



The Importance of Book Sharing in the First Two Years

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Disclaimer: Sharing books with young children is neither a necessary nor sufficient foundation for their later learning to read, but it can be very, very helpful!

5 Tips for sharing books with your young child. Adults should:

1. Serve as child's bridge to understanding (support attention & be responsive)
2. Establish a reading routine (that is emotionally warm & fun, using engaging, enthusiastic voice).
3. Focus on meaning (NOT on teaching reading). Unless child shows interest, don't teach alphabet until later.
4. Stay at the child's level by adjusting the books you choose and the language you use.
5. Share different kinds of books – they foster different kinds of skills.

1. Serve as Child's Bridge to Understanding: What Does the Research Say about Electronic Media?

- **Attention:** Number of hours of TV time at ages 1 and 3 associated with attention problems at age 7 (Christakis et al., 2004)
- **Vocabulary** (Zimmerman et al., 2007)
 - Each additional hour of baby DVDs/videos associated with additional 17% decrease for babies 8 – 16 months
 - No impact for toddlers 17 – 24 months
- **General language**
 - No increase for 12 – 15 month-olds watching Baby Wordsworth; best predictor was reading to child (Robb et al., 2009)
 - Language delay 6 times more likely with earlier onset of TV watching (7 months vs 12 months) & with > 2 hours per day (Chonchaiya & Pruksananonda, 2008)
- **Use of language: Child & adult**
 - Each hour of audible TV further reduces child vocalizations and adult number of words (Christakis et al., 2009)

2. Establish a routine

- Snuggle
- Use engaging, enthusiastic style
- Vary voices for different characters
- Make interesting sounds (for animals, vehicles, etc.)
- Find or create books related to child's interests (e.g., trucks, insects, lights)
- Don't go longer than child's interest allows
- Read same book repeatedly

3. Focus on meaning

- Don't be tempted to give your baby a head start by teaching her or him to read
- References:
 - The Hurried Child, 3rd ed (Elkind, 2001)
 - Einstein Never Used Flashcards: How Our Children REALLY Learn – and Why They Need to Play More and Memorize Less (Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff, 2003)

4. Stay at the child's level

- Babies:
 - **Books:** cloth, board, or plastic; interactive & repetitive; bold & high contrast pictures; single-object pictures, very little text, or rhyming text
 - **Adult talk:** make interesting sounds; use very animated, baby-talk voice; label objects (often ignore print); introduce question–answer routine; okay to read rhyming books with rhyming cadence.
 - **Adult actions:** tapping pictures, moving book & making animated, exaggerated faces
 - **Babies Can Influence Interaction:** Can initiate & end routine; initiate, reintroduce, extend, or change topic nonverbally
 - **Babies Learn About the Routine and Can:** turn pages with assistance; hold book right side up; recognize front to back of book sequence; learn that each page is important; learn that books are different from other manipulable objects; recognize favorite books
- Toddlers:
 - **Books:** still need fairly indestructible books; more text; more involved pictures, often of scenes
 - **Adult talk:** relate book to child's life; longer sentences that label pictures, describe objects, label actions, & describe actions.
 - **Toddlers Can Learn To:** follow story, relate objects/actions to own life, point, label objects, make animal/vehicle sounds, imitate adult language, fill in words in well know books/stories, answer questions, request labels (“Dat?”), search for and bring favorite book to adult, show empathy for character
 - **Somewhat Older Toddlers Can Learn To:** recite phrases from favorite stories if adult pauses; protest if adult “misreads”; perform an action shown or talked about in book; pretend read to dolls or today; make associations from one book to another; talk about characters and events in storybooks

5. Share different kinds of books (just suggestions – no research)

- **Babies:** Picture & rhyming books
- **Toddlers:** Repetitive, rhyming, information (science or non-fiction), simple stories, learning about life
- **Preschoolers:** Story, Alphabet, counting, information, and rhyming books

Some On-Line Resources for Book Recommendations for Ages 0 – 3:

Your Public Library: www.dallaslibrary.org/childrensCenter/

PDF download from American Library Association: Building a Home Library Ages 0 – 3:

<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alsc/compubs/booklists/homelib/alacbcbuildinghomelbry.cfm>

Amazon Books lists thousands if you search under books for “ages 0– 3”

Family Education: <http://fun.familyeducation.com/reading/toddler/37045.html>