

Tips for Reading Aloud With Toddlers

Read aloud so toddlers can:

- Continue to associate reading with warm, pleasant feelings while learning about words and language.
- Expand their listening skills.
- Build their vocabularies with words they understand and can use.
- Consider books as fun and valuable play materials.
- Link pictures and stories in books to the real world.
- Gain a sense of competence by "mastering" repetitive rhymes and phrases.
- Begin creating pictures in their minds while listening to stories.
- Begin understanding print concepts, such as, pictures and print as symbols for real things and that we read words, not pictures.

Choose books that toddlers like:

- Toddlers are learning to cope with feelings. Look for books with characters handling typical emotions and experiences.
- Toddlers feel competent when they can participate. Read books with rhymes and predictable words they can remember.
- Toddlers can pay attention -- for a while -- if they are interested. Read picture storybooks with brief, simple plots and only a few words per page.
- Toddlers are curious. Read books about special interests and books about new people, places, and events.
- Toddlers are increasing their vocabularies and listening skills. Read books a few levels above their current vocabulary that introduce new words and ideas. Also look for books with lots of pictures of things to name.
- Toddlers are beginning to make sense of concepts such as size, color, shape, and time. Read simple picture-concept books that reinforce their learning.
- Toddlers are learning self-help skills. Read books about daily routines such as using the toilet, washing hands, and taking a bath.
- Toddlers are doers. Read books with flaps to lift and textures to feel.

Try these read-aloud tips:

- Read the same books again and again, if asked. A toddler will let you know when he or she has had enough of a book.
- Read slowly so the toddler can make sense of what's happening in a story.
- Offer crayons and paper to occupy the toddler who finds it easier to listen when he or she is busy.
- Vary your voice to fit the characters and plot.
- Use puppets and other props related to the story.
- Repeat interesting words and phrases.
- Stop often to comment, ask questions, and look closely at the illustrations.
- Encourage a toddler to join in: turn pages, name things in pictures, make sounds, repeat rhymes and phrases, and think about what might happen next.
- Talk about the pictures and point out details a toddler might miss.
- Talk about the book and how it relates to a toddler's real life experiences.