

Sharing Books with Your Baby



Can you really share books with children who don't talk yet? Yes! Mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts, uncles—even older brothers and sisters—can help babies learn to love reading by reading to them. Here are some tips that have worked for parents and caregivers.

How do I get started?

- Talk, sing, or recite simple rhymes to your baby every day, starting when he is born.
- Introduce books when your baby begins to notice pictures. For many babies, that happens around 4-6 months of age.
- Find a place to read where both of you are comfortable and your baby can see the pages. She will probably prefer to sit in your lap. In a car, the car seat is the place for a little one when you read aloud.
- Point to a picture on a page. Let your baby touch, too. Talk about the picture or read the simple words. Babies often like to have the same book or the same page read to them over and over.

What books can I share with my baby?

- Babies often treat books like toys, so find books that are made especially for them. Good baby books are made of thick cardboard, cloth, or plastic. They are easy to clean and tough to destroy!
- Look for books with appealing pictures of people, animals, or familiar objects, and with simple words and rhymes.

When can I read with my baby?

- Make reading part of the daily routine. After a nap and before going to bed are two popular times.
- Tuck a book into the diaper bag when “out and about” with a baby, so sharing books can be part of waiting for the bus or standing in the checkout line.

How long can I read to my baby?

- Read to your baby only as long as she remains interested—for a few seconds or a few minutes.
- Sing the words, change your voice, or use a puppet to help hold her attention. If reading time is short but pleasant, she may listen more another time.

What if my baby isn't interested in books?

- Keep trying, but don't force it. Some babies are just busy learning other things.
- Let him see you reading.
- If your baby can hold objects, let her play with baby books. Offer books when she is looking for something to do. Such invitations help many children develop an interest in books.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



Children's Research Center
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
51 Gerty Dr. • Champaign, IL 61820-7469
Telephone: 217-333-1386
Toll-free: 877-275-3227
E-mail: iel@illinois.edu
<https://illinoisearlylearning.org>



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