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New Year Resolutions

According to the Daily Telegraph, 4 in 10 of us will have made New Year resolutions in January, which means in Witham around 5,600 of us will have planned to take up a new hobby, learn a new language, eat more healthily, give up alcohol, lose weight, give up smoking, spend less, or just learn something new.

Come February though, and the shine can have worn off of going out running or munching through yet another apple, or perhaps you haven't got round to looking for a French class yet. All of a sudden, it can feel really easy to give up.

So why not make a belated New Year resolution that is bound to help you with whatever else you have decided to take up, or give up? Resolve to make this the week that you get to your local library and either join up or renew your membership. It is quick and easy and free, and offers so many benefits. If you have never been a member before, then you just need to take yourself along, but if you think you have an old card somewhere, or might have joined before, just bring along some i.d. such as a driving licence. Don't be worried or put off about old fines – in reality, library fines are very small (from just 10p per day) and don't get any bigger once the books have been returned.

So how does joining the library help with your resolutions? Here is a look at some of the most popular resolutions, and how the library can help:

Get Fit, Exercise More: You can borrow exercise DVDs from the library for a small fee, and you can order them online. Take your pick from yoga, belly dancing, aerobics and more. Borrow a book to perfect your running technique, or find details of local clubs.

Eat More Healthily, Lose Weight: We have a wealth of cookbooks and diet books sure to tempt your taste buds. Dieting needn't be all about carrot sticks and celery! Larger libraries have 'Healthy Living' collections to browse, and you can always order them for delivery at your local branch. Some libraries run health events where you can get a free mini health check – sign up to the library e-newsletter to keep up to date with what is happening where!

Give Up Smoking: Although we can't lend you willpower, we can offer you books, CDs and even e-books to help you stop and stay stopped. We can also let you know about what support is available to you from the NHS to give you the best chance of success.

Learn a New Language: You can pay a small fee to borrow a CD or cassette language course, from beginners or holiday makers up to advanced. We also have books, both to teach you another language, and to read in another language. If you use our website, you can use the interactive website Transparent Learning Online free of charge, with a choice of 80 languages.

Learn To Drive: As well as borrowing the theory test books and Highway Code, you can take the official practise theory test, including the hazard perception test free on our website. Once you have passed, you can borrow the Haynes manual for your car from us, or road maps to plan your journey.

Take Up a New Hobby: Your local library can help you find details of classes, courses, clubs, tutors and societies, for everything from cross stitch to cross country running! We are likely to have books for you to borrow too.

Save Money: We have lots of books about how to be thrifty and save money, and just by using the library service to borrow instead of buy you will be saving lots. It is free to borrow books, and we only make a small charge to borrow films and music. If you are used to ordering books from online shops, you will find it an easy transition to ordering them on our online catalogue. Plus, as they are delivered to your local library for collection, you don't have to worry about not being in when the postman comes!

Try Something New: If you already read a lot, or are a library regular, or are just stuck trying to choose what to read next, then come in and have a chat with us. We have lots of themed lists of reading ideas, books that tell us 'who writes like' your favourite author, sequels to what you have already read and enjoyed, and regularly updated displays of books designed to tempt you to take them home.

This is just a small example of some of the services you can use through your local library. To find out more, go online to www.essex.gov.uk/libraries, phone 0845 603 7628 or just come in and see us! We are opposite the job centre in Newland Street and we are open Monday to Friday 9-7 and Saturday 9-5.