



How to Read with Your **Baby and Toddler**


Little



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Books that GROW with your child

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A vertical bar on the left side of the page, composed of ten horizontal squares in the following colors from top to bottom: red, blue, yellow, pink, dark blue, light green, red, blue, yellow, and pink.

“If there is one thing you can do to ensure your child’s future academic success, it is to show your child the value of books.”

—Susan B. Neuman, Professor of Educational Studies,
University of Michigan

Dear Caregiver,

Reading books with your child is a wonderful activity that you can share from the time he or she is a baby through the preschool years and well beyond. Reading together is not only fun, but also an integral step in setting young children on the path to becoming active learners.

Children whose parents and caregivers read to them understand the joy, the fun, and the knowledge that books provide. Studies show that children who love books at an early age want to learn to read when they are older. Eager learners make enthusiastic students.

Reading together encourages your child’s language and early literacy development. Infants and toddlers learn words by listening to you label pictures in a book. Preschoolers encounter words in books that expand their vocabulary beyond the everyday language they hear in their environment.

Choosing an appropriate book for your child can be overwhelming. To make it easier, we have created a guide to help you match just the right book with your child’s developmental level, therefore maximizing the fun and benefits that come with reading together! When you take time to read with your young child, you are not only giving your child a wonderful learning experience, but you are also making time to be together. Children look forward to these special moments, and will remember them throughout their lives.

Best,



Susan B. Neuman



Susan B. Neuman is a Professor of Educational Studies, specializing in early literacy development, at the University of Michigan. She served as the U.S. Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education from 2001–2003, helping to establish the Reading First program and the Early Reading First program.

Reading with Your Child: Tips for Getting Started

1. Start now! It is never too early or too late to read with your child.
2. Read with enthusiasm. If you are interested, your child will be too.
3. Consider scheduling a regular time for reading with your child that you both can look forward to. Many parents read with their children before bedtime.
4. Visit your local library. Children's librarians can help you choose just the right book on almost any topic.
5. Store books within your child's reach. Have the cover face out (rather than spine out) so your child can tell books apart and make choices by the pictures and colors on the cover.
6. Carry books in your baby bag, purse, or briefcase and keep books in your car. Books are a great way to keep your child occupied when you're stuck waiting somewhere.



A Quick Guide to Reading with Your Child

FORMAT

FEATURES

CONTENT

LANGUAGE

SKILLS

AGES
0–1

Books for Babies



- Stiff cardboard books
- Soft vinyl and cloth books that are easy for babies to handle
- Pictures prominent
- Simple, large pictures or designs set against a contrasting background
- Books with animals
- Familiar subjects about family life, faces, food, and toys
- Labeling sounds of common objects or animals, such as cars or cats
- Noises that are distinguishable (beep, beep!)
- Babies will point to pictures
- Babbling may resemble the rising and falling sounds the caregiver makes when reading

AGES
1–2

Books for Young Toddlers



- Sturdy hardcover books
- Standard-size cardboard books
- Engineered books with elements of surprise (such as pop-up books)
- Simple design with a picture on every page (such as a picture of shoes or keys)
- Familiar subjects of family, faces, bedtime, food, and toys
- Concept books (transportation, ocean animals)
- Rhythm, rhyme, and repetition; chants and songs
- Highly predictable language, humor, and playful language
- Children will point to things they wish to be named
- Children may use one or two words to convey information

AGES
2–3

Books for Older Toddlers



- Hardcover, paperbacks, or board books
- Sturdy binding
- Illustrations that help tell the action of the story
- Picture on every page accompanied by a small amount of text
- Books with happy endings
- Information books that are told in story form
- Silly books that pose preposterous situations
- Familiar language that reflects children's everyday world
- Books with rhyme and lots of repetition that encourage children to repeat words
- Children can initiate and respond to questions from their caregiver about familiar objects and events

Reading with Your Baby

AGES
0–1



Introduction

Reading to babies isn't just about exposing them to **rhythmic text** or songs. It is also meant to be an enjoyable experience for both of you. Do not worry too much about "getting it right." Instead you should take cues from your baby and create your own routines together, which can include **rocking, clapping, and repetition**.

What Types of Books Should I Read with My Baby?

Babies often use their mouths as their primary source of experience, so you will want to choose cloth, vinyl, or board books for their sturdiness. Smaller board books are easy for small hands to maneuver, but large books are visually stimulating, especially ones with clear pictures full of **high-contrast color**. Babies are drawn to pictures of faces, animals, people, and common objects. Black and white patterns are also appealing. The language accompanying the text should be simple.

How Should I Read with My Baby?

It is important that the book is within your baby's grasp, so that he can touch it when interested. You can seat your baby on your lap and place the book before him. Or if he is on his tummy, you can read together, while lying beside him.

Your baby will respond to the pitch and intonation of your voice. As you are reading, make your voice low or high, enunciate certain words, and be playful or silly to make your baby coo or laugh.

Take cues from your baby. Read one page repeatedly or skip pages based on what he seems fascinated by. Reading the same book again and again helps babies become familiar with language.

When and Where Should I Read with My Baby?

Try to find a time when your baby is calm but alert. You can read at a regularly scheduled time, or before naps or bedtime. If your baby becomes fussy, it is okay to stop.

In some homes there is a designated reading place, as in a specific chair or reading area, but you should choose to read together where you are most comfortable. Babies should be allowed to familiarize themselves with books on their own, which can easily be done by mixing books in with toys in any play environment.

How Will I Know My Baby Is Learning?

At first, an infant may not focus, but he will be soothed by your voice. Within a few months, he will gaze at pictures and smile and coo in response to the text and images. Between six and nine months, your baby will babble and may imitate the change in pitch of your voice. Finally, around the twelve-month mark, your baby may point to pictures and attempt to mimic your words.

Reading Aloud to Babies Is an Enriching Experience with Many Benefits. Babies Can Learn to:

1. Associate books with warmth and closeness to a parent or caregiver
2. Listen to language
3. Respond to language
4. Focus on pictures
5. Link words to pictures
6. Practice grasping a book
7. Explore how books taste and feel



Reading with Your Young Toddler

AGES
1–2



Introduction

One-year-old children are alert, active, interested in their surroundings, and mobile. Reading to young toddlers supports their ability to learn language as they begin to develop their vocabulary with simple words and phrases. Be prepared—your child may have a favorite book he wants you to read again and again. While reading the same book can be tedious for an adult, it is important to remember that repetition is key to a young toddler's ability to learn. Finally, while there is no “right” time to read with a toddler, you should try to make reading before bedtime a consistent routine.

What Types of Books Should I Read with My Baby?

Toddlers at this age still use all of their senses to explore, and in doing so may throw, suck, or chew on books. For this reason, board, sturdy lift-the-flap, or basic pop-up books are recommended.

Books focusing on **basic objects**, such as trucks or animals, help children make a connection between a word and the picture in the book. Young toddlers still connect to simple **repetitive language** and **rhyming text**, in addition to **familiar topics** they can easily identify with—for example, family, bedtime, or animals.

Children at this age can make simple choices, and one way to encourage this skill is by holding out two books and asking, “Which book should we read?” You can also store books—cover face out—with your toddlers’ toys, as this helps them recognize books by cover and will eventually foster their ability to make their own decisions.

How Should I Read with My Young Toddler?

Because toddlers have the energy and desire to move around a lot, you may want to sit or lie down on the floor with your child to read, making the time to read a continuation of playtime. It is always important that your child be able to see, touch, and point to the pictures. Encourage your child to turn the pages, and invite her to recite some words after or with you. You can describe what you are looking at or invite your child to, or stop and talk more about a particular page. Ask questions like, "What is that?" when pointing at an object.

Reading to Young Toddlers Is a Great Way to Boost Their Vocabulary and Has Many Other Benefits. Young Toddlers Can Learn To:

1. Associate books with playful interaction with a parent or caregiver
2. Listen to new words
3. Associate pictures with words
4. Understand new words
5. Say new words and phrases
6. Recognize favorite books by the front cover
7. Turn the pages of a book



Reading with Your Older Toddler

AGES
2–3



Introduction

This is the year children really start to communicate through language; your older toddler will begin to understand language rapidly, and put together longer sentences. Because of his newfound use of language, now is still a great time to start reading with your older toddler, if you haven't already begun.

Because an older toddler knows many more words and may be able to speak in two- or three-word phrases, reading must be an interactive experience!

What Types of Books Should I Read?

An older toddler will continue to enjoy books with **repetitive, rhyming text**, which he can repeat after you. Books with **interactive components** that encourage participation and movement, such as clapping, will be especially well received. Your toddler may point to an image and ask simple phrases like, "What that?" If already familiar with books and reading, he can look at pictures on his own and chatter independently.

At this age, children begin to understand books with a simple beginning, middle, and end, as in stories in which the main character introduces and resolves a problem. These books have more text, and the accompanying illustrations reinforce the meaning of the words.

How Should I Read with My Older Toddler?

Older toddlers do not like to sit still for very long, but try not to become frustrated. Your little one has a lot of energy, so try reading right after active play, when he might be able to focus more. It is important to try and find a location, whether in bed, on the floor, or in a chair, that is comfortable and suitable for both of you.

Older Toddlers Reap Great Benefits from Being Read To. They Can Learn To:

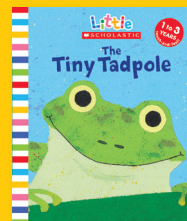
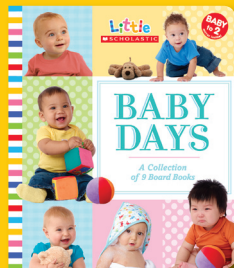
1. Receive one-on-one attention from parents or caregivers
2. Enjoy the language and stories in books
3. Listen to and understand simple stories
4. Understand the meaning of new words and phrases
5. Repeat some of the language from books
6. Ask and respond to simple questions about books
7. Turn the pages of a book
8. Choose which book to read





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