

How watching TV can help boost your child's reading skills

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Parents are being encouraged to make just one simple change to boost their children's reading skills(Image: PA)

Studies have shown watching television with subtitles can double a child's chances of becoming a proficient reader

Parents are being encouraged to make just one simple change to boost their children's reading skills.

It's the easiest of things to do and won't cost a penny, but apparently turning the subtitles on while your little one watches the box can double their chances of becoming a proficient reader.

It's not a new revelation, Bill Clinton was banging on about it as far back as 2009, but a campaign to get parents to Turn On The Subtitles (TOTS) is gathering pace.



While reading with children is the best way to establish a love of books, evidence shows subtitles are an effective way to help boost literacy skills

Oli Barrett MBE is behind the campaign and says there have been studies across the world, which all show that: "If you turn on the subtitles for children's TV programmes (particularly between the ages of 6 and 10) it doubles their chance of becoming a proficient reader."

Bill Clinton discusses subtitles on children's TV

His campaign started after discovering the work of Brij Kothari, a professor at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, and founder of PlanetRead.

After listening to Brij's valuable piece of advice - 'If you want to teach a nation to read: Just turn on the subtitles' - Oli and his friend Henry Warren, who's also behind the campaign, took various pieces of evidence to the UK National Literacy Trust (NLT), to get their take on the issue.

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And they received overwhelming support from the man at the top, Jonathan Douglas, who said: "The international evidence base suggesting that children respond well to having subtitles on when they're watching television is compelling."

"We would absolutely support automatic same-language subtitling on children's TV programmes."

Oli told us: "When I found out about the powerful link between subtitles and literacy, I couldn't believe more hadn't been done to join these dots here in the UK.

"Henry Warren and I approached the National Literacy Trust and they were keen to partner with us.

"We set of on the Tots journey last month and see this as the beginning. Our job now is to share the idea with broadcasters, including the BBC.

"Also with programme makers, politicians and parents. I'm confident that in time, children's programmes will be subtitled by default. It's such a simple change which can make a huge difference. "

Mr Douglas, director of the NLT, which leads the [Read Manchester campaign](#) in the city, confirmed his support for subtitling kids' TV.

He said: "While parents reading with children is the best way to establish a love of books and improve communication skills, the international evidence base suggests that same language subtitles are a simple and effective way to help boost literacy skills."

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So now you know. There's no harm in that fifth episode of Peppa Pig after all.