

Start Reading to Your Child Early

How to Help Your Child Learn to Read

A baby can enjoy books by 6 months of age! Here are things you can do with your child at different ages to help your child learn to love words and books.

Birth to Age 1

- Play with your baby often. Talk, sing, and say rhymes. This helps your baby learn to talk.
- Talk with your baby, making eye contact. Give your baby time to answer in baby talk.
- Give your baby sturdy board books to look at. It's OK for a baby to chew on a book.
- Look at picture books with your baby and name things. Say "See the baby!" or "Look at the puppy!"
- Babies like board books with pictures of babies and everyday objects like balls and blocks.
- Snuggle with your baby on your lap and read aloud. Your baby may not understand the story, but will love the sound of your voice and being close to you.
- Don't let your child watch TV until age 2 or older.

1 to 3 Years of Age

- Read to your child every day. Let your child pick the book, even if it's the same one again and again!
- Younger toddlers (1 to 2 years of age) like board books with pictures of children doing everyday things (like eating and playing). They also like "goodnight" books and books with rhymes. Books should only have a few words on each page.



- Older toddlers (2 to 3 years of age) like board books and books with paper pages. They love books with rhymes and words that are repeated. Books about families, friends, animals, and trucks are also good.
- Let your child "read" to you by naming things in the book or making up a story.
- Take your child to the library. Celebrate your child getting a library card!
- Keep talking, singing, saying rhymes, and playing with your child.
- Don't let your child watch TV until age 2 or older.

Reading Tips

- Set aside time every day to read together. Reading at bedtime is a great way to get ready for sleep.
- Leave books in your children's rooms for them to enjoy on their own. Have a comfortable bed or chair, bookshelf, and reading lamp.
- Read books your child enjoys. Your child may learn the words to a favorite book. Then, let your child complete the sentences, or take turns saying the words.
- Don't drill your child on letters, numbers, colors, shapes, or words. Instead, make a game of it.

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3 to 5 Years of Age

- Read ABC books with your child. Point out letters as you read.
- Preschool children like books that tell stories. They also love counting books, alphabet books, and word books. Like toddlers, they love books with rhymes and words they can learn by heart.
- Help your child recognize whole words as well as letters. Point out things like letters on a stop sign or the name on a favorite store.
- Ask your child questions about the pictures and story. Invite him or her to make up a story about what's in the book.
- Some public TV shows, videos, and computer games can help your child learn to read. But you need to be involved too. Watch or play *with* your child and talk about the program. Limit TV time to 1 or 2 hours per day. Avoid violent shows and movies. Try to stick to educational shows.
- Give your child lots of chances to use written words. Write shopping lists together. Write letters to friends or family.



Read Aloud With Your Child

Reading aloud is one of the best ways to help your child learn to read. The more excited you act when you read a book, the more your child will enjoy it.

- Use funny voices and animal noises!
- Look at the pictures. Ask your child to name things in the pictures. Talk about how the pictures go with the story. Ask what is happening in the story.

- Invite your child to join in when a line is repeated over and over.
- Show your child how things in the book are like things in your child's life.
- If your child asks a question, stop and answer it. Books can help children express their thoughts and solve problems.
- Keep reading to your child even after he or she learns to read. Children can listen and understand harder stories than they can read on their own.

Listen to Your Child Read Aloud

Once your child starts reading, have him or her read out loud. Take turns reading.

If your child asks for help with a word, give it right away. But let your child sound out words if he or she wants to.

Know when your child has had enough. Stop if your child is tired or frustrated.

Most of all, give lots of praise! You are your child's first, and most important, teacher!

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is grateful for the Reach Out and Read program's help with this handout. Reach Out and Read works with children's doctors to make promoting literacy and giving out books part of children's basic health care. This program is endorsed by the AAP. To learn more about Reach Out and Read, go to www.reachoutandread.org.

To learn more, visit the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Web site at www.aap.org.

Your child's doctor will tell you to do what's best for your child. This information should not take the place of talking with your child's doctor.

We hope the resources in this handout are helpful. The AAP is not responsible for the information in these resources. We try to keep the information up to date but it may change at any time.

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