

# Ireland Reads explained

## What is Ireland Reads?

Ireland Reads is a new campaign to get the whole country reading this month in the lead up to a national day of reading on Thursday, February 25.

Irish libraries have teamed up with publishers, booksellers, authors and others for the campaign which is part of the government Keep Well initiative and aims to celebrate reading and all the benefits it can have for wellbeing and enjoyment.

The campaign is asking everyone to ‘squeeze in a read’ on Thursday, February 25.

## Why is reading important?

Research shows that reading for pleasure is really important for all of us – no matter our age.

For children, of course, it has a huge positive impact on their cognitive development and literacy.

For adults, studies have found that reading for pleasure enhances empathy, understanding of the self, and is effective in combatting loneliness.

Right now, many of the activities we used to take for granted are not available to us, but you can always enjoy a good book – or a newspaper or magazine.

Reading offers a way to escape and keep mentally active, and to lift our mood, and it doesn’t have to be a solitary experience – you can read with your kids of course, or you might use reading to connect with friends and family. Maybe through a book club, or just swapping recommendations.

## How can people join in the campaign?

It doesn’t matter how long you read for or what you read, it doesn’t matter whether you’re an avid reader, a reluctant reader, a lapsed reader or a new reader, this campaign is for you.

**Take the pledge to read at irelandreads.ie**   
A new website [www.irelandreads.ie](http://www.irelandreads.ie) has been set up where the public can pledge to read on ‘Ireland Reads’ Day, February 25th, and check to see how much time has been pledged by the Irish public so far.

**Get a book recommendation at irelandreads.ie**The Ireland Reads website also offers book recommendations, suited to a person’s interests and the time they have available. There are more than 800 recommendations from librarians all around the country.

A website user can simply enter their favourite type of book and how long they would like to read each day and the website will offer a suitable book suggestion and work out how long it will take to complete – a couch to 5k for books!

**Attend an event**Campaign partners and libraries all over the country will be running ‘Ireland Reads’ initiatives and events throughout February in the build up to Thursday, February 25th. You can get details at irelandreads.ie

**Share on social media**

Please use #IrelandReads or #SqueezeInARead and share your pledge to read on social media or tell others about your favourite books, recommended reads or the book that got you through Covid.

## Who is involved in the campaign?

The Ireland Reads campaign is a collaboration led by the Libraries Development Unit at the Local Government Management Agency, and part of the Government ‘Keep Well’ initiative.

As well as all public libraries, partners in the campaign include RTÉ Supporting the Arts, Bookselling Ireland, Publishing Ireland, Childrens Books Ireland, the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), Junior Cert Schools Programme Libraries, and SOLAS.

A number of campaign ambassadors from the world of writing, science, sport, broadcasting are on board to help promote the campaign, including:

Broadcaster and book clubber, Rick O’Shea  
Author, Emma Donoghue, Sarah Webb, Sebastian Barry, Áine Ní Ghlinn, Luke O’Neill, Kevin Barry, Patricia Scanlan and Melanie Murphy  
Sarah Fitzgerald of Sarah’s Book Project

Ray Cuddihy (Muinteoir Ray) from RTÉ Homeschool Hub  
Professor Ian Robertson, Dr Tony Bates, Professor John Sharry and Dr Colman Noctor.  
Canoeist, Jenny Egan

You can find out what reading means to them and why they think it is important at IrelandReads.ie

## How can people access books during Covid?

While libraries are not currently open for borrowing or borrowing due to Covid restrictions, library members can use the library Borrowbox service online and choose from more than 43,000 eBooks and 33,000 eAudiobooks.

More than 70,000 people joined up to use the library Borroxbox service in 2020, a 150% jump in the number of new users compared to the previous year. On average more than 2,000 eBooks and 2,300 audiobooks were loaned each day in 2020.

We’re also encouraging people to support their local bookshops. They have had a really tough time throughout Covid and have done all they can to keep going, keep taking orders and keep people stocked up with books. You’ll find a link to a map of bookshops on IrelandReads.ie

And Ireland Reads is not just about books – if you want to read a magazine, a newspaper or a comic, that’s great too!

## What do libraries offer?

In ordinary times, library members can borrow from more than 12 million items.

Right now, while libraries are unfortunately closed to the public, our online services are still available.

Members can access

44,000 eBooks  
33,000 eAudiobooks  
4,000 magazines  
2,500 online newspapers from over 100 countries,

## Is this campaign just about library books?

No! We are encouraging people to support local bookshops too. You’ll find a link on the Ireland Reads website to a map where you can find your local bookshop and how to order from it.

Most people have that book or pile of books they’ve been meaning to get around to or that old favourite comfort read you keep returning to – what better time than now!

## The creative behind the campaign

We’re asking everyone to ‘Squeeze in a read’ on February 25th and well known illustrator Tara O’Brien took that idea and created some lovely illustrations, showing people of all ages enjoying taking the time to read in some unusual places – squeezed into drawers, under beds, in cupboards … it plays on how we are all stuck at home at the moment and it can be hard to find space or time – but if you have something to read, you can forget about that and get away from reality for a while.

And if you do need something to keep the kids busy while you’re reading, we have turned some of Tara’s illustrations into a lovely colouring book – also available at irelandreads.ie

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