



## **Story Station Site Coordinator Program Guide**

## Our Mission

United Through Reading strengthens military families' literacy, emotional bonds, and well-being through the power of reading together at every age, no matter the distance.

## Our Vision

A nation of thriving military families whose strength is amplified by a shared love for reading.



## Why United Through Reading Matters

Frequent separations and deployments are a reality for military families. Every year, more than **100,000 military parents deploy and many more work long hours or travel for temporary duty**, leaving over **250,000 children at home** — resulting in millions of missed bedtime stories.

United Through Reading (UTR) bridges that distance through **On-demand Storytime Video Recordings**. Service members record themselves reading a story aloud, and their families receive both the video and a matching copy of the book. Children can **watch, read along, and reconnect anytime they miss their parent** — day or night, again and again.

These recordings do more than fill the silence of separation. They become **time capsules of love and connection**, capturing a parent or grandparent's voice, expressions, and personality at a particular moment in their family's story. Years later, families often return to these videos — remembering the comfort they brought and the stories that held them close.

Hearing a parent or grandparent's voice and seeing their face through an on-demand recording helps military children:

- Feel emotionally connected and comforted, even across long distances
- Reduce stress and anxiety during deployment or training
- Strengthen family bonds and resilience
- Expand literacy, vocabulary, and imagination

UTR's free program is available to all components of the military — **Active Duty, National Guard, Reserve, and Veterans** — ensuring every family can share stories, build literacy, and create lasting memories through reading together, no matter where or when duty calls.

## What Is a Story Station?

A **Story Station** is a dedicated United Through Reading recording location that gives service members and families access to everything they need to make a Storytime Recording — a tripod and recording device, a curated selection of books, and easy-to-follow instructions.

Story Stations may be **Embedded** (dedicated to a specific military unit or command) or **Location-Based** (available to any service member with access to the site).

Each site is equipped with recording tools appropriate for its level of connectivity:



- **App-based Sites** typically use a tablet enabled with the **UTR App** for recording when on or offline and uploading for instantly sending to the recipient when connected to Wifi.
- **Camcorder Sites** use a **camcorder and SD cards** for offline recordings (no Wifi available) that are mailed to the recipient.
- **Self-Service Sites** allow service members to make recordings on their own device by downloading the **UTR App** and recording directly at the Story Station.

## How Story Stations Help Execute Our Mission

Story Stations are at the heart of UTR's global impact. They make our mission real and tangible by:

- **Connecting families through storytime** - anytime, anywhere
- **Strengthening literacy and learning** across all ages
- **Empowering local coordinators and volunteers** to sustain engagement
- **Expanding reach** to new families, commands, and communities

Each Story Station represents a visible commitment to military family connection, helping military members stay close and children feel loved through the simple, powerful act of reading together.

## Story Station Site Coordinator Responsibilities

- ✓ Complete training with your United Through Reading POC
- ✓ Receive and Manage Supplies
- ✓ Recruit Volunteers to Assist
- ✓ Promote Recording Opportunities
- ✓ Submit Monthly Reports (Self Service Sites need only submit reports if they choose to log volunteer hours)

## Story Station Tool Kit

### Supplies and Equipment

- ✓ Storytime Library: Children's Books for recorded stories
- ✓ Program Materials & Equipment: Backdrops, Brochures, Recording equipment if needed
- ✓ Seasonal book additions for actively participating Story Stations

### Resources

- ✓ Command Communication Templates
- ✓ UTR Volunteer Resources Site
- ✓ Programmatic support
- ✓ Pre-Deployment support when referred
- ✓ UTR App How to Guide

## Key Talking Points for Promoting Your Story Station

- Our **On Demand Storytime Recordings** are there every day for families, no matter the time of day and no matter the distance.
- United Through Reading helps children feel connected to their parent or caregiver and provides a sense of normalcy and comfort during any challenging time.
- Children of **ALL AGES** benefit from Storytime Recordings, even tweens and teens – they may need it the most!
- This is a **FREE** service for Active-Duty, Guard, Reservists and Veterans. All branches are welcome to make recordings (Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Space Force). With United Through Reading, military moms, dads, aunts, uncles, older siblings, godparents, and mentors can **video-record themselves reading storybooks** to **ANY CHILD** in their lives.
- The recording along with the book are given to the child to be watched and enjoyed whenever they are missing their service member due to deployment, training, or any requirements of duty.

## Managing the Story Station

### Creating and Managing Demand

#### **Promote the Story Station Regularly**

- Announce at All Hands, POD, daily stand-ups, briefs, and Command or Resource Fairs.
- Visit divisions/work centers to promote in smaller groups.
- Partner with FRGs and Ombudsman to inform families at home.

#### **Encourage Readiness Before Operations**

- Invite service members to download the UTR App ahead of deployments or TDY.
- Schedule pre-deployment “Recording Days” (your UTR Program Manager may assist).
- Offer recurring themed sessions—birthday, holiday, seasonal, or family milestones.

### Record Keeping

#### **Track Participation**

Record on the Sign-Up Sheet:

- Number of recordings facilitated
- Number of books/chapters read
- Platform used (App, SD Card, Other)
- Volunteer names and hours contributed
- Volunteer email address (for support and recognition)

#### **Counting rules:**

- **Each book or chapter = 1 Book Read**
- **Each recording = 1 Recording**

#### **Monthly Reporting & Volunteer Hours**

Submit your Monthly Report to your UTR Program Contact.

#### **Volunteer hour guidelines:**

- **30 minutes per recording for the facilitating volunteer**
- **5 administrative hours per month** for the Coordinator
- Additional hours may be included with explanation
- Include **volunteer email addresses** (personal preferred)

*Volunteer documentation of hours and Certificates of Appreciation may be issued annually, at deployment end, or upon request.*

## Tips for Success

**Promote broadly** through command channels and personal engagement.

**Engage families** via the FRG and Ombudsman to build participation and awareness.

**Offer recurring opportunities**—birthday and holiday sessions work extremely well.

**Keep books visible** to inspire interest and choice.

**Stay mission-centered:** Every recording becomes an on-demand, lasting time capsule that keeps families connected through the power of reading together.

## Facilitating Recordings

### Prepare Your Story Station

#### Inventory your supplies

- Books
- SD cards (if applicable)
- Envelopes or mailing supplies
- Backdrop or signage

*Request additional materials from your UTR Program Manager as needed.*

#### Set up a private recording area

- Choose a quiet room or corner with a door whenever possible.
- Place a chair and small table for comfort.
- Hang your UTR backdrop to soften the space and brighten the frame.

#### Preparing for UTR App Recordings (tablet or self service)

- Ensure the **device is charged** before each event or recording block.
- If Wi-Fi is stable and consistent, log out and log back in to the UTR App before beginning a session to refresh permissions and avoid upload errors.
- When entering a location without Wi-Fi, confirm the App is logged in before losing connection.

### Facilitate Recordings

#### 1. Sign-Ups & Flow

- Offer 20–30 minute sign-up slots; supplement with walk-ins.
- Use a Sign-Up Sheet to track participation and volunteer support.

#### 3. Coach readers to:

- Browse the book before recording
- Begin with a greeting to their child or family
- Hold the book toward the camera
- Add personal touches and questions
- End with warm closing remarks
- **Have fun—authenticity makes recordings meaningful time capsules**

#### 5. Provide basic support:

- Check battery level before the recording begins.
- Show how to start/stop the recording on the device.
- Step out of the recording area to maintain privacy.

#### 2. Book Selection

- Readers may select from the UTR book library or bring their own.
- Assist with choosing an age-appropriate or meaningful book if asked.

#### 4. Recordings may be made using:

- **UTR App** (tablet or personal device)
  - Assist in completing recording set up prompts
- **Camcorder + SD card** (for low/no Wi-Fi locations)
  - Assist in SD Card insertion
- **Personal device camera** (if preferred by the service member)

#### 6. After the Recording

- **UTR App:** uploads manually when connected; families receive the video and instructions on requesting a physical book via email.
- **Camcorder/SD card:** service member mails both the SD card and book home.
- **Personal device:** service member uploads or shares video per their chosen method.



# How to Record & Send Stories With the UTR App Self-Service

## 1. Download the UTR App

Search “United Through Reading” in the Apple App Store, Amazon Appstore, or Google Play Store. Visit [UTR.org/app](https://utr.org/app) for direct links.

## 2. Register and Log In

Create your secure account using **ID.me** inside the UTR App. ID.me confirms military affiliation to keep the platform safe for all families.

## 3. Read & Record

Tap **Add (+)** to start your story.

You can:

- Choose a book from the in-App ebook library
- Request a free book
- Read a book you already have

### Recording offline?

No problem! Your video will save on the device and can upload when you reconnect to Wi-Fi or cellular.



## 4. Send Your Story Home

When finished, tap the **checkmark** to upload your video.

Enter an adult's email address for the child's household.

They will receive an email linking directly to the storytime video.

## 5. Watch Anytime, On Demand



Families can watch the story:

- On any web browser (computer or mobile device)
- Online or downloaded for offline viewing

Storytime becomes available **whenever the child needs comfort or connection**.

## 6. Get Your Free Book

Visit [utr.org/getbooks](https://utr.org/getbooks) to request a brand-new book—one free book for every recording you make.

**Download the UTR App Today!**



## FAQ

**Q: What is United Through Reading ?**

**A: United Through Reading (UTR), the nation's first nonprofit to promote the read aloud experience, provides a meaningful opportunity for Service Members to stay connected to the children in their lives via video recordings of them reading aloud. These powerful emotional connections help relieve the stress of time apart, increase Service Member and family morale, and help increase literacy and a love of reading. We currently serve all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces.**

**Q: Who can participate?**

**A: This program is for ALL Service Members and Veterans (Active Duty, Reservists, and National Guard) to read to ANY child in their lives they might be separated from due to military service (deployments, schools, medical reasons). Parents can read to their children, older siblings can read to younger brothers or sisters, uncles and aunts to nieces or nephews. You define your family! United Through Reading is here to keep you connected to them through deployment or any other separation.**

**Q: Why is reading with my children so important?**

**A: Reading aloud with children strengthens family bonds, encourages communication, reduces your AND your loved one's stress and promotes a love of reading. All of these benefits have long range impacts. As an example, research shows reading aloud to be the single best predictor of a child's future academic success.**

**Q: Do I have to be a parent to participate?**

**A: No. You define your family. This program can be utilized by all military personnel who want to read aloud to children who are special to them: younger brothers or sisters, nieces or nephews, grandchildren, or even children they mentor or volunteer with. A great benefit of the program is the bond it creates between the children and the person who is away for long periods of time, and the continuity of connection.**

**Q: Can I make United Through Reading videos for my spouse/girlfriend/boyfriend?**

**A: Our mission is to encourage literacy and facilitate supportive relationships for children through families and friends reading aloud with them. Other uses of a site's equipment are not part of the United Through Reading program.**

## For More Information

**Contact your UTR Program Coordinator or  
[Military@utr.org](mailto:Military@utr.org)**