

Parent Pages

Toddlers Are Taking Steps Toward Reading

Toddlers love activity and the chance to practice their growing language skills. You can use these traits to advance your toddler's pre-reading skills. Involve toddlers in the reading experience by asking questions and having them expand on the stories you read together. Toddlers who talk about the illustrations, characters, setting, actions, and other aspects of books step up the development of their language and reading skills.

Use the following suggestions to choose developmentally appropriate books for your toddler and make your shared reading time enjoyable and successful!

Read to your toddler twenty minutes everyday. Don't save reading for a time when you have twenty minutes uninterrupted; anyone raising a toddler knows that time will never come! Instead find a few moments throughout the day to read together. Read aloud a book or retell a story from memory while eating breakfast. Read while your child is sitting on the toilet. Read while waiting for dinner to cook. Just a few minutes at a time add up to lifetime of special reading memories. The important thing is to read every day.

Read alphabet books. Use alphabet books to increase your child's awareness of the letters in the alphabet. Two great alphabet books are *The Accidental Zucchini: An Unusual Alphabet* by Maw Grover and *Animalia* by Graeme Base. Most children use the letters in their name as the foundation for letter recognition and writing; focus on the letters that make up their name while reading alphabet books and expand to include the names of other favorite people or things.

Read wordless picture books. Make up simple stories about the beautiful images found in these books. As your child becomes more comfortable, create more elaborate tales inviting your toddler to contribute ideas. Ask toddlers to label the images they see. These are also great books for toddlers to use when they are “reading” aloud to you and for independent use during quiet reading time.

Read books with rhythm, rhyme, and repetition. These books are easy for your child to memorize, and your toddler will be able to pretend to read them to you. Toddlers love the predictability that comes from hearing the same story, song, or refrain again and again. Read nursery rhymes to enhance their phonemic awareness. Many nursery rhymes can be set to music, using different notes for each syllable.

Work with your toddlers developmental stages. Toddlers rarely sit still; find books that can be acted out: *Toddlerobics* by Zita Newcome, *Clap Your Hands* by Lorinda Bryan Cauley, *From Head to Toe* by Eric Carle and *Calling All Toddlers* by Francesca Simon. These great read alouds are fun and encourage movement.

Use the dialogic reading method. Although it sounds complicated, dialogic reading simply means having a dialogue while reading. Follow this basic model – ask questions, expand on what your child has to say, and follow up with additional questions. Try to use who, what, where, why, and how questions. By keeping your questions open-ended you are enhancing your child’s language and narrative skills.

Books for Two to Three Year Olds

1. *Where's My Teddy?* by Jez Alborough
2. *Tumble Bumble* by Felicia Bond
3. *Today is Monday* by Eric Carle
4. *The Very Busy Spider* by Eric Carle
5. *Polar Bear, Polar Bear What Do You Hear?* By Eric Carle
6. *I Like Me!* by Nancy L. Carlson
7. *Jesse Bear, What Will You Wear?* by Nancy White Carlstrom
8. *The Neighborhood Mother Goose* by Nina Crews
9. *Click Clack Moo: Cows That Type* by Denise Cronin
10. *Feathers For Lunch* by Lois Ehlert
11. *Bark, George* by Jules Feiffer
12. *Time For Bed* by Mem Fox
13. *Barnyard Song* by Rhonda Gowler Greene
14. *The Doorbell Rang* by Pat Hutchins
15. *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats
16. *Bouncing on the Bed* by Jackie French Koller
17. *We All Went on Safari* by Laurie Krebs
18. *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault
19. *Dogs Don't Wear Sneakers* by Laura Numeroff
20. *10 Minutes Till Bedtime* by Peggy Rathmann
21. *Sheep in a Jeep* by Nancy Shaw
22. *Owl Babies* by Martin Waddell
23. *Mouse Paint* by Ellen Stoll Walsh

24. *Hi, Pizza Man!* by Virginia Walter

25. *Mrs. McNosh and the Great Big Squash* by Sarah Weeks

26. *If I Were a Lion* by Sarah Weeks

27. *Skip to My Lou* by Nadine Bernard Wescott

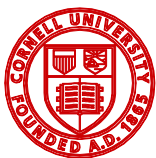
28. *Have You Seen the Crocodile?* by Colin West

29. *Bumble Gum, Bubble Gum* by Lisa Wheeler

30. *Bear Snores On* by Karma Wilson

31. *The Napping House* by Audrey Wood

32. *How Do Dinosaurs Say Goodnight?* by Jane Yolen



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Prepared by Wendy Wilcox, Extension Support Specialist Cornell University. Visit the Parenting Project website at <https://www.human.cornell.edu/engagement/parenting-project>.

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