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Four in 10 parents consider listening to audiobooks as 'cheating' – but an expert has revealed it can be as effective for children as traditional physical books.

Research of 2,000 mums and dads of kids aged three to 12 revealed 35 per cent don't believe hearing a story has the same impact as reading print books.

But education and parenting expert Cathy Walker thinks otherwise, explaining how listening still provides them with exposure to more words to absorb and, in turn, helps increase their vocabulary among other things.

Interestingly, of the 94 per cent whose children listen to audiobooks, boys were the bigger adopters, gravitating to them more ahead of girls.

Cathy Walker was speaking in collaboration with kid's audio player company Yoto[<https://uk.yotoplay.com/collections/world-book-day-2026>], the official audio partner for World Book Day, which has a collection of over 60 audio cards where £1 will be donated from sales to the reading charity.

She said: "Listening to audiobooks is in no way cheating.

"When children lose themselves in a story, whether reading or listening, so much is at play – they are not just absorbing words, they are developing empathy, inhabiting other people's experiences and learning to understand the world from perspectives that are not their own.

"These are the very skills that will matter most as young people step into an increasingly tech-dominated and volatile world where human connection is absolutely essential."

The study also revealed 39 per cent of parents believe kids absorb more information from reading than they do an audiobook – but three in 10 disagree.

Interestingly, 37 per cent claim their child's comprehension is better when they listen to a story compared to when reading one.

And 40 per cent reckon audiobooks help with their little one's pronunciation of words, as well as improving their listening skills (47 per cent).

Something which 44 per cent of those polled via OnePoll.com have noticed to be a big improvement in since their son or daughter started listening to stories out loud.

Other things parents have picked up on since introducing audiobooks include better vocabulary (38 per cent), spelling and grammar (29 per cent), and a keenness to read (23 per cent).

Cathy also explained a child who listens to stories regularly is not taking a shortcut, but rather the opposite.

According to the education and parenting expert they are building profound experiences and skills as well as the ability to listen actively, engage deeply with ideas, empathise with others, and to be happy in their own company.

She explained audiobooks help them gain the social skills and capital that will afford them the quiet confidence to be themselves, whoever they are with and wherever life takes them. It also emerged that while 46 per cent would prefer their child to read books, they agree listening to audiobooks is a good alternative – particularly to screen-based activities (39 per cent).

The most common times children listen to audiobooks are in the evening before bed (33 per cent), during car journeys (28 per cent), and while on holiday (22 per cent).

With adventure being the most popular genre (26 per cent), followed by fairytales (24 per cent), bedtime stories (24 per cent) – and classic children's literature (20 per cent).

Cathy added: "Books in any format expose children to a rich and varied vocabulary that builds on the conversations they have every day with family, friends and teachers.

"This ever-growing language and expression become the foundation for how confidently they communicate, connect, and collaborate throughout their lives.

"As parents, we would want to raise children who can listen well, speak confidently, and genuinely connect with the people around them - stories, whether heard or read, are a crucial part of how we get there."

For one day only, World Book Day, Thursday 5th March, Yoto is offering a range of audiobooks for just £1 as well as providing a selection of free audio stories hosted on the World Book Day website [<https://www.worldbookday.com/book-types/audiobook/>]. The audio cards can be played on the free parental app as well as on the company's screen-free players.

Jess Tarrant, Content Director at Yoto, added: "We want to ensure audiobooks are as accessible as possible for children and parents to experience.

"Listening to stories doesn't just need to be for the kids, it can be for the family as a whole.

"We believe audio can have a transformative power, and can help children who perhaps aren't as drawn to physical books engage with some incredible stories and content they might not otherwise get to experience."

About Yotoplay

Yoto is an interactive audio platform for kids. Yoto offers a catalogue of over 1,200 stories, songs, activities and more to inspire creative play and learning without a screen. The carefully connected audio players, Yoto Player (3rd Generation) and Yoto Mini, put kids safely in control. No cameras. No microphones. No ads.

Inspired by Montessori principles, Ben Drury and Filip Denker founded Yoto in 2017. Yoto Player was designed with renowned design agency, Pentagram, and launched in early 2020. Yoto Mini, the portable audio player, launched in late 2021. The new and improved third generation Yoto Player arrived in summer 2023.

Available worldwide, Yoto has won awards and accolades from critics, parents and children alike. TIME Magazine even named it one of the Best Inventions of 2020 and Yoto Mini won a prestigious D&AD Pencil in 2022. Yoto was named one of Bloomberg's Top Start Ups to watch, and was named the second fastest growing tech company by Deloitte in 2023.

Yoto's platform features both award-winning original content and audio that has been licensed or co-created with partners. These partners include PRH, Macmillan, Universal Music Group, Sony, Warner Music, Mattel, Pottermore Publishing, Roald Dahl Story Company, HarperCollins, Hachette, Bonnier and Scholastic.

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