

Tips for Reading Aloud With Babies

Read aloud so babies can:

- Associate reading with warm, pleasant feelings.
- Hear sounds, rhythms, and words.
- Use their senses--listening, seeing, touching.
- Make their own sounds--cooing, gurgling, babbling--which will eventually become talking.
- Point to pictures that you can name.
- Begin to understand that pictures represent objects.

Choose books that babies like:

- Very young babies love to hear your voice. You can read anything to them, but they especially like nursery rhymes and other stories with set rhythms.
- Choose board books with simple, bright pictures against solid backgrounds.
- As babies learn to grasp things, pick light, washable cloth and vinyl books.
- When babies are older enough to hold things, provide brightly colored board books featuring only one or two objects per page.
- As babies become interested in what's inside a book, read books with bright pictures of animals, babies, and familiar objects.
- As babies begin to do activities for themselves, read simple stories about routine events -- eating, taking a bath, or going to bed.
- As babies begin to talk, read books that invite them to repeat rhymes, words, and phrases.
- When older babies want to join in, read books with textures, things to touch, flaps to lift, tabs to pull, and holes where they can poke their fingers.
- Babies of any age enjoy homemade books and family photo albums.

Try these read-aloud tips:

- Hold the baby in your lap; make sure he or she can see the pictures.
- Play with words, sing, and make up rhymes; include the baby's name.
- Expect babies to touch, grasp, and taste -- that is how they learn.
- Offer the baby a toy to hold and chew while listening to you read.
- Read one or two pages at a time; gradually lengthen the number of pages.
- Let the baby turn the pages if he or she is more interested in the book than listening to you read. He or she will still be learning about books and enjoying your company.
- Point to, name, and talk about things in pictures. Describe what's happening.
- Ask the baby: "Where's the...?" "What's that...?" Wait for a response.
- Encourage a baby to join in -- moo like a cow or finish a repetitive phrase.
- Stay on a page as long as a baby is interested.
- Put the book away and do something else when the baby loses interest.

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