

extratime for Magazines

Introduction

Producing a magazine is a fun and creative way to engage young people in study support – also known as out-of-school-hours learning – activities. It provides a wide range of opportunities to enrich and extend their skills and knowledge in areas such as literacy, ICT and design.

A varied menu of after-school study support activities, such as magazine clubs, is a key element of the 'core offer' of extended services that all schools are expected to provide by 2010. Evidence shows that participation in such activities can lead to improvements in young people's self-esteem, achievements, attitudes to learning, classroom behaviour, and school attendance.

To find out more about the benefits of study support, visit www.continyou.org.uk/studysupportetc.

About this guide

This Extra Time Magazines Mini Guide will give you lots of ideas for including a magazine club in your school's study support programme.

Whether you want to set up a club from scratch or add a journalistic 'flavour' to other clubs, this guide will help you to get started. It's full of top tips and helpful hints, and also includes a range of tried and tested ideas that you and your members can enjoy.



Top tip!

Ask local businesses to support the club, for example, by photocopying each completed issue.



Making your magazine club a success

Producing a magazine can offer something for everyone. A magazine club provides a rare chance for members to focus on and investigate an area that interests them personally, while working within a clear structure towards a common aim.

The whole process from start to finish will fine-tune members' powers of negotiation, develop research and investigation skills – and encourage them to work to deadlines.

What can you achieve through your club?

Members of the club will need to work as a team to identify and research the stories, interview the stars, write articles, design the layout and market their publication. More specific skills, knowledge and understanding that can be gained through a magazine club include:

- a deeper understanding and appreciation of how communication is adapted to suit a particular purpose and audience
- experience of the benefits and challenges of working as a team of individuals aiming to achieve a shared goal
- gaining first-hand experience of planning, drafting, editing and evaluating written and design work
- increased levels of competence and confidence with ICT, and enthusiasm for a wide variety of written and printed media
- skills that can be applied to other areas of curriculum and non-curriculum learning, such as communication, research and analysis.

These outcomes will form the basis of the aims and objectives of your club, and will help you decide whether or not to identify a target group. Even if your club targets a particular group of students, aim to reserve some places for other students, to allocate on a 'first-come-first-served' basis.

For more information on all of these issues, and advice on monitoring and evaluating the impact of your club, visit www.continyou.org.uk/schoolsetc

Top tip!

The most successful clubs offer members the chance to participate in a combination of desk-based and active sessions. How the term is split will be up to you and your members. However, if you have a large group or limited access to ICT, you may need to create a more structured rota system.

How should the club be structured?

To ensure that the first edition reaches readers on time, you will need to establish a high level of commitment from your members. Whether or not you are able to achieve this will depend on the culture you and your members create. Try to develop a club where:

- the atmosphere is informal, fun and relaxed
- members are treated as individuals and feel that their voice is encouraged and listened to
- the editorial team is encouraged to work in different ways, try out new things and take responsibility for its own learning
- the members recognise that the processes of researching and developing the ideas for the magazine are as important as the end product.

By getting these elements right, you will have a sound base from which to work.

How does the story start?

What will the members write about?

Before your club members begin writing, it would be useful to conduct a survey to find out what their key audience wants to read about, their preferred format and whether they would be prepared to pay a small price for the publication. Compare the findings with the club members' ideas and opinions. Use common or similar areas to form the basic content of your club's magazine.

What will the magazine look like?

As well as the content, members need to think about the format of the magazine, its frequency and the kind of image that it conveys. Find out if there are resources available to produce hard copies of each issue, or whether the magazine will only be available online.

Spend time looking at a wide variety of papers, comics, newsletters, and so on. Identify what makes them interesting, or otherwise. Encourage members to consider how they can incorporate the ideas that they like within their magazine and to think, realistically, about what they can achieve within the budget and time available.

This information can then be used to make a document template, or style guide, that sets out how long the magazine will be and the main headings within it. Include guidelines about fonts, images, boxed text, colour and layout.

Top tip!

Run a club competition to see who can come up with the best title that fits the image members have agreed.

Who will do what?

Work with members to draw up a timeline, identifying what they need to achieve by when and who is responsible for each section of the magazine. Initially, new or less confident members may prefer to work within their comfort zone. Members who are less confident, or who don't want to write articles, can still be fully involved by compiling quizzes, illustrating features or designing the front cover. Ensuring and promoting an inclusive approach means that members will know that their contribution is valued, and allows building on the strengths of the team. Over time, members will also begin to take more responsibility for their own learning and explore new challenges and areas of interest.

What activities should you provide, and how?

Producing a magazine is an exciting business; however, sometimes the need for accuracy and working to deadlines can be a little daunting. Consider some of the following to add an extra something to your club when the inevitable writer's block kicks in or enthusiasm for editing wanes:

- link with local sports clubs, museums, galleries, theatres and cinemas – arrange a club trip or visit, or ask members to write a review or interview someone interesting
- ask a local paper or magazine if you can visit their printing house, or if a journalist or photographer can come and work with the club for a session
- find out if any of the members' parents or carers have interesting or unusual jobs – perhaps some members could research and write a 'day in the life of' article
- create links with other school initiatives and clubs – for instance, invite a representative from the Healthy Schools team or another oshl club to be interviewed about what they do and why.

Case study

The packed study support/oshl programme at **Queen's Park Primary School** in Westminster, London, provided their Year 5 and 6 journalists with a wide menu of stories to feature in their termly magazine.

At the start of each term, the group looked at the school diary and together mapped out the content of the next edition. As well as current news stories from around the school community, each issue contained a number of staple items, including a fashion feature, TV/film reviews, and puzzles. The sports pages told of the football team's success, the diary pages detailed the most recent school trip. One of the headline stories, 'Shark attack', was based on a play that the drama group had devised.

The school magazine club met weekly and the group was split into two, alternating between working in the computer room and the library. Each member of the club had a coloured ID badge showing their name, job title, and specialist area.

The members based in the computer room concentrated on producing copy, and downloading images and stories from the internet, where permission to do so had been received. The other group operated as roving reporters, nailing their study support/oshl stories, as well as spending time rehearsing their own club rap and practising their interview techniques.

At the end of each session everyone got together to talk through how far they had got, and to work out their targets for the following week in order to meet the deadline.

The biggest challenge, at first, was encouraging students to focus on the process, as well as the end result. This was tackled by ensuring that, by the end of each session, members had created something to be included in the finished magazine.

East-Side Educational Trust, an arts education charity, facilitated the club. The school's senior management team were so convinced of its potential contribution to school improvement that they released funds from the school's own budget to support the club, which supplemented funding from the National Lottery.



Tried and tested ideas

The ideas below can be incorporated in your magazine club at any time. They are in three sections:

A Main content items

B Feature this

C Fantastic fillers

These ideas should help you to plan your club over the course of the term. The activities are not age-specific and can be adapted to suit whatever group of pupils you are hoping to attract.

A Main content items

Your document template and style guide will dictate which of the sections you feature in your publication, but here are some ideas to get you started.

1 Investigate it

Do some of your members have burning questions about their favourite sports star, a recent news event, or whether you really can dig a hole to Australia? In small groups, members can find out the answers to their questions by using the internet or the library. Working together, they can write up the findings into articles. If they can't find the answers, perhaps suggest they write a fictional solution.

2 Holiday specials

Include sections on recommended holiday ideas, recipes, top tips for festivals, and where to go and what to do when not at school. These are really good ways of encouraging members to investigate what their community has to offer. Drawing maps, and finding out the costs and opening times of local amenities are all good fact-finding missions.

3 Word puzzles

Word searches, 'Boggle' and crosswords are fairly simple ideas, but they encourage members to add a twist or a particular theme to make the activities a little more interesting. There is a huge amount of mileage in developing puzzle pages. They provide an opportunity for creativity and imagination, but also encourage members to think about words and language in different ways.

4 Read all about it

Ask students to write an article about a recent school trip, the results of inter-school sports competitions, or why a visitor came to the school. This can be a great way for members to celebrate the achievements of those within the editorial team – and of the wider school community. Perhaps there is a piece of harmless gossip that could be highlighted, or a record that needs putting straight.

B Feature this

These ideas are more specific and rely less on the exact content of your magazine; however, they can plug a gap or add value to your pre-defined sections.

1 Club/rap songs

In the same way as lyrics are published in music magazines, the editorial team could write, rehearse and publish their own club rap song or poem. Photos could be taken of some people performing it, and others could be interviewed about the process of producing the rap song or poem.

2 Rebus puzzles

Combining logic, pictures and words, Rebus puzzles will challenge the minds of your members and readers alike. Encourage members to design their own or find examples at www.fun-with-words.com/rebus_puzzles.html.

3 TV Mania

Using successful TV programmes as models for activities within your club is a fun way to think about words and word play – for instance, ‘Countdown’ or ‘Call my bluff’. You can re-create a TV set within your club space and run a ‘live show’. Some of the best anagrams and most convincing false definitions can then be recorded and written up for the puzzle pages.

4 Do you really mean that?

Introduce puns and the power of journalistic language. Spend time coming up with sentences that have double meanings. Take photos or create images to illustrate two short stories, one for each meaning. A sample title would be ‘Super man flies over the sea’. (Is this a story about (a) a man who is super who has flown over the sea? or (b) a new species of fly that looks like ‘man’ and has been seen hovering over the sea?) Some members could act the stories out, and another member could review their performances.

5 Pen exchange

Establishing a partnership with other schools that are also running magazines or other study support clubs can be a great way to generate new material for your magazine. Members could swap ‘profiles’, poems, stories and news articles, as well as jokes, puzzles and pictures. The internet and email make sharing quick and easy. ACE reading clubs in America are keen to establish a trans-Atlantic written exchange. See page 8 for details of how to contact ACE.

C Fantastic fillers

You will doubtless have a few spaces within the club session that need filling, or be a little short of ideas from time to time. Below is a list of ideas for you and the magazine team to use at such times:

- fashion features, and comments on current trends
- what’s hot and what’s not – a sliding scale on everything from games to gardening
- news and views – from your school, community, or the rest of the world
- adverts – for a fictitious product, a forthcoming school event, a local business, and so on
- a frequently asked questions and answers section
- cartoons, comic strips, tongue-twisters and story-boards – whether made up or reproductions, they are great fun
- reviews – on books, music, TV, cinema, computer games, and so on
- the increasingly popular Sudoku and other logic puzzles
- a ‘Create a caption’ competition.

Essential checklist

Below is a summary of all the main issues to consider as you plan your study support magazine club. Taking the time to get everything right before you start will really help to sustain your club.

Find out what's needed

- What gaps are there in your existing study support programme that could be filled by staff with special skills, or an interest, in writing, ICT or journalism?
- What do you want to achieve through your club?

Find the right time for your club

- If you are introducing a new club, when is the best day/time of day and what is the best frequency to attract members?
- What might affect pupils' ability to come to your club, for example, transport, other clubs, and community commitments?

Find the right staff

- Who is the best person to run your club, and how many staff will you need for each activity?
- Can older pupils help run activities?

Involve others

- What existing/new partners could support your club?
- How will you approach them?

Cover the costs

- What resources (money and otherwise) will you need to provide your planned activities?
- What funding are you eligible to apply for and how long will the application process take?

Keep it safe

- What are the health and safety considerations of your provision, including any training and checks for staff and insurance cover for activities?
- Do you need to undertake a risk assessment for your planned activities, including off-site visits?

Get pupils involved

- How can you involve pupils in developing and running new activities?
- Have you asked pupils what they are interested in?

Decide which pupils to target

- How will you identify which groups or individuals will benefit from your club?
- How will you encourage them to take part?

Promote your club

- How can you give your magazine club its own identity within the school?
- How can you turn magazine activities into publicity opportunities for the school?

Keep it going

- How will you review the success of your club and decide what you need to change in order to improve it?
- Who will you ask for their views on your magazine activities, and what will you ask them?

Useful resources

Visit the websites below to find useful information and resources for your magazine club.

4TheGame – www.4thegame.com

Information and updates from the world of football.

ACE Reading Clubs – www.greenbeltmd.gov/ace

Email bookit@continyou.org.uk for information on linking with ACE Reading Clubs USA.

BBC – www.bbc.co.uk/schools

Provides a wealth of information and interactive activities for teachers and students.

CBBC Newsround Press Pack – <http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/club/default.stm>

Information on how to become a press-packer and some good examples of young journalism.

Channel 4 – www.channel4.com/learning

Support and ideas for teachers and pupils covering all Key Stages.

Children's Express – www.childrens-express.org/aboutus/community.htm

An outreach initiative to encourage young peoples' voices through youth journalism.

Fun with Words – www.fun-with-words.com/index.html

Contains games, puzzles, ideas and examples of how to have fun with words.

Information sites for budding young writers –

<http://homepages.enterprise.net/youngwriter>

www.ability.org.uk/young_writers.html

www.youngwriters.co.uk

Inspiration, tips, examples, and support for young people interested in writing and creativity.

National Curriculum Online – www.nc.uk.net

Programmes of study and non-statutory guidelines, including notes and links to online teaching resources, with schemes of work by Key Stage.

The Newspaper Education Trust – www.the-net.org.uk

Offers resources and training for teachers, as well as guided tours for primary and secondary pupils.

Reading Matters – www.readingmatters.co.uk

Online reviews of children's books – see whether the members' opinions match those on the site

Sudoku – www.sudoku.org.uk

Top tips, puzzle plans, and information on the latest logic game craze to sweep the UK.

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17 Old Ford Road
London E2 9PJ

Tel: 020 8709 9900

Fax: 020 8709 9933

Email: info.london@continyou.org.uk

Website: www.continyou.org.uk

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This Extra Time Magazines Mini Guide is one of six **free** guides to setting up and running study support clubs:

Engineering

History

Magazines

Modern foreign languages

Science

Sport and maths.

The Extra Time Mini Guides can be downloaded from www.continyou.org.uk/miniguides.

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