






Babies, Toddlers, and Books!

It's natural to want our children to grow up with a love of books. In our Q&A feature in this issue, Steven Herb, President of the American Library Association, gives good advice and suggestions on how to raise a reader. Also, there are many wonderful and appropriate books and early

reading materials now available for all ages. Here are some guidelines for introducing your baby and toddler to books, and ideas for sharing those special reading times together.

—By Marianne Daniels Garber, Ph.D., and Robyn Freedman Spizman

Age	Type of Book	What Parents Can Do	How It Helps Your Reader
<p>first year</p> 	<p>Board books are best introduced when your infant can sit up. Choose books with bright pictures representing common objects.</p>	<p>Tape black and white pictures of faces to your baby's crib. Stimulate your infant's interest with high-contrast visuals that fascinate little ones and allow them to practice focusing.</p>	<p>By stimulating his visual interest, you can help your child focus and use his eyes to explore the environment. As he is exposed to his first books, he will begin to attach labels to familiar objects and words to pictures.</p>
<p>1-2 years</p> 	<p>Board books are easy to handle and wipe clean. Add easy picture books, selecting stories with a simple plot or rhymes and repetition. Simple ABC books and number books are good, but don't expect your little one to count or identify letters yet.</p>	<p>Be ready to read and reread your child's favorite books. Children love repetition and familiarity. Follow your child's lead and let him match the objects in the book with the objects around him. Ask your child to identify various objects in the pictures.</p>	<p>A child's visual skills will soon increase and her ability to follow simple story lines will improve. Although attention spans increase slowly, reading introduces new words to the vocabulary, and this is a big plus.</p>
<p>2-3 years</p> 	<p>A child is ready for longer stories, so introduce classics like <i>Goodnight Moon</i> and <i>Runaway Bunny</i>. Picture books still lead the way, and simple story lines continue to be favorites.</p>	<p>Make sure there is time to read daily. Add a quiet reading time to bedtime, since it eases the way to lights out. As you read to your child, casually follow the words from left to right with your hand, subtly identifying the direction in which print is read.</p>	<p>Your child will begin to recognize that these squiggly marks on the page have meaning. That's the first step towards reading. At this age, children also begin to read the pictures and identify a story line, with a beginning, middle, and end.</p>
<p>3-4 years</p> 	<p>Now you can add more sophisticated picture books, with more words and several sentences on a page.</p>	<p>As you read, let your child guess what will happen next or leave out a familiar word and have her fill it in. Also add a special place to begin a home library.</p>	<p>Prereading skills are growing fast. Many children will naturally learn to identify letters and words. But all children develop at different times, so don't push.</p>
<p>4-6 years</p> 	<p>Introduce books that are longer and may not have a picture on every page. Your child may now be ready for classic fairy tales, books of funny poetry, and books that are part of a series. Match your child's interests to nonfiction books.</p>	<p>Visit the library often with your child. Set a family reading time so everyone can enjoy the process. Begin to introduce books that she can read on her own.</p>	<p>A love of reading begins at home. Having been read to every day, your child will soon become a reader in his own right.</p>

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