



TIPS | for parents of Babies

It's never too early to read to your baby. As soon as your baby is born, he or she starts learning. Just by talking to, playing with, and caring for your baby every day, you help your baby develop language skills necessary to become a reader. By reading with your baby, you foster a love of books and reading right from the start. The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

■ Snuggle up with a book

When you hold your baby close and look at a book together, your baby will enjoy the snuggling and hearing your voice as well as the story. Feeling safe and secure with you while looking at a book builds your baby's confidence and love of reading.

■ Choose baby-friendly books

Books with bright and bold or high-contrast illustrations are easier for young babies to see, and will grab their attention. Books made of cloth or soft plastic (for the bathtub) or "board books" with sturdy cardboard pages are easier for a baby to handle.

■ Keep books where your baby can reach them

Make sure books are as easy to reach, hold, and look at as toys. Remember, a baby will do with a book what he does with everything else—put it in his mouth. And that's exactly what he's supposed to do, so you may only want to put chewable books within reach.

■ Talk with your baby—all day long

Describe the weather or which apples you are choosing at the grocery. Talk about the pictures in a book or things you see on a walk. Ask questions. By listening, your child learns words, ideas, and how language works.

■ Encourage your baby's coos, growls, and gurgles

They are your baby's way of communicating with you, and are important first steps toward speech. Encourage attempts to mimic you. The more your baby practices making sounds, the clearer they will become. Go ahead and moo, woof and honk!

■ Give baby a hand!

Encourage your baby to pick up crackers or peas, touch noses and toes, point to pictures and grab toys. The muscles in those little hands will grow strong, agile, and ready to turn pages.

■ Develop a daily routine (and make reading a part of it)

Routines can soothe a baby, and let a baby learn to predict what will happen next. The ability to predict is important when your child is older and is reading independently.

■ Sing, Read, Repeat

Read favorite stories and sing favorite songs over and over again. Repeated fun with books will strengthen language development and positive feelings about reading.

■ "Read" your baby

Pay attention to how your baby reacts to the book you are reading. Stop if your baby isn't enjoying the story and try another book or another time.

Visit www.ReadingRockets.org for more information on how you can launch a child into a bright future through reading.



TIPS | for parents of Toddlers

Being a toddler is all about ACTION. Encourage continued language development and interest in books and reading by keeping things lively and engaging. Everyday experiences are full of opportunities to engage in conversation and develop language skills. The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

■ Don't expect your toddler to sit still for a book

Toddlers need to MOVE, so don't worry if they act out stories or just skip, romp, or tumble as you read to them. They may be moving, but they are listening.

■ Recite rhymes, sing songs, and make mistakes!

Pause to let your toddler finish a phrase or chant a refrain. Once your toddler is familiar with the rhyme or pattern, make mistakes on purpose and get caught.

■ Choose engaging books

Books featuring animals or machines invite movement and making sounds. Books with flaps or different textures to touch keep hands busy. Books with detailed illustrations or recurring items hidden in the pictures are great for exploring and discussing.

■ Keep reading short, simple, and often

Toddlers frequently have shorter attention spans than babies. Look for text that is short and simple. Read a little bit, several times a day.

■ Encourage play that involves naming, describing, and communicating

Set up a zoo with all the stuffed animals. Stage a race with the toy cars. Put your toddler in charge and ask lots of questions.

■ Every day is an adventure when you're a toddler

Choose books about everyday experiences and feelings. Your child will identify with the characters as they dress, eat, visit, nap, and play.

■ Ask questions

Take time to listen to your toddler's answers. Toddlers have strong opinions and interesting ideas about the world. Encourage your toddler to tell you what he or she thinks. You'll build language skills and learn what makes your toddler tick at the same time.

■ Play to their favorites

Read favorite stories again and again. Seek out books about things your toddler especially likes—trains, animals, the moon. These books may extend a toddler's attention span and build enthusiasm for reading.

■ Not having fun?

Try a different story or a different time during the day. Reading with a very young child is primarily about building positive experiences with books, not finishing every book you start.

Visit www.ReadingRockets.org for more information on how you can launch a child into a bright future through reading.



TIPS | for parents of Preschoolers

Read early and read often. The early years are critical to developing a lifelong love of reading. It's never too early to begin reading to your child! The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

■ **Read together every day.**

Read to your child every day. Make this a warm and loving time when the two of you can cuddle close.

■ **Give everything a name.**

Build your child's vocabulary by talking about interesting words and objects. For example, "Look at that airplane! Those are the wings of the plane. Why do you think they are called wings?"

■ **Say how much you enjoy reading.**

Tell your child how much you enjoy reading with him or her. Talk about "story time" as the favorite part of your day.

■ **Read with fun in your voice.**

Read to your child with humor and expression. Use different voices. Ham it up!

■ **Know when to stop.**

Put the book away for awhile if your child loses interest or is having trouble paying attention.

■ **Be interactive.**

Discuss what's happening in the book, point out things on the page, and ask questions.

■ **Read it again and again.**

Go ahead and read your child's favorite book for the 100th time!

■ **Talk about writing, too.**

Mention to your child how we read from left to right and how words are separated by spaces.

■ **Point out print everywhere.**

Talk about the written words you see in the world around you. Ask your child to find a new word on each outing.

■ **Get your child evaluated.**

Please be sure to see your child's pediatrician or teacher as soon as possible if you have concerns about your child's language development, hearing, or sight.

Visit www.ReadingRockets.org for more information on how you can launch a child into a bright future through reading.