



HOW TO READ TO YOUNG CHILDREN

When you read to your child, his brain cells are turned on and begin to make connections. As he looks at the picture on the page and hears the words you are reading, his brain is hard at work. And if you can talk about how the story is like something in your child's life, that's even better. Hearing favorite stories over and over also helps strengthen brain connections. Research shows *how* you share books with a child is even more important than how often you do it.

Building Your Baby's Brain by the U.S. Department of Education

Previewing the Book

1. Relax and have fun when you read. Be patient and confident. Show the child that books start at the front and go to the end. Point out page numbers.
2. Look at the book's cover. Ask the child to name the pictures and characters they know. Read the title and the names of the author and illustrator.
3. Turn the pages to look at pictures. Point to familiar objects and name them together. Ask the child, "What do you see?" and "What is this story about?"

Reading

4. Say, "Let's start at the beginning and read the words." Point out the text on the page. Lightly run your finger under the words as you read to show that you read from top to bottom and from left to right.
5. Read the story aloud with enthusiasm. Change your voice for each character.
6. Stop once or twice to check the child's guesses about the story. Ask questions like, "What do you think will happen next?" Let the child interrupt to ask questions. This shows the child is involved in what you're reading.

Rereading

7. Sometimes reread the words of the book without discussion.
8. Help the child to become the teller of the story. Ask the child to retell the story. Let the child hold the book and turn the pages. Give lots of support and praise. Talk about the beginning, middle and end of the book and summarize the story line or the plot.



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Additional Tips for Effective Rereading

9. Ask open-ended questions about the story, which encourage the child to think of creative answers. Ask, "What do you think that person is doing?"
10. Ask "who, what, when, where, why, and how" questions about the story. As the child tells more about the story, his sentences and connections will grow.
11. Make connections between the story and real-life events. "Did this happen to you? Do you know someone like this? Have you seen animals like these?"
12. Sometimes as you read, leave off a word at the end of a sentence. Let the child fill it in. When the story has rhymes or recurring words, stop to let the child guess the end of a line. "Ned, Ted and Fred fell out of ... what?" Substitute a wrong word in a familiar sentence, and let the child correct you.
13. Ask if the child liked the story. Use open-ended questions. "What was the best part? The funniest picture? The silliest character?"
14. Help the child learn to read the words on the pages. Point to the letters as you sound out the words. Look for common words in other places, like on mail, cereal boxes, or street signs.

Early Literacy Hints

Most newborns enjoy being held and listening to the sounds of words. Change activities often, since babies have a short attention span and may only enjoy a few minutes of reading at a time. Choose some washable cloth or vinyl books so babies can play with them.

Toddlers usually enjoy short, simple books and ask to hear favorite books over and over. Choose some sturdy, cardboard books that toddlers can handle easily. Select your family favorites and books that are recommended as good literature for preschoolers. Ask local librarians for book lists. Read yourself and set a good example.

The first five years is the prime time when brains make and strengthen connections for language. When babies hear the sounds of words, their brains are wired for language. When toddlers have people that regularly talk, listen, and read to them, their brains are fed and their language and reading skills develop. Without this stimulation, a child's development can be stunted or delayed.

Read at least 20 minutes a day in an effective way to each child. When you make story time a habit and a special part of a child's daily activities, the child will begin developing her potential. At five years of age, she will have over 600 hours of stimulating literacy experiences. A primary difference between children who do well in school and those who do not is their pre-kindergarten literacy experience. Families and communities can ensure that all children are set up to succeed and have the personal pride and ability to learn that come with being a good reader.