

Read Early and Often

By Rebecca Parlakian and Sarah S. MacLaughlin

You probably know that it's important to read to your child. You also may have heard that starting earlier is better. But maybe you feel a little silly reading aloud to an infant? We've all been there. Although it seems babies are too young to enjoy being read to, they're learning something new.



Why Read to Babies?

Reading together when babies are as young as 4 months old increases the chances that parents continue reading to babies as they get older. Beginning early is important because the roots of language are developing in a baby's brain even before he can talk! **The more words your baby hears over time, the more words he learns.**

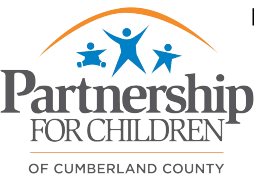
Here are some general guidelines for what types of books are a good fit from birth to 18 months, along with some can't-miss parent tips for book-sharing in the early years.

Your Child's Age	Books for Infants	Tips for Parents
Birth-6 Months	Go ahead and start reading chunky board books, soft fabric books, or vinyl bath books.	Though your baby may seem too little to understand, she enjoys your company and the sounds of your voice and words. At this age, babies may come to recognize the book-sharing routine by calming, widening their eyes, or smiling and kicking to show excitement. Babies will also want to explore books through their senses by grabbing and chewing on the book. They may not pay attention to the whole story, so take a break when they get bored (looking away, arching back, closing eyes, crying).

Your Child's Age	Books for Infants	Tips for Parents
6-9 Months	Offer short, simple stories with colorful illustrations—board books are perfect.	Babies may begin to explore books by looking, touching (opening/closing), and mouthing them. By 9 months, they may prefer or seem to recognize certain stories or pictures. Your baby may also continue to occasionally mouth books. In the early years, that is a normal book behavior and tells us that babies want to explore books!
9-18 Months	Offer board books with simple stories. Stories with rhymes and phrases that repeat also catch your toddler's attention. Children this age also love stories with pictures of other babies and familiar objects, such as animals.	Your toddler may have a favorite story that she requests all the time. Starting at about 12 months old, you can start to ask simple questions about the pictures such as "Where is the moon?" and watch to see if your baby points or gestures.

Finally, remember that telling your child a story can happen any time. Give it a try during mealtimes, diaper changes, driving to child care, and right before bed when you "tell the story" of your child's day. Each of these moments creates an opportunity to build a deeper connection with your child and to build her language and literacy skills, too!

Source: <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1833-read-early-and-often>



Family Connects North Carolina Southeastern Region
a program of un programa de
Partnership for Children of Cumberland County
 SERVING CUMBERLAND, HOKE, AND ROBESON COUNTIES
 SIRVIENDO A LOS CONDADOS DE CUMBERLAND, HOKE Y ROBESON



Nurses provided by Carolina Collaborative Community Care (4C). Funded in part by the Elizabeth A. Hudspeth Endowment Fund of the Cumberland Community Foundation. Enfermeras suministradas por Carolina Collaborative Community Care (4C). Financiado en parte por la Elizabeth A. Hudspeth fondo de dotación de la Cumberland Community Foundation.