Reading (<http://www.gradedreading.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/>)
A collection of about a dozen free graded readers.

The Extensive Reading Pages (<http://www.extensivereading.net/>)
A repository of knowledge and advice about extensive reading in an EFL context.

The Japan Extensive Reading Project (<http://japanerp.pbwiki.com/>)
A collaborative project to create additional reading material for junior high school students. It is currently based on the New Horizon textbooks.

Project Gutenberg (<http://www.gutenberg.org/>)
An online collection of thousands of out of copyright books that are freely available to read, download, or print out. An excellent resource for advanced or returnee students (or bored teachers!).

Reading A-Z (<http://www.readinga-z.com/>)
A commercial site with over 1500 downloadable readers. Their free sample section offers 30 free books for download/printing.

Richmond Readers (<http://www.richmondelt.com/spain/more6a.html>)
Twelve full-colour illustrated readers available as PDF files for free.

Starfall (<http://www.starfall.com/>)
An excellent site with online phonics and reading practice.

