For Parents: Reading and Talking With Your Toddler

Children become competent communicators by being read to, by doing activities and by talking. When you see your child doing something new with language or books, you should realize that you are doing a good job educating your child and getting your child ready for school. You are also encouraging your child's curiosity and desire to understand the world.

It's important for young children to see words everywhere as they begin to make sense of written and spoken communication. They also need to see you and other adults reading—the mail, a newspaper, a catalog, an instruction manual, or a magazine. Buy books when possible. Yard sales and library book sales are good places for bargains.

Young children are listening to what you are saying all the time. Their minds and bodies are growing at an amazing rate! Two-and three-year olds are very independent and may want to do things all by themselves, including choosing books and telling a story their own way.

When you choose books for a two-or three-year old look for books with:

- Lots of everyday objects
- Simple stories
- The same words repeated over and over
- Humor
- Lots of conversation and friendship between characters
- Pictures of animals
- Predictability
- Stories they can participate in

Two-year-olds:

Two-year-olds begin to see the details in pictures. They like to point and name and ask, "What's that?" over and over again.

They often have favorite books that they want read to them over and over and over. That's OK. Your child is learning by repetition.

Your child may need to be doing something else while listening to a story.

Reading new stories and poems adds new words to your child's speech.

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Your child is learning from the stories you read together. She's learning about her world and about getting along with others.

If your child wants to stop and do something else, that's OK. Don't force reading.

You can use adventures in a story to start conversations. Here's an example: "Oh no, I forgot your juice. Do you remember who Sam the zookeeper forgot to feed?"

Reading time can be short. Many children have a short attention span. Be patient.

Three-year-olds:

Your three-year-old will still like to hear the same story over and over.

He will be able to guess what the characters will do next.

While you are reading a book some three-year-olds may run, hop, jump or stand on one leg.

Three-year-olds like to write, scribble and draw. Keep paper, pencils, crayons and markers where your child can easily reach them.

You and your child can begin memorizing nursery rhymes.

Use books to begin conversations and talk about things you've done together.

When your child points to a familiar object, expand on it by telling him how to use it or what it does.

Have books, magazines and catalogs to read and look at.

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