READING HACK

GUIDE

www.readingagency.org.uk/readinghack
What’s Reading Hack?
Well, it’s reading subverted, flipped on its head, re-read, converted.

ABOUT READING HACK

Reading Hack is a programme led by young people aged 13 to 24, who do reading activities and volunteering, called hacks, to gain skills and experience.

Reading Hack gives you tools and resources to run hacks which encourage young people to use the library, organise activities, volunteer and inspire others to read.

Reading Hack has been developed by The Reading Agency, young people and practitioners and is funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. The programme is supported by a national brand and website, a bank of innovative and fun approaches to reading, prizes for young people, and free training, resources and ready-to-use activities for practitioners.

Visit the website for more information and exclusive resources: readingagency.org.uk/young-people/resources-for-librarians

You will need the password from your local coordinator, or else email readinghack@readingagency.org.uk
**IT’S A HACK**

**What is a hack?**

A hack is “a clever solution to a tricky problem. To hack is to modify or change something in an extraordinary way” (Urban Dictionary definition, 2009). Examples include Lifehack, Museum Hack and IKEA Hackers which all take something established and remake or redefine it.

Young people redefine reading through their involvement with Reading Hack.

**Hacking reading**

Young people hack reading by doing an activity with reading at its heart. This could be anything from a poetry-themed DJ set or novel-inspired Minecraft, to book-related filmmaking or helping younger children read.

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**It’s a hack! Helping others read**

Summer Reading Challenge volunteer James from Warrington hacked reading by clocking up over 100 hours of sharing reading with others in his local library.

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**It’s a hack! Novel soundtracks**

Young people in Croydon hacked the novel _Boy Nobody_ by Allen Zadoff by creating a playlist of tracks which revealed their thoughts as the story unfolded.

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**It’s a hack! Novel-inspired Minecraft**

Twelve boys in South Tyneside hacked reading by building scenes from books in the popular computer game Minecraft. They revisited passages from their favourite books before deciding what to build.

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**It’s a hack! Remixing fairy tales**

Beata, a young person from London, created a fairy tale hack. She selected lines from two well-loved fairy tales and used a photocopier, scissors and glue to remix them into an entirely new story of her own creation.
FIVE THINGS READING HACK GIVES YOUNG PEOPLE

Reading Hack turns reading on its head. The programme supports young people to create their own hacks, meet new people, build their skills and inspire others to read. From doing creative activities to producing events, volunteering and getting involved in social action, Reading Hack gives young people:

1. **A place to showcase and share** their ideas on how to engage others;
2. **A chance to shape their own reading journey** in the library, empowered by trained facilitators;
3. **Access to a national website** to get inspiration and recognition for their ideas, connecting nationally with their peers;
4. **A framework to record and accredit the skills** they have gained, helping them build their CVs and showcase their achievements;
5. **Access to professional support** for their activities.

Reading Hack helps young people increase their confidence, employability, well-being and enjoyment of reading.

### HOW IT WORKS

1. **Young people do hacks** in their library, school or community
2. **Share their hacks online** and get ideas for new hacks
3. **Get skills, badges, prizes and compete** with others in the Reading Hack League

“It’s an amazing idea in that it tries to actively engage teenagers to read and also get involved with changing their community for the better.”

Seventeen-year-old Reading Hacker

IT’S A HACK – CREATE A POETRY-INSPIRED DJ SET
Reading Hack is designed to be flexible and adaptable so you can create your local offer with young people to suit your library’s needs and the interests of the young people you are working with. Reading Hack gives you:

1. A **framework** for running year round activities and volunteering into which you can integrate your own existing young people’s activities and partnerships;

2. An exciting **brand and online platform** to inspire young people to get involved locally;

3. A **scheme** for incentivising young people to engage with your offers and reward their achievement;

4. A **menu of activities, ideas and campaign hooks** that makes reading fun and relevant and which you can run across your authority. These activities can be integrated with existing activity, to drive and support local engagement;

5. A **bank of toolkits, resources and training** to support your work with young people.

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**FIVE THINGS READING HACK GIVES YOUR LIBRARY**

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“**We are looking forward to developing Reading Hack in our libraries across Staffordshire. Reading Hack will provide an opportunity for young people to participate in year round volunteering, supporting them in their college, university and job applications.”**

Sue Ball, Libraries Service Development Manager, Staffordshire County Council

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**BENEFITS FOR LIBRARY AUTHORITIES**

- Adds value to the work you are already doing and helps you create new offers with young people that redefine reading, using the economies of scale and new thinking that Reading Hack brings.
- Helps your staff develop skills and confidence to work with young people to shape their own reading journeys.
- Increases your influence with local partners and organisations by using Reading Hack to showcase your expertise in youth-led work and inspire new collaborations.
- Demonstrates your contribution to key local authority priorities for young people through Reading Hack, for example supporting community cohesion through youth volunteering.
- Supports the ambitions for youth involvement embedded in the library sector Universal Offers and Children’s Library Journey.
Chris Everett, Senior LiveWire Advisor – Reading, tells us about plans in Warrington.

How long has your library authority been working with young people?
We have been working with young people for over 11 years now. Our offer has grown from stock buying in the early days to letting young people plan, run and evaluate events and sit on interview panels. Involving young people in the future of their library is now embedded in our work.

The way we engage young people has changed with the growth in social media. We run digital reading activities and encourage our young volunteers to use social media to publicise services available. This work in particular has been enhanced by Reading Agency projects and competitions. Being part of Reading Activists over the last few years has provided our young people with fantastic opportunities such as trips to Downing Street and the Guardian newspaper.

How are you planning to use ReadingHack in your library?
We will use Reading Hack to build on our work with young people. We have good links with local schools and colleges so we will be letting them and all our partners know about Reading Hack. We will have Reading Hack groups meeting across Warrington for those young people who would like group support and want to plan activities. Some young people from these groups will set up our social media platform to keep others updated on their activities and anything they think might be of interest.

How do you think Reading Hack will help your staff and young people?
Reading Hack will give us the chance to publicise our events for young people and our volunteer offer. It will raise awareness of what a modern library provides for young people, helping us to reach more young people in our community. The flexibility of the programme means that it caters for a wide range of interests and all levels of commitment. From past experience we know it will provide young people with new skills and increase their confidence. Instant rewards and an attractive new website will encourage their continued participation.

Reading Hack will support the delivery of a year-round volunteer offer. Our staff will engage more with young people, becoming more aware of their needs and interests and so providing attractive facilities and events for them. Hopefully this will ensure an increase in footfall and in issues to this age group.
GETTING STARTED

Get started planning your programme using one of the Reading Hack planning sessions for staff and/or young people. They can be found online at: readingagency.org.uk/young-people/resources-for-librarians

Including current opportunities
Don’t forget your library service’s current opportunities for young people will form the bedrock of your Reading Hack offer – and which you can build on with the input of young people. Reading Hack isn’t about reinventing wheels but instead adding value to your existing work.

Planning new activity for Reading Hack
If you are unsure about what to offer or you are looking to create new opportunities, there are three pathways through Reading Hack which are flexible to suit local circumstance and the different ages and interests of young people involved. Read about the three pathways on the next page.

READING HACK BRAND

You can use Reading Hack to brand both your authority’s new and existing opportunities into one exciting, unified offer for young people.

The Reading Hack brand provides recruitment materials, resources and a website to engage young people in reading activities while challenging their perceptions of reading. The brand has been designed and tested extensively with young people and developed by youth communication experts, Bold Creative.

The brand is fun, fresh and creative and gives you a new way of talking about reading activities and volunteering through doing hacks. Reading Hack can be used in your library to brand roles, events, festivals and even spaces. You can download branded materials from the website and find videos, such as the Reading Hack animation, to share with young people and online.

EVALUATION

Evaluation is crucial to help us understand, measure and report the impact that Reading Hack has on young people and delivery partners. Please read the evaluation guide for more information about completing the Reading Hack evaluation surveys.

IT’S A HACK – DESIGN AN APP THAT GETS MORE PEOPLE READING
Reading Hack pathways

There are three pathways through Reading Hack which you can develop alongside your current opportunities:

**HACK CHALLENGE**
Young people take part in a specified number of short drop-in activities over a period of time e.g. 6 hacks over the summer holidays and get a certificate at the end.

**HACK PROJECT**
Young people plan and lead an extended project over several sessions or weeks e.g. planning a Manga Night or a performance in partnership with a local theatre.

**HACK VOLUNTEER ROLE**
Young people volunteer and take part in social action to share reading in the library, school or local community e.g. Summer Reading Challenge volunteer.

Offer all three pathways together or use one pathway to progress onto another one.

**READING HACK BRAND**
Use the Reading Hack brand to combine your authority’s new and existing offers into one exciting, unified local programme.
Developing new opportunities

Current opportunities for young people in your library

What are you looking to offer young people?

- A specified number of short drop-in activities
- A project which young people plan and lead
- Volunteering and social action opportunities

Activities and events

Run a planning session with staff and/or young people

Visit the Reading Hack and Reading Agency websites to get resources

READING HACK BRAND
Branded materials and resources for recruitment and promotion

Your Reading Hack programme - ready to promote to young people

Develop a young person’s planner role
One of the most effective ways of engaging with young people is to set up a young person’s planning group. This gives young people the chance to take on planning roles to guide creative programming and get others involved. The group will quickly tell you what they like and don’t like. They’ll soon have more young people engaged in your organisation and becoming advocates for reading if you follow their advice and involve them fully in decisions.

A planning group can be a sounding board for all decisions concerning young people. They can plan Reading Hack events and activities, injecting a youth-friendly angle to events that have failed to attract a teen audience in the past.

We expect that organisations starting Reading Hack will be at different stages in terms of working with young people in this way. You may be new to youth-led approaches or have several consultation or planning groups established. If you’re starting out or are looking to refresh an old opportunity, here’s advice to help you get going.

**SETTING UP A GROUP OF YOUNG PLANNERS**

**Time it Takes**
Meetings should last at least an hour to an hour and a half. Depending on whether young people are part of a consultation panel or are running regular activities, groups should meet regularly to enable work to progress quickly and for the young people to get into a regular routine.

**Things you’ll need**
- Somewhere to meet regularly.
- Young people! Think about the age of your members. 12 year olds will have very different ideas and interests to 16 year olds.
- Posters to advertise your new group, or other promotion methods suggested by young people.

**RECRUITMENT**
- Think about your audience. Posters advertising a “Library Planning Group” probably aren’t going to attract much interest. Posters recruiting for a “MARKETING WORK EXPERIENCE GROUP” that just happens to take place in a library are far more likely to have young people popping along to see what you have to offer.
- Send your posters to local senior schools. A lot of schools expect their young people to organise their own work experience, so when a poster appears offering a unique work experience opportunity they will make sure that their students are aware of it.
- Hold an information evening with refreshments. Do a presentation that shows why your organisation desperately needs the help of young people. Make the young people feel important and valued from the beginning.
FIRST MEETING

1. Explain why your organisation needs a young person’s planning group and what you hope the group will achieve. Focus on what young people will get out of it.
2. Ask everyone to introduce themselves and play some ice-breaking games.
3. Discuss how the group will run and agree some rules.
4. Allow the young people to set an agenda for their meetings.
5. Show them the Reading Hack animation to introduce the programme.
6. Start to discuss what could be done to attract more young people to your organisation. What could you be doing better?

Agree the date of the next meeting before everyone leaves and discuss if the current proposed date and time works for everyone.

IMPORTANT - Make sure that you have everyone’s contact details before they leave the first meeting so that you can remind them about the next meeting.

Future Meetings
- Download a planning session from the website to plan your Reading Hack programme in more detail.
- Take your lead from the young people, be flexible, and have fun!
- Celebrate your group’s successes!

USEFUL INFORMATION
- Feed and water everyone. Crisps and drinks will be appreciated!
- Take your lead from your group. Allow them to determine as much as possible.
- Let them talk about whatever they want, including last night’s TV. As long as some important matters are discussed then that’s fine.
- Be prepared for young people to dip in and out of the group depending on their commitments.
- Keep in touch with group members via text and email. Be persistent but don’t nag.
- Have regular recruitment campaigns to keep your numbers topped up.
- Don’t be complacent - young people have busy lives and there will be a steady drop-off of young people taking up other commitments - this isn’t a failure - keep recruiting to keep things fresh. You may find that some young people drift in and out at various times depending on what you’re doing and what else is going on in their lives. Accept that attendance patterns vary. Some will loyally come every time, others won’t...
- Keep meetings informal and FUN!
- Facilitate to a certain point - no-one likes having someone talk over them.
- Encourage young people to advertise the group on the Reading Hack website at www.readinghack.org.uk and through local channels.
RAISING AWARENESS AMONG STAFF

Make sure your colleagues are aware of the fantastic work being done by your young people. Share updates at staff meetings, by email and over lunch in the staff room. It’s important that staff and library volunteers value young people’s contribution to your organisation, and that the young people are never made to feel unwelcome or unimportant in your building.

As your group grows in success the message will filter out across your whole organisation that young people are very much needed and valued. Share your news with partners, elected members, stakeholders and the voluntary sector.

IT’S A HACK – MAKE A STORY ESCAPE FROM A BOOK IN A STOP-MOTION ANIMATION
WHAT NEXT?

- Visit the website for more information and exclusive resources: readingagency.org.uk/young-people/resources-for-librarians

You will need the password from your local coordinator, or else email readinghack@readingagency.org.uk

- Download planning sessions to run with staff and young people and get branded materials.

- Stay posted for newsletters and tips from the Reading Hack network. Look out for exciting offers, campaigns and competitions to motivate Reading Hackers in your library.

Be part of something big, never seen before.
We are Reading Hack.
Read more. Be more.

Go online to watch the Reading Hack animation and hear the rest of the Reading Hack poem.