



Chapter One

Online Reading Volunteers



Signing up as a Chapter One Online Reading Volunteer: Frequently Asked Questions

You will find answers to common questions here, or you're always welcome to contact our friendly team with any questions at uksupport@chapterone.org.

What is the commitment?

Being a Chapter One online reading volunteer is fun and rewarding—but it is a commitment to support a child. **Sessions are typically during school hours, once a week, for 30-minutes, over the course of a school year (excluding school holidays), so that is around 30 sessions.** We ask our volunteers to support the same child over the course of an academic year, as we believe this delivers the best results for children's reading confidence and for volunteer satisfaction: you really get a chance to build a relationship and see a child progress and flourish. Do please think carefully about whether this sustained commitment will suit you! *Please note:* we do offer volunteers the chance to do more than 30 minutes a week if they would like this additional commitment. When you register you can select the options that suit you.

Who will I be reading with?

You will be matched with a pupil aged between 5 and 7 who is in either Year 1 or Year 2 (England) or P2 or P3 (Scotland) and is attending a school that serves a disadvantaged community in England or Scotland. Teachers select the struggling readers who need extra help. Reading with the same child over the course of the school year enables you to get to know each other and build trust. Note: We also offer **Chapter One Online Reading Volunteers @Home**, an adaptation of the programme that allows volunteers to support children at home as well as in the classroom. You will be asked during the registration process if you are interested in supporting Chapter One @Home in addition to the class-based platform.

What about safeguarding? Do I need a background check?

As part of [our commitment to child safeguarding](#), all of our Chapter One online reading volunteers are required to have an Enhanced DBS (or PVG in Scotland) check in place before they start reading with a child.

For volunteers supporting children attending English schools, the Chapter One programme uses a third-party accredited



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provider, uCheck, to carry out these DBS checks and the process includes a check of your identity which will be done via an app or a verification ID call. Unfortunately, we are unable to accept DBS checks from other organisations, but if you are registered with the [DBS update service](#), please do let us know.

Volunteers supporting **Scottish children** need to follow a specific process for PVG checks which your company will explain to you.

Foreign nationals please note that you can still complete a DBS/PVG check, but you will need to have 5 years of UK address history, with no longer than 6 months spent continuously abroad during this time. You must also possess either a passport (any country), or a valid UK driving licence. Without one of these forms of photo ID, we cannot process the DBS/PVG check. More details of how this process works will be made available when you register with us, but if you have any DBS/PVG specific questions, please contact us at uksupport@chapterone.org.

Do I need experience teaching a child to read to participate in Chapter One?

Do I get any training?

No experience is necessary! Our training webinars will give you the tools you need to understand the platform and the basics of early reading. Once you've signed up and cleared your DBS (or PVG in Scotland) check, you also have access to the resources in our Knowledge Base to help you make the best of your virtual volunteering experience. Our interactive platform easily guides you through every step of volunteering during each session. *Please ensure that you use Google Chrome as your web browser.*

In addition to the Knowledge Base, we offer all our volunteers the opportunity to join us for a **short series of 40-minute LIVE training and development sessions** via Zoom. The sessions are hosted by Chapter One staff and external child literacy experts to help you and your pupil get the most from your weekly sessions. The sessions cover topics such as how to break the ice with your pupil, how to get the most out of the Chapter One platform, how phonics is taught to year 1 children in primary school, how to engage with shy or reluctant readers or with more confident children who seem ready for additional reading challenges.

We also host informal **monthly online reading volunteer Zoom drop-ins** where you can ask us any questions and/or exchange your tips and experiences with other volunteers.

Do I need any special skills or attributes? We firmly believe that anyone with patience, empathy and a love of reading can be a Chapter One online reading volunteer! We have outlined the qualities we think make a great 'Chapter One online reading volunteer superhero' [here](#).

How do I actually connect with my pupil for the sessions?

Once you've got your DBS check and been trained, you need to wait until we assign you a pupil and notify you of the classroom launch date. You can then book your first session! As described in our training, you should log on to the app.chapterone.org platform with your email and the password you created when you registered. *Please ensure that you use Google Chrome at all times for your sessions.*

Just before your first session, you will launch the Chapter One application. A designated phone number for your child's classroom will be generated from the Chapter One system. You will use your mobile or a desktop/landline phone to call that number so that you can talk to your pupil, whose classroom will have a dedicated Chapter One laptop. (Please note the Chapter One platform is audio only so you cannot actually see the child on the screen). A classroom phone greeter (usually one of the children in the class) will answer the phone and will find your pupil to join you for the session. The pupil will sit down at the Chapter One laptop, put on an audio headset, and be able to view the screens that you share via the Chapter One platform. You will drive the session, controlling what they see—your student will be in “view-only” mode during the entire session. If you ever need a refresher or have any other questions on how the platform works then you'll always be able to visit our Knowledge Base where we also have an FAQs section and a series of brief videos.

What are the benefits to a child of having Chapter One reading support?

Teachers report that students who have regular, consistent reading sessions with a Chapter One online reading volunteer



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really flourish as readers! Not only do they develop stronger vocabularies and exhibit improved reading confidence, they also improve their reading fluency, comprehension and oracy (speaking and communication) skills. In addition, students and their volunteer readers enjoy building warm and meaningful relationships. You can read more about the impact of our programme [here](#).

What benefits will I get from volunteering with Chapter One?

Our online reading volunteers tell us that they find it highly rewarding to experience the growth in their students' abilities and confidence during the school year. The weekly sessions are also an opportunity for you to switch off from the demands of your job for half an hour and gain some headspace. Many of our volunteers tell us they are more productive at work following a reading session with their student.

Can I volunteer even if I'm not a native English speaker (or have a strong accent!)?

Yes, absolutely! It's great for children to be exposed to different accents and pronunciation, so as long as you speak English well (which if you're working in the language is likely!) then please do volunteer. The way different words sound with different accents can be a lovely talking point with your pupil.

What if I'm not sure I have time to volunteer?

The main thing to consider is whether you think you can make a sustained, weekly commitment to reading, over the course of an academic year. In any given week, we do of course understand that your diary may change or emergencies arise! Our session scheduling platform therefore gives you the flexibility to change your session time should you have a conflict or are not able to make a reading session on a particular day, but please do bear in mind that it is a weekly commitment.

Can I choose which days I volunteer?

Yes. Volunteers schedule their weekly sessions directly in the Chapter One platform using a calendar shared with the class teacher. The teacher will make it clear which times are available for reading calls and you can choose which slot works best for you.

What if I can't make my scheduled reading time slot or I'm on holiday?

There is no need to alert your teacher if you are not able to make a session. Simply reschedule for another day or time that works for you. Scheduling changes can be made on the same day or weeks in advance. If you're away on holiday, we suggest you let your pupil know that you'll miss calling them next week and send the teacher a message using the messaging part of the platform.

Can I volunteer with more than one child?

When you register with us you'll be asked if you can support more than one child. If you can, thank you! We'll let you know if that is possible during the course of the year. Note: We also offer **Chapter One Online Reading Volunteers @Home**, an adaptation of the programme that allows volunteers to support children at home as well as in the classroom. You will also be asked during the registration process if you are interested in supporting Chapter One @Home in addition to the class-based platform.

When will I actually be able to start reading?

All Chapter One online reading volunteers have to have their Enhanced DBS (or PVG in Scotland) in place and have completed training before they can be matched with a pupil. And, while this process is happening on the volunteer side, our partner schools take a little time to secure parental consent for participating children, and get the IT systems needed for Chapter One up and running. Usually, if you're part of a team of volunteers from your organisation, we wait until several of you are ready before matching with pupils. For volunteers who sign up during the summer, matching will usually take place in late September or early October. Some volunteers may start a little later. For those who join the programme later, you may need to wait until a pupil becomes available before you can be paired.



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So I won't actually be able to see my student on the screen at any point during our session?

No. The Chapter One programme is **audio only**, not a video call platform. You will, however, be able to see and direct what your reading partner can see and interact with on their screen. Many of our new volunteers are initially surprised to find out the reading sessions are audio only but quickly come to see the benefits. Veteran Chapter One volunteer Kathleen Reeves, who is co-head of HR at Janus Henderson Investors, says: *"It hasn't been a hurdle or an obstacle in any way not being able to see my student... maybe even better because you're both focused on the reading."*

I want to help but I'm not sure how to work with a pupil and I'm nervous. What should I do?

As soon as your DBS (or PVG in Scotland) check is complete, you're able to start to use the practice module on the Chapter One platform to get a sense of how our activities and content look. All our volunteers tell us they feel a little nervous when they first start but the Chapter One platform guides you through the 30-minute tutoring session so you are supported all the way. You'll start with a quick game of flashcards. After flashcards your student can choose a story from a library of levelled books. At any point in your session you can dip into a selection of word games to help your student increase their word knowledge and have some fun.

The Chapter One training will give you an overview of early reading, but don't worry, we're not expecting you to be experts in phonics - that is the teacher's role. We're looking for volunteers who can inspire children to enjoy reading and boost their confidence through practice. Our Knowledge Base contains FAQs, phonics resources and lots of tips to make the best of your reading sessions! We run additional LIVE training sessions during the first term of the school year as well as offering our volunteers monthly drop-in Zoom sessions where they can meet other volunteers and ask us questions. Many of our volunteers have set up informal Chapter One support groups with fellow volunteers at their company where they can share wins and experiences and swap tips. If your company is new to the programme, or hasn't yet set up such a group, then why not take the lead and get one off the ground? It's a great way to bond with colleagues!

Is there an opportunity to meet my student in person?

We hope so! Most schools participate in the annual year-end celebration. This is a wonderful time to meet your student either face-to-face or virtually over Zoom and celebrate all the great work done throughout the school year. Other opportunities for meeting your student are available, for example, before or after the Christmas holidays, and will be organised on a school-by-school basis.

What if I need help during my reading session?

If you run into any tech issues during your reading session, our (real people!) live chat support staff is available in real-time and can resolve issues quickly. Please do reach out immediately rather than reporting the issue after the event - we can usually help get the session up and running very quickly!



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What tech will I need?

You will need to have access to a laptop or desktop (PC or Mac) with good internet connection AND a phone of some sort - mobile or landline (this is for the audio connection with your pupil). Please note that iPads or tablets are not compatible. You will also need to feel relatively comfortable using technology. We have training and guidance to help you learn how to use the platform.

Can I volunteer from my work computer?

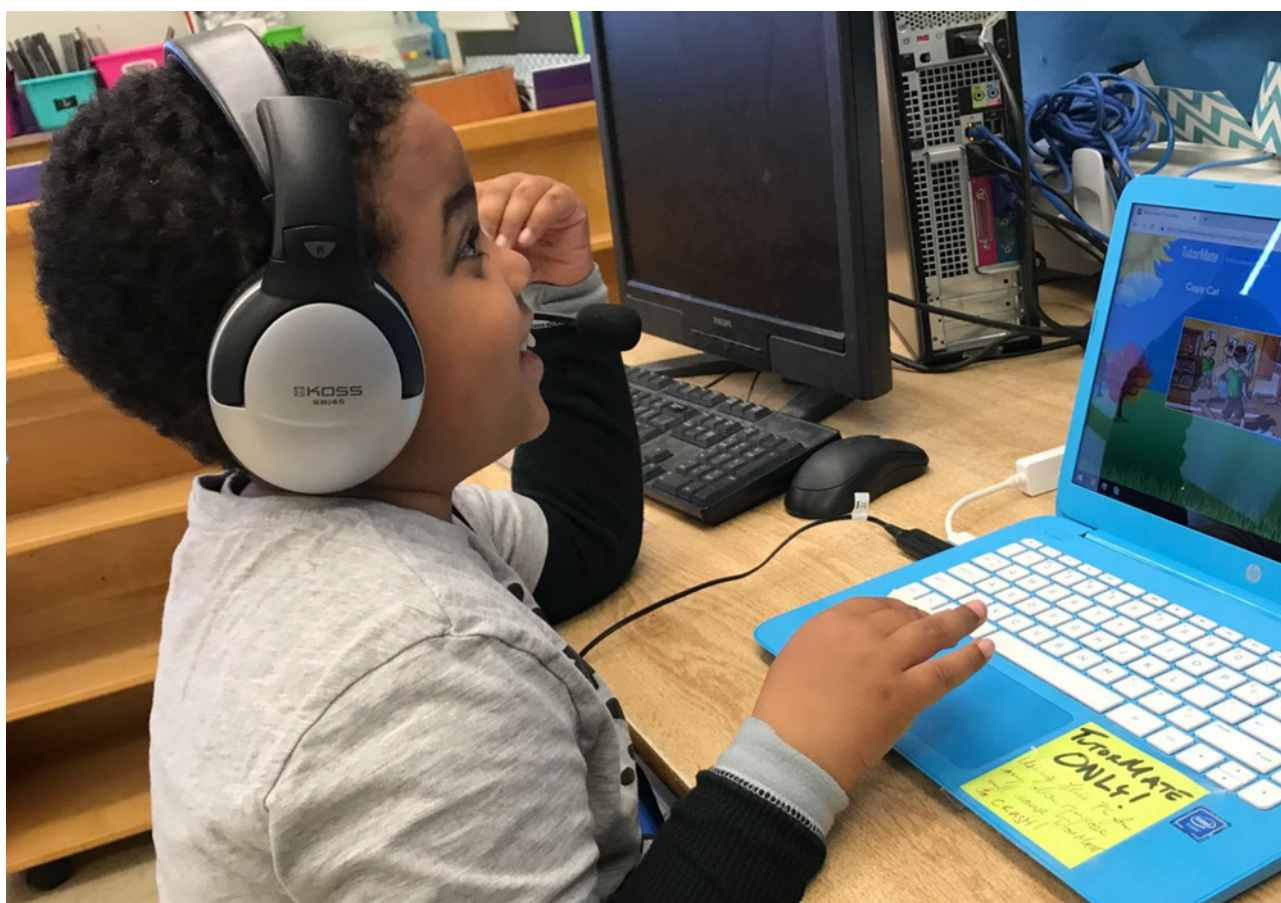
If you are using a work device to volunteer, we would recommend testing that you can access our reading platform on your device as many organisations have more stringent firewall protection compared to home systems. If you are not able to successfully connect, you won't be able to participate in a Chapter One online reading programme. Additionally, if you plan to use a work device from home and your company uses a VPN to access internal systems, please always ensure that this is **switched off** for Chapter One reading sessions. These should be conducted on a standard internet connection, using Google Chrome.

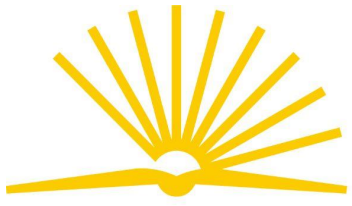
What contact and support can I expect from the Chapter One team?

In addition to the live chat support team during your sessions, the friendly Chapter One team is always available via uksupport@chapterone.org. Our online training resources are available for you to refer to whenever you want in our Knowledge Base, and you have the option to attend our monthly drop-in support sessions and to receive our monthly volunteers' newsletter, with snippets of news, reminders and tips as well as updates on the latest research around child literacy and social mobility to help cheer you on! Please make sure to check your spam folders if you haven't received anything from us!

I'm in! How do I sign up?

Fantastic! We can't wait to have you join us! Do check in with any internal communications at your company about Chapter One regarding how you sign up, or with your organisation's dedicated Volunteer Coordinator. If you're not sure who your Volunteer Coordinator is, it is most likely the person in your organisation who sent you this information (but also feel free to reach out to us on uksupport@chapterone.org). Your company will explain if you need to express your interest via your internal company system first. When you are ready to register, there are [five easy steps](#) to your first online reading session, including the DBS/PVG check. Please note that these steps differ for volunteers supporting Scottish children, so please check with your company coordinator about the process you should follow.





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chapterone.org

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