

# Coronavirus: ‘Add TV subtitles to boost literacy’

Celebrities urge TV and internet broadcasters to add subtitles while home learning is at its peak during the pandemic

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By Dave Speck

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Children’s laureate Cressida Cowell is among key figures calling for broadcasters of children’s TV programmes to turn on subtitles at the height of the coronavirus pandemic.

Campaigners say subtitles are an “incredibly simple” way of boosting literacy, particularly among primary children.

The bestselling author of the *How to Train Your Dragon* books is among celebrities, including writer and performer Stephen Fry, who have signed a letter to broadcasters and internet streamers saying that subtitles are needed “as a matter of urgency” at the height of the lockdown when home-learning is at its peak.

The letter, published in today's *Observer*, states: "This simple change will make the world of difference to millions of young people at this extremely challenging time."

## Home learning in the coronavirus lockdown

It is addressed to organisations such as Sky, Netflix, Amazon Prime, YouTube Kids, ITV and the BBC, many of whom are said to have shown interest in the idea.

Other signatories include businesswoman Martha Lane Fox and children's television presenter Floella Benjamin.

The campaign is being organised by [TOTS \(Turn on the Subtitles\)](#), which says that "extensive research across multiple countries has shown us a way to improve children's literacy. It's incredibly simple; just turn on the subtitles".

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### **Dave Speck**

Dave Speck is a reporter at Tes