

Tips for Reading to Very Young Children

Reading to your child **at least 20 minutes a day** is so important, even with infants. Concepts like stories, numbers, colors, shapes, and many more come to life when you read to your child and spend time looking at the book. Reading to your child naturally helps bonding and closeness while helping a growing brain develop. The first five years are also the prime time for children to learn language.

Here are some great tips to help make reading to your very young child a joy for everyone involved!

- ◆ If your child tends to be squirmy when you're reading, try not reading the text and using your own words instead. Try pointing to the objects on the page while you or the text "talks" about them.
- ◆ Put life into the reading with your voice. Be expressive. Give different voices to different characters. Make the sounds of the animals pictured.
- ◆ Move your fingers across the page to show that movement is taking place.
- ◆ You might find that your child enjoys book-time more if, each time you read a book, you talk about the same things using the same words. Children love repetition and enjoy it when you say something they expect you to say and they adore the sound of your voice.
- ◆ Encourage your child to participate in the story by pointing at objects, saying the words after you, or by simply adding sound effects!
- ◆ Just talk about the pictures, and don't stay on one page too long. Don't even expect to finish the book!



- ◆ Start with "easy-to-read," bright, simple and maybe even aesthetically unappealing (to you, anyway) picture books. Children often need to be taught to appreciate the classy, beautiful art in so many books. Introduce these often among favorites, and when s/he's about 12-18 months old, teach your child to turn pages.
- ◆ If your child is still at the point of needing you to zip right through page-turning at a pretty good clip (to hold her interest), you might find that you shouldn't bother reading text with a plot. Talk about the pictures, instead, and forget the plot for now.
- ◆ Use the book the way you want to use it. For instance: you don't have to teach numbers to a one-year-old with that beautiful counting book. Just talk about the pictures, instead. You don't have to read what the book says. If the story includes a particular event or emotion you'd rather not present, make up your own version.

Even if you don't feel like reading, remember: many requests for book-time are merely indications that your child wants to sit and cuddle.

Adapted from a list compiled by Anita West/<http://www.chinaberry.com/service/musings.cfm?qid=29>

