

Roots to Reading
A guide to reading
for 0 to 4s

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This guidance aims to provide an overview of how to lay firm foundations for children aged 0 to 4 years old to enable them to eventually become enthusiastic, competent and confident readers. It addresses the benefits of reading to young children and the impact it can have on their holistic development. The guidance also provides practical ideas on: how to select appropriate books, when and how to read with young children and the identification of skills which need to be nurtured and developed in other areas of the curriculum to support reading. This guidance is a supplementary tool to the document 'Open a book.... Support for reading in the early years' and should be read in conjunction with it. Ideas within the guidance are designed to be shared with practitioners and parents alike.



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The Benefits of Reading to Babies and Young Children

Reading aloud to a baby or young child is a wonderful shared experience which also promotes brain development.

Reading aloud:

- Teaches babies and young children about communication
- Introduces concepts such as numbers, letters, colours, and shapes in a fun way
- Builds listening, memory, and vocabulary skills
- Gives babies and young children information about the world around them



By the time babies reach their first birthday they will have learned all the sounds needed to speak their native language. The more stories they share, the more words they hear the better their speech, language and communication will be.

Hearing words helps to build a rich network of language in a baby's brain. Babies who are talked to and read to, often know more words by age 2 than children who have not been read to. Babies who are read to during their early years are more likely to learn to read at the right time.

When reading to babies and young children:

- They hear adults using different intonation, expressive sounds and emotions. This supports social and emotional development.
- Reading encourages babies to look, point and touch. As toddlers and young children they start to verbally respond to what they see in books and answer simple questions. This helps with social development, cognitive and thinking skills.
- The language skills of babies and young children improve as they copy sounds, recognise pictures and learn new words.
- Furthermore, exposure to the rhythm, repetition and rhyme often built into children's books helps to lay down the neural networks for learning to read.
- Children's imagination and curiosity are stimulated and they begin to learn the difference between 'real' and 'make-believe'.
- They understand change and new or frightening events, and also the strong emotions that can go along with them.

But perhaps the most important reason to read aloud to a baby or child is that it helps build relationships. If infants and children are frequently read to with joy, excitement, and closeness, they begin to associate books with happiness and, in this way, new readers are created.

A child's ability to read is dependent upon their learning and development in many other areas. When children are very young it is important to continually support and assess their gross and fine motor skills together with their language and cognitive development. Reference to the chronological development of these combined areas of learning and skills and their link to reading are referenced in the appendices. Guidance is also given for practitioners and parents on how to support a child's development in these areas at each particular stage of development. In addition to the guidance there is a section within each age band which raises awareness for practitioners and parents to possible arising concerns.

How to Select Books for Different Ages

Infants

A newborn's eyesight is not fully developed at birth. They see best from about twelve inches, which is perfect when holding a baby and gazing into his eyes. Here are some additional characteristics to keep in mind when choosing books for babies:

- Choose small books that are easy to hold and turn the page whilst holding a baby.
- Look for books with black-and-white designs or with bright colours and highly contrasting images. This makes it easier for babies to focus as their eyes grow stronger.
- Look for books that have simple drawings of familiar things, actions, and events.
- Choose simple books with one or two objects on a page surrounded by lots of empty space and very few words.
- Books should be durable since they are chewed on, tossed, dragged around and pulled on so choosing board books, soft vinyl or cloth books are best.

Older Infants

Oral language is important, so books with a single word and picture help infants learn that pictures have meanings. Books with simple sentences or nursery rhymes are enjoyable for older infants. Young children delight in listening to rhythmic and rhyming text. Here are some additional characteristics to keep in mind:

- Choose board books with rounded edges and thick pages to make turning the pages easier.
- Choose books that have large pictures or designs, or photos of other babies or family members.
- Choose books that encourage further investigation. Older babies enjoy peek-a-boo, pop-up or lift-the-flap books, as well as books with hidden surprises. They like books that are soft and furry with lots of texture, scents and even mirrors.



Toddlers

Toddlers are constantly on the move and might not sit in one place for very long. One thing toddlers still need every day is for adults to read books with them. They enjoy books with lots of action about everyday experiences that help them explore and understand their world. As you choose books for toddlers:

- Look for small sturdy board books with a few or no words on the page. Books with no words allow children to make up their own stories and develop their imagination.
- Toddlers relish large colourful pictures and photographs with simple story lines. The lift-the-flap, touch and feel, sound buttoned interactive and sensory books which encourage exploration provide much interest at this age.
- Concept books introduce topics like animals, feelings, colours, numbers, shapes and letters. Predictable text, books with repeated text, rhymes and stories with funny sounding words are all fun to read aloud.
- Try some books that show children doing common things and that tell simple stories. Look for cause and effect stories, and fictional books that describe a problem or circumstance to overcome. Goodnight books for bedtime are great to help toddlers wind down before sleep time. Choose books about familiar and comforting things like mealtimes, saying goodbye and other routine activities.
- Books with songs, rhymes, poetry and repetitive text are easy for toddlers to memorize and read or sing along to.
- A child's favourite characters may attract his attention in a book but ensure that the story isn't too long as it could fail to hold the attention of a young child.
- Try predictable books with repeated text, words that rhyme, and pictures that correspond to the text. Books with songs and repetitive verses are still a good choice for this age.

Pre-schoolers

Books for pre-schoolers should have simple stories with basic plots, engaging illustrations and a fun text that lends itself to being read aloud. The storyline should move rapidly so it can be read in one session. It is time for more intricate story composition using repetitive phrases and sounds that young children can repeat and remember. Try to choose books that have the following characteristics:

- Select books that promote imagination and solve problems in a creative way. Young children enjoy books about real-life circumstances that mirror their concerns. They enjoy stories about going to school, playing with friends and sharing with others.
- Remember that illustrations are still a great fascination and will have significant impact on children's involvement in a book.
- Choose lots of ABC books, counting books and simple information books about dinosaurs, trains, trucks, animals, insects, geography or construction etc.
- Look for books with nursery rhymes and poetry.
- Predictable books that allow children to fill in the blanks, guess what comes next, or make predictions about sentences, phrases and words that are intriguing.
- Introduce children to books and stories about cultures from around the world that are different from theirs.
- Present opportunities to learn about families and making friends. Books about having brothers and sisters are a great way to introduce the pending arrival of a new sibling.



How to read stories to babies and young children

Getting it right from the start

Use this simple four-step sequence to build a baby's language through books.

1. Focus a baby's attention on a picture in a book by pointing at it and saying, 'Look!'
2. Ask a question about the picture e.g. 'What's this?' or 'What do you see here?'
3. Wait a few seconds to see if the baby responds. They may vocalize, smile, or maybe even say a word. If necessary, give the answer yourself.
4. Expand on the answer with more detail.

A few minutes at a time is fine, don't worry if you don't finish the story

Young children can only sit for a few minutes for a story, but as they grow, they will be able to sit longer. Let the child decide how much, or how little time you spend reading. It isn't necessary to read every page. You may find that a child has a favourite page or even a favourite picture and may want to linger there for a while, and then switch books or activities. Many babies just want to mouth the book and that's okay. When you allow a child to explore books in ways that interest them, the reading experience is more meaningful.

Talk or sing about the pictures

You do not have to read the words to tell a story. Try "reading" the pictures in a book to the child sometimes. If a child is old enough and ready to, ask them to read the pictures to you!

Let the children turn the pages

Very young babies cannot yet turn pages on their own however they will soon develop the will to want to have a go. By eighteen months old, toddlers will be able to turn the pages to board books and most three years old can certainly turn pages alone. Remember, it's fine to miss out some pages when reading to a young child.

Show children the cover page

Explain what the story is about. If you have an older toddler, ask them to guess what the story might be about.

Show children the words

Run your finger along the words as you read them, from left to right.

Make the story come alive

Create voices for the story characters and use your body to tell the story.



Make it personal

Talk about your own and the child's family, pets, or community when you are reading about others in a story.

Ask questions about the story and let the children ask questions too!

Use the story to have a back-and-forth conversation with the child. Talk about familiar activities and objects you see in the illustrations or read about in the story.

Let the children tell the story

Children as young as three years old can memorise a story. Provide opportunities for children to tell the story to you, giving them a chance to retell and put the story into their own words.

Create books Together

Make photo books of family members and word books by cutting pictures out of magazines or catalogues. As children get older, encourage them to dictate a story to you and then draw pictures to go with the words. (Ideas above taken from www.zerotothree.org based upon research)



Making books come alive for toddlers and young children

Story bags, baskets and prop boxes

To help engage children and hold their attention and interest whilst reading a story try using a bag, box or basket containing props relating to the story. This enables the story telling to be more playful and interactive. It is an ideal way of supporting and developing a child's attention span and provides the opportunity for them to return to the story independently through the use of the props. Using props adds another dimension to a book and helps to bring a story alive. It enables them to engage with the book through hands on learning.



What can be included?

Story bags, boxes and baskets do not need to be shop bought. They can be easily put together using existing materials from nursery, home etc. and assembled to be completely bespoke to the individual story and children with whom they are to be used. All you need to start is a canvas bag or large pillowcase, or an old basket or even a cardboard box! It is vital to add the actual book to the bag, basket or box and then carefully consider what props can be included to help bring the story alive. Thought must be given to which props will be used to represent and correspond to scenes, characters and significant highlights in the book.

Possible props to use

Hand puppets, finger puppets, small boxes, small world people, small animals, small boxes, soft toys, straw, sticks, materials including textured materials, visual aids etc. the list is endless.

Consider using sensory props that cover the five main senses, sight, touch, taste, hearing and smell. Try to be as imaginative as you can when choosing your prop, e.g. if you are representing an animal aim to use a sound effect or pick its main feature e.g. lion's mane, tiger's stripes, shark's teeth rather than always using a plastic or stuffed toy.

Remember that large props can also be used to enhance a story.

What type of story bag do I want?

Take into consideration why you are using the bag and how it will enhance the learning experience for the child. Some possibilities:

- A story bag that uses simple everyday materials with props that correspond clearly to the book and help to tell the story as you read it. This bag type works well for babies and toddlers.
- A story bag which provides an interactive sensory experience for the children. Take into consideration how the bag will stimulate and engage the children's senses through the materials chosen.
- A bag which enables the story to be retold through dramatic play using larger scale materials and props.
- A story bag which provides more playful learning and extension experiences after the story has been told.
- A story bag with props that will help children to make up or re-tell their own version of the story.

When and where to read, advice for practitioners

Ideas for practitioners

When and where should I read to babies and young children?

The answer is there is no wrong place or time providing the child is receptive, it's safe and the time feels right. The more books that are woven into a child's everyday life, the more likely they will be to see reading as a pleasure.

Babies and young children

- Babies and young children love sharing a book on an individual level. When they are very young they need the sole attention of the adult so that they have the opportunity for their individual cues to be picked up on and responded to straight away. The sharing of books with babies and young toddlers should be a time of intimacy, pleasure, fun and intense interaction.
- Try to find opportunities to look at and share books when the child is going to be receptive, pick your moment. As always with very young children it is best to let them lead the way.
- Once babies and toddlers are familiar with books and are read to regularly, books can be used as a source of comfort, soothing, distraction and pleasure.
- As for older children, younger children often respond to sharing a book at certain times of the day, making it part of their daily routines.
- Sharing of books may be appropriate for some children at the following times:

- transitioning into nursery
- any point within a session
- outdoors
- before sleep/after waking
- before going home
- rest times
- potty time/ on the loo
- meal times- just as food is cooling down

- When sharing a book try to pick somewhere that is comfortable for both yourself and the child. Comfortable to a very young child might mean being stood up and you sitting on the floor. For a young baby this may mean being nestled in your arms. Wherever you choose to be and whatever stance you take it is really important that the child can see your face as sharing a book should always be a two way interaction.
- Consider the environment that you are in. Think about the level of background noise. If it is noisy can the noise be reduced? Are there other areas of the room or outdoor area you can go to which are quieter and calmer?



As children become a little older i.e. two to three years old, the temptation to read and share books to them in a larger group increases. Always remember that reading should be a valuable experience. For children under three this requires the opportunity to effectively interact with an adult. This can only happen when a book is shared individually or in very small groups. Books and stories need to be shared at opportune moments throughout the session and not at set times e.g. just before lunch time in order for tables to be set up etc.

Supporting home learning

Research shows that parental involvement in their children's learning is the greatest factor in determining children's future success. The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) research study showed the following activities, provided by families, gave children a particular advantage both socially and intellectually:

- Reading with and to children
- Singing songs and rhymes
- Going on visits
- Painting and drawing
- Creating opportunities to play with friends
- Going to the library
- Playing with letters and numbers

It should be noted though that the study also found that parents tended to engage in less of these activities with boys. This is an important consideration for early years practitioners when they plan how to support and involve parents in reading with their children at home.

Early years settings should develop effective partnerships with parents so that they can offer appropriate support to help enhance the learning and development of children's reading at home. This means all staff being aware of the importance of working with parents and providing the practical support they need.

Ideas for supporting families with early reading with their children:

- **Time:** Make time to talk to parents on an individual basis about the importance of reading at home. Building positive relationships with families is key to being able to support home learning in a way that meets parents' individual needs.
- **Displays:** Consider having reading as a theme for a display on your parent noticeboards. Provide clear and concise information about the value of reading to children at home and ways that parents can incorporate this into their daily routines. Compile leaflets with useful websites to support reading at home which parents can take away with them. Develop interactive displays where parents can add their own top tips for reading or details of a particular book their child has enjoyed.
- **Setting Website / Facebook Page:** Add specific information about reading onto your setting website. Include links to videos showing parents top tips for reading. You may even add videos of your setting's practitioners reading a bedtime story which can be shared at home. Include information about the setting 'nursery rhyme and/or book of the week' so parents can share this with their child at home. Flag up details of books which will help to engage boys in reading. Talk about the value of sharing other reading materials, such as comics and catalogues. If you use online learning journals, add photos of the children enjoying sharing books with a practitioner or reading to themselves and their friends. Encourage parents to add photos of the child reading at home. You could even set a competition for a photo of the most unusual place to read!
- **Book lending library:** Start a book lending library for parents. Ensure books are high quality and are at an appropriate developmental age for the children. Include a simple reading diary so that the parents can share how the child enjoyed the book.
- **Story bags or baskets:** Make up reading bags or baskets with a book and accompanying props. Alternatively include an activity such as a jigsaw or game linked to the book. Provide information about how to get the most from the book and activity.
- **Nursery rhymes:** Consider having a rhyme of the week and send parents the words and an online link to the tune. Make up nursery rhyme bags to share with home with the words to the song on laminated card together with an appropriate soft toy, puppet or prop
- **Stay and play:** Organise regular stay and play sessions for parents / grandparents. Include story time as part of each session so that practitioners can model reading and telling stories. Alternatively have a stay and play session themed around reading. Plan a range of activities around different books which parents can participate in with their children. Choose resources which are easily and cheaply available so that parents can replicate the activities at home. Think about books which engage boys as well as girls.

- **Group learning sessions:** Plan specific sessions for family learning about reading with young children. Provide information about research into early reading. Show videos of parents and professionals reading to children. Provide activities for families to do between sessions at home with their children and use these as the basis of follow up sessions. It may be that sessions such as these are organised by your local family learning service. If so, signpost parents to these events. Alternatively contact the providers and see if they are able to deliver the learning sessions in your own setting.
- **Workshops:** Plan practical workshops to involve parents in making their own reading resources to use at home with their children. Start by making simple personalised books, using family photos for example. Try making simple story props for favourite traditional tales e.g. wooden spoon or paper bag puppets.
- **Libraries:** Involve parents in visits to your local library with the children. Invite your local librarian to come into the setting to speak to the parents about the library service. Borrow storybags from the library to show to parents. Share information about activities held at the library for parents of young children e.g. rhyme time, holiday activities
- **World Book Day:** Plan activities for families for World Book Day which highlight the importance of early reading.
- **Reading visitors:** Invite parents and grandparents into the setting to share books with children in small groups. This also provides a good opportunity for ensuring that children who are not regularly read to at home have additional time for reading.



When and where to read, advice for parents

The following ideas can be shared with parents.

The more that books are woven into a child's everyday lives, the more likely they will be to see reading as a pleasure and a gift.

At Meal Times

Sing or read a story during a moment whilst your child is sat at the highchair or at the table.

In the Car or on the Bus

Keep a few books in the car or in a bag to engage children when travelling.

Dropping off at nursery, school, childminder

Calm a crying child at good-bye time with a favourite story or lullaby. Leave a photo book with pictures of loved family members at nursery so your child can flip through it and talk about you.

At the Doctor's Surgery

Read or tell a soothing story to your child in the waiting room and sing or talk through any scary parts of the visit. Before the visit, read books about going to the doctor so your child knows what to expect.

At the shops

Buy board books to clip on to the baby's pushchair or the shopping trolley to keep your little one amused whilst out shopping.

At sleep times and resting times

Familiar routines always help babies calm down. Use books and stories to quietly ease babies to sleep.

End of the day

Lie down on the floor surrounded by books. Sing a song together while you all try to relax a bit.

At Bath Time

Plastic bath time books are great fun and may help a fussy baby enjoy bath time a little more.

At Bed Time

Soothing books and stories can work magic with babies who fight sleep

(Ideas taken from the website - www.zerotothree.org)



Useful Websites to share with parents

<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/>

BookTrust is the UK's largest children's reading charity. It is a great source of practical information and advice for parents and practitioners to support reading in the early years. The website has freely downloadable reading guides for different ages, information on Bookstart, details of new books and much more.

https://literacytrust.org.uk/?gclid=EAlalQobChMI4vSQhtDM6gIVCIBQBh3ySA_vEAAYASAAEgKLc_D_BwE

On the 'Learning at home - Family Zone' there are lots of ideas and guidance for fun, simple activities that will engage children at home, while also benefiting their reading, writing and language development. Divided into different age categories, children can watch and listen to favourite stories, play games and find out about book-related activities to try at home.

<https://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/early-years-development/learning-and-play/reading-with-your-child/>

Information, top tips and videos for parents about reading with young children.

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

With information for parents about why it is important to read to children early. Includes ideas for the types of books to use at different ages and also tips for reading to young children.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=DrOtUL-bKM

This video is part of a series of videos by Neil Griffiths who uses this platform to read some of his stories with groups of children. These videos provide excellent information for parents on tips and techniques for reading to young children.

<https://www.readingrockets.org/article/reading-tips-parents-babies>

With reading tips for parents of babies and young children, written in a range of languages.

<https://hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk/>

On the Hungry Young Minds website parents will find some short videos and simple, fun activities that they can do together with their children. The activities are broken down into ages from birth to 5.

<https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/childrensservices/childrenandfamilies/cfis/homelearning/homelearningandtimetogetherhomepage/homelearningandtimetogetherhomepage.asp>

'Time Together at Home' is an online resource for parents. Divided into 3 age groups from birth to 5, it contains ideas of activities to support children's reading at home.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/grownups/making-time-for-books-at-home>

The CBeebies Storytime app is packed with tips for parents as well as playful, imaginative stories designed especially to develop early reading skills. There are fun things to touch, swipe and play with in each story, as well as questions to build older children's comprehension skills.

Appendix 1

Reading Skills: Typical Development

Age	Motor Skills	Language and Cognitive Skills	How to support in nursery and at home	Concerns to watch out for
0-5m	• Turns head toward things that touch his cheek (rooting reflex) • Grasps an adult's finger with his hand (grasping reflex) • Begins to coordinate movements of the arms and legs. Reaches toward an object, grabs own foot • When placed on his stomach, wiggles arms and legs and tries to lift head	• Smiles or becomes quiet when an adult talks or sings • Shows pleasure by cooing or laughing • Visually tracks a moving object • Starts to repeat sounds like ee-ee-ee or oo-oo-oo	• Talk and sing with babies every day. Babies listen and learn the tones, sounds and words of language from the very beginning • Use daily routines, such as nappy changing or feeding time to talk, sing and play with the baby • Be attentive and respond to babies by looking at their faces, making eye contact, imitating expressions and copying their sounds • Provide daily "tummy time" to help build muscle tone and coordination	It is important to notice and seek further advice if a baby does not seem responsive to adults, particularly their closest carers or if they do not respond to sounds around them
6-11m	• Reaches for objects a few inches away • Grabs and lets go of objects • Places objects in mouth to chew or taste • Holds head and upper body steady while being held or on an adult's lap • Tries to turn book pages, especially thick board book pages	• Enjoys large, clear pictures and photographs • Vocalises with a growing number of sounds – may combine consonant and vowel sounds to represent words ("muh-muh-muh," "buh-buh-buh") • Watches faces and reacts to expressions when others talk to him • Pays attention to language and music, turning towards the source of sounds and responding with expression or movement, such as a smile, to show pleasure • Points at objects to direct your attention	• Talk, talk, talk with the child as this is the foundation for language and future reading • Use board books that the child can safely put in his mouth • Choose books with large pictures or photographs, few or no words, and various textures • Frequently hold the baby so she can see your face • Point to and name objects and pictures • Stop a book activity when a child is tired, acts disinterested or fusses • Play interactive activities like Peek-a-Boo	• The baby stops making vocal sounds • The baby does not respond to sounds • A baby that does not respond to familiar people, objects or pictures • Does not point at objects to direct an adult's attention

Age	Motor Skills	Language and Cognitive Skills	How to support in nursery and at home	Concerns to watch out for
12-17m	- Sits independently without support from a person - Carries books or objects when walking - Moves or dances to music. - Shows increased awareness of books, such as holding them, opening them or turning several pages at once	- Uses motions or gestures to communicate, such as waving goodbye or shaking head “no.” - Labels things consistently with the same sound and begins to say words. At this stage the baby may not pronounce the word accurately, but makes a consistent and recognizable sound (e.g., “muh” for “milk” or “Da” for “Daddy”) - Understands familiar words even if he cannot say the words. Will point to the correct object, toy, picture or person when asked - Chooses books for adults to read to them. May want to switch books before a story is finished - Holds book right-side up. From this early age, babies start to learn which way pictures in books should be oriented	- Show interest when a child brings you a book to read - Name and describe pictures in a book - Make up your own words to the story and don’t worry about reading all the words on a page - Follow the child’s lead as you read together. The child may want to turn the page, change books before you are finished reading, or stop looking at books and do something else - Continue talking and singing during daily routines - Ask the child to point to, touch or show you pictures, toys or objects as you name them - Accept the child’s short attention span and movement during book time – a reading activity may be only a couple of minutes. The child does not have to sit the whole time	- Does not say any words - Does not respond when his name is called - Does not initiate shared interaction e.g. does not bring you a toy or book to enjoy together. - Does not point out objects of interest for you. - Often seems to be “in her own world” – beyond just shyness, seems less interested than usual in other people and does not make much eye contact. - Does not start walking
18-23m	- Turns book pages without help – especially “chubby” book pages made of thick cardboard - Tries scribbling with chalk, crayons, paint or washable markers - Shows increasing skill in picking up smaller objects with fingers - Uses both hands to pick up, hold or carry things	- Names several familiar objects and pictures - Uses short phrases when talking, such as “Mummy come,” “See Daddy,” “Want juice” - Follows simple directions e.g. “Bring me your shoes, we are going outside” - Brings books to adults to read - Imitates an adult’s words and actions. Begins to copy pretend play sequences e.g. pretending to cook play food	- Build daily routines around books and reading, such as before naptime - Read stories about the child’s current experiences as this helps the child make connections and understand significant events in her life (potty training, visiting grandparents, being sick) - Ask the child to point to and name pictures in books - Let the child turn the pages in books. Choose books for tiny hands and fingers, such as books made of thick cardboard, cloth or plastic baby-safe material	- Stops using words. Suddenly seems socially withdrawn and does not use words that she previously used. - Has trouble understanding simple spoken language - Does not say several words and short phrases - Does not walk independently – should be able to walk without holding on to furniture or another person

Age	Motor Skills	Language and Cognitive Skills	How to support in nursery and at home	Concerns to watch out for
			- Elaborate on the child's language e.g. if the child says "truck," you say, "Yes ... yellow truck" - Provide chalk, markers or non-toxic paint for children to mark make with	Shows odd, repeated movements with body or objects e.g. spinning own body or objects frequently (multiple times per day) or focusing obsessively on one part of a toy, such as the wheels on a car, rather than playing with the toy like other children the same age
24-35 m	- Turns paper pages in books - Imitates movements such as "flying" like a bird or "jumping" like a frog - Scribbles on paper, making circular scribbles and lines - Crosses the centre of the body with one hand when scribbling. Until a child can do this, he will switch hands to scribble on the left or right side of the writing surface	- Talks using phrases and short sentences of three or more words - Understands many words, phrases and simple questions, such as, "Where is Mummy?" - Recites phrases or stories from his favourite book - Will "fill in the blank" when you leave off the last word or phrase of a familiar story or rhyme - Corrects you if you read the story wrong e.g. won't let you skip any words or pages, or say the wrong word - Chooses to play and pretend with books by reading books on his own	- Keep building daily routines around books. Make visits to the library a regular part of your routine, if possible - Introduce audio stories, ideally with the accompanying book - Be willing to read the same book over and over to build children's confidence in reading. - Ask questions about a story, such as what will happen next, how a character might feel or how the story relates to the child's life. - Introduce new vocabulary, longer sentences and simple questions during conversation - Drape large pieces of unlined paper to a flat surface for drawing. - Use the outdoors area for scribbling with chunky chalk or paint with a paintbrush and bucket of water	- Does not speak in sentences – continues to use single words instead of phrases ("milk" instead of "want milk" or "I want milk") - Does not have conversations and does not answer simple questions or make eye contact to keep a brief conversation going - Seems to be "in his own world". Does not interact socially much at all and stays to himself when others are around. Does not point and talk to get another person's shared attention. - Does not hold toys well and struggles to use fingers to grasp small objects, preferring to use the palm of the hand instead. - Has problems walking and running smoothly – looks very awkward or clumsy

Age	Motor Skills	Language and Cognitive Skills	How to support in nursery and at home	Concerns to watch out for
3 year olds	- Handles books well. Knows the front and back of the book and can turn individual pages - Gains more hand and finger control for drawing and scribbling - May continue to use the whole hand to hold crayons, markers or other writing tools	- Has a longer attention span for listening to stories - Enjoys books with more words and remembers the sequence of events in familiar stories - Uses longer sentences when talking, including more descriptive words - Combines two simple sentences into one when talking - Asks simple questions, using the words “what,” “where,” “why” - Moves finger from left to right under print - Begins to recognise a few letters. These are often the first few letters in a child’s name or those at the beginning of the alphabet	- Have conversations with the child. Ask questions to see what a child thinks about an experience or a story and then elaborate on what the child has said. - Choose a wide variety of different kinds of books, such as picture books, alphabet books, counting and story books. - Provide plastic, magnetic or wooden alphabet letters for children to play with. - Provide lots of opportunities for writing and drawing - Adults should show how reading and writing help in daily life, such as reading recipes, writing lists and sending emails or texts	- Children who do not choose books, show no enjoyment of reading stories to themselves and tend to resist sharing books with an adult - Children who do not hold writing tools with any control, cannot keep marks or scribbles on a large sheet of paper and do not coordinate looking at the writing surface with hand movements - Children who are not making steady progress in the development of their language and the breadth of their vocabulary
4 year olds	- Shows emerging right- or left-handedness. Uses the same hand more often for drawing, writing and eating - Shows increasing hand and finger control. Controls a crayon better than when younger - Draws some recognizable shapes – draws a circle, straight lines and can copy a square - Can copy letters in their name – should be recognisable, but some errors are okay	- Recognises a few familiar words in print - Recognises words that rhyme, such as mat, bat - Recognises their own name in print - Can point to and name several letters - Begins learning letter sounds. Starts to learn the difference between a letter name and its sound - Claps syllables in words; claps once for each syllable - Can retell a simple story plot or sequence, saying what came first, next, etc. for a familiar story	- Read longer books with more plot and character complexity - Encourage children to use more precise descriptive words and sentences by modelling longer sentences - Provide frequent drawing and writing opportunities. Encourage creativity and help children begin to make connections between their ideas and their writing and drawing	- Children not reading or starting to write their name - A child not recognising any letters - Children with trouble understanding spoken language and needing frequent repetition of simple requests, not following spoken directions well and needing adults to show them things to help them understand. - A child who has trouble having a conversation and does not answer well when an adult asks simple questions.

Age	Motor Skills	Language and Cognitive Skills	How to support in nursery and at home	Concerns to watch out for
	• Can write some letters in their name from memory. This should be recognisable but some errors are okay. Will begin to try to copy their name, gradually remembering all the letters without assistance		• Provide activities to build phonological awareness skills. Play games with words that rhyme or start with the same sound, mixing in made-up or silly words too • Provide activities to build letter knowledge skills. Point out letters in the environment and ask children to find words on food packages that start with a specific letter	• A child who does not understand rhyming and cannot accurately say whether two words rhyme, such as big and wig



Appendix 2

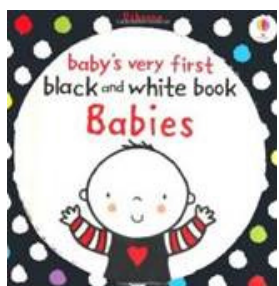
Recommended Books for Babies 0-12 months



Baby Touch: Busy Baby

Author: Ladybird

With different patches of touch-and-feels on every double page and bright high contrast pictures, there is lots to look at and explore together. This book comes with an accompanying CD featuring ten tracks of specially-composed instrumental baby music.

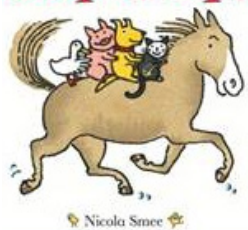


Baby's very first black and white book: Babies

Author: Stella Baggott

Babies find it easier to focus on high-contrast, and black-and-white images. This specially designed book has black and white pictures of happy, hungry and busy babies, and more. A delight to share with a baby, or for older babies to look at for themselves.

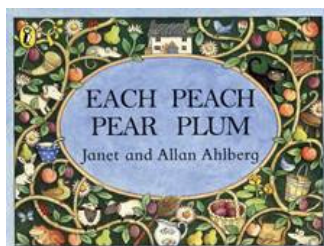
Clip-Clop!



Clip-Clop

Author: Nicola Smee

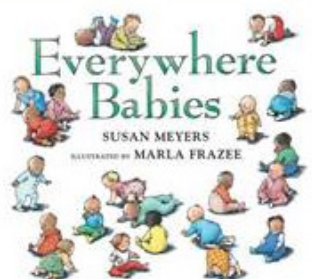
Cat, Dog, Pig and Duck all want to climb aboard Mr Horse for a ride. But when they get bored with the slow pace, they ask Mr Horse to go faster and faster... But will "faster" lead to disaster? A delightful rhythmical text with great illustrations.



Each Peach Pear Plum

Author: Allan Ahlberg Illustrator: Janet Ahlberg

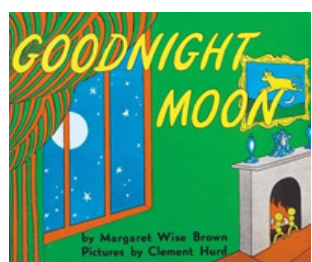
This classic book from author and illustrator team Janet and Allan Ahlberg is a real favourite with families.



Everywhere Babies

Author: Susan Meyers Illustrator: Marla Frazee

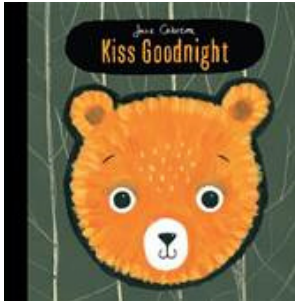
This gorgeous board book follows all sorts of babies – 'small babies, tall babies, winter and spring babies'.



Goodnight Moon

Author: Margaret Wise Brown & Clement Hurd

Margaret Wise Brown's comforting, rhythmical text makes Goodnight Moon a timeless picture book, which is known and loved around the world.



Kiss Goodnight

Author: Jane Cabrera

Say goodnight to lots of animals as the moon comes up. A beautifully illustrated, simple and soothing read.



Little Truck

Author: Taro Gomi

Little Truck is eager to get ahead but he needs the help of his ever-watchful parent when he gets tired. A simple story for older babies.



Where's Mr Lion?

Author: Ingela Arrhenius

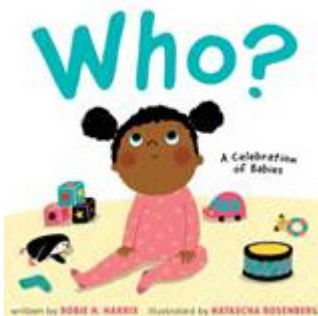
Five beautifully illustrated spreads show a series of friendly savannah animals hiding behind bright felt flaps.



Where's Spot?

Author: Eric Hill

This adorable board book about Spot the dog is the first in the Spot series. With lift the flap pages, this is ideal for older babies who are starting to show interest in peek a boo games.



Who?

Author: Robie H Harris Illustrator: Natascha Rosenberg

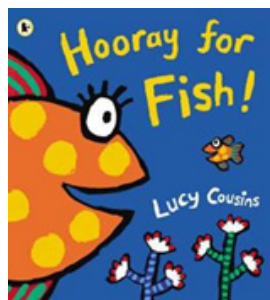
This board book will delight babies who love to look at pictures of other babies.

All books are recommended on the Book Trust website.
See website for further details <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/>

Appendix 3

Recommended Books for 1 year Olds

Toddlers at this age are often getting better at using their hands. They love board books with flaps and trying to turn the pages. Also think about books with textured images as these help to engage toddlers with the illustrations in books



Hooray for Fish!

Author: Lucy Cousins

Paddle along with Little Fish on a mesmerizing underwater tour of friends spotty and stripy, happy and gripy, hairy and scary, even curly whirly and twisty twirly. Great for encouraging joining in the chorus: Hooray for fish!



It's A Little Baby

Author: Julia Donaldson

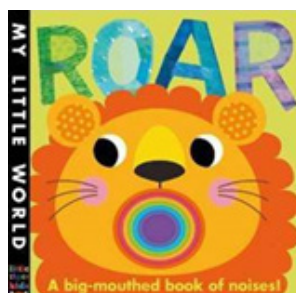
Featuring five little babies, doing all the things that babies do – waving, clapping, pointing . . . and more. With big flaps to lift and actions to join in with. There is also an online song to accompany the book.



Orange Pear Apple Bear

Author: Emily Gravett

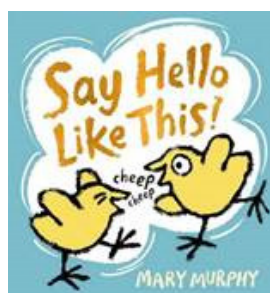
Containing only five words: apple, pear, orange, bear--and there, this book is simple but engaging. Toddlers love the repetition and reading this book over and over again will help them learn many different concepts.



Roar

Author: Jonathan Litton

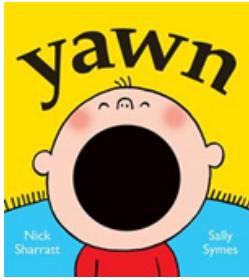
Who is the loudest animal in this fiercely fun book of sounds? Bright artwork, finger holes, and a cheerful rhyming story make learning come alive!



Say hello like this!

Author: Mary Murphy

Different kinds of animals say hello in their own way. Full of funny adjectives and sound words, this is an ideal read-aloud for the very youngest of listeners and is sure to engage babies as they first learn to talk



Yawn

Author: Sally Symes

Peep through the holes and follow the yawn as it is passed on from one animal to another. A simple, fun interactive board book with repetitive text.



So Cosy

Author: Lerryn Korda

A funny and beautifully illustrated story, toddlers will love following the jokes in the pictures and joining in with the repetition in the words.



Sometimes

Author: Emma Dodd

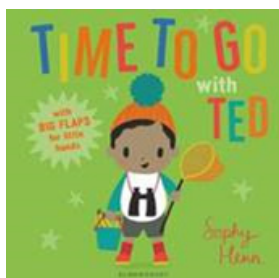
In Sometimes... a mother elephant assures her child that no matter what he does and who he is, she loves him unconditionally.



Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes

Author: Mem Fox

With a simple flowing rhythm and rhyming text, this book is perfect for finger play with young children. It explores how children all over the world are different yet all have ten little fingers and ten little toes – to play with, to tickle, to wave.



Time to Go With Ted

Author: Sophy Henn

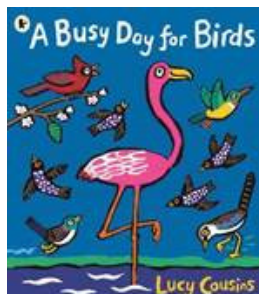
With sturdy flaps to lift on every page, toddlers can explore with Ted on his adventures, catching lions in the grass, spotting polar bears in the freezer or hanging out with a bunch of hungry monkeys.

All books are recommended on the Book Trust website
See website for further details <https://www.booktrust.org.uk>

Appendix 4

Recommended Books for 2 year Olds

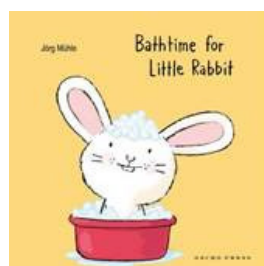
Two-year-olds can often follow a simple story and love joining in with lively actions or guessing what will happen on the next page.



A Busy Day for Birds

Author: Lucy Cousins

This is a bright, lively book, full of cheerful rhyme about the many different kinds of birds in the world.



Bathtime for Little Rabbit

Author: Jörg Mühle

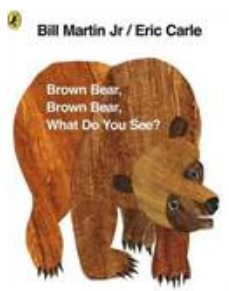
It's Little Rabbit's bath time, but he's going to need some help! This interactive story encourages toddlers to call Little Rabbit, and then act out shampooing, cleaning and drying.



Bear on a Bike

Author: Hannah Shaw

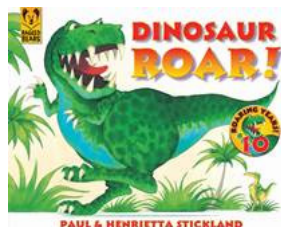
Bear has made a cake for Mouse. But just as he arrives at Mouse's door, he sees Mouse disappearing around the corner. An easy to follow story with great vocabulary-building pictures and lots of animals and things to spot in the brilliant and detailed illustrations.



Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?

Author: Bill Martin Jr

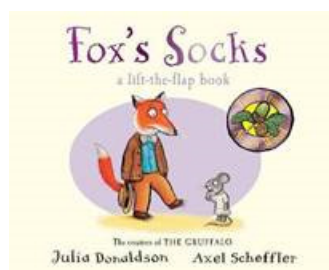
An all-time favourite that introduces different colours through simple text, presented in a satisfyingly repetitive pattern.



Dinosaur Roar!

Author: Henrietta Stickland

This book is an absolute winner, which soon has toddlers joining in with the rhyming words.



Fox's Socks

Author: Julia Donaldson

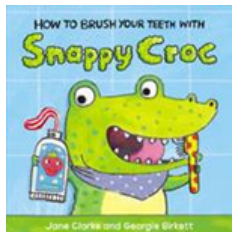
Mr Fox has lost his socks! Where could they be? A 'getting dressed' book, a hide-and-seek book and a lift-the-flap book.



Have You Seen Elephant?

Author: David Barrow

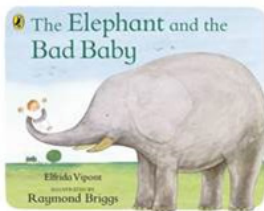
This hilarious book - about an elephant who wants to play hide and seek -will delight children and adults with its offbeat humour.



How to Brush Your Teeth with Snappy Croc

Author: Jane Clarke

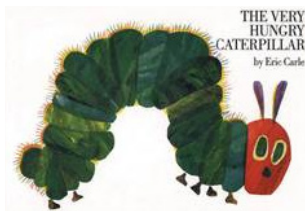
The little girl in this delightful board book takes Snappy Croc through each teeth-cleaning step.



The Elephant and the Bad Baby

Author: Elfrida Vipont

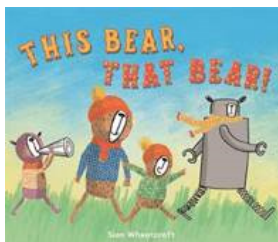
One day, an elephant offers a baby a ride through the town, and the set off on a great adventure.



The Very Hungry Caterpillar

Author: Eric Carle

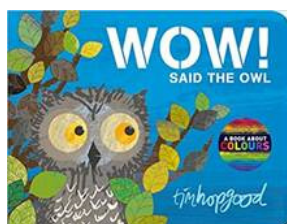
Eric Carle's The Very Hungry Caterpillar deserves its reputation as a much-loved classic.



This Bear, That Bear

Author: Sian Wheatcroft

There's a bear parade and every bear you can imagine is there! A book with a simple rhythmic flow and incidental rhymes, young children love choosing and talking about their favourite bears.



WOW! Said the Owl

Author: Tim Hopgood

Everyone knows that owls are nocturnal but one curious little owl decides to take a long nap at night so she can stay awake. An engaging book all about colours.

All books are recommended on the Book Trust website
See website for further details <https://www.booktrust.org.uk>

Appendix 5

Recommended Books for 3 year Olds

When children reach three, they can often follow slightly longer stories but they will still love listening to their old favourites again and again - they might even be able to retell them.



Almost Anything

Author: Sophy Henn

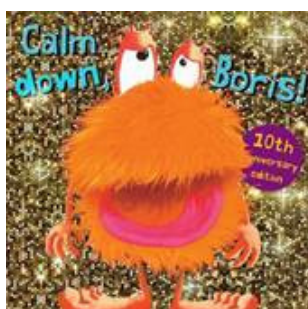
A book about self-belief, Sophy Henn has the perfect touch when it comes to tapping into childhood emotions. This is a book that readers both young and old will relate to.



Blue Penguin

Author: Petr Horacek

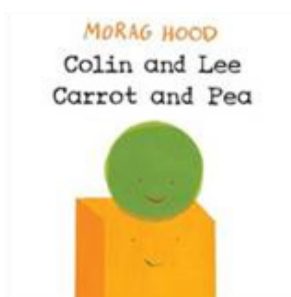
Blue Penguin wants to belong. But how does he convince the other penguins that he is just like them?



Calm Down, Boris!

Author: Sam Lloyd

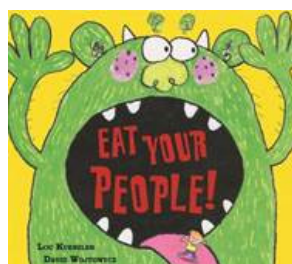
This interactive book comes complete with a Boris puppet making it perfect for sharing.



Colin and Lee: Carrot and Pea

Author: Morag Hood

Colin is a carrot, and Lee is a pea. An amusing and deceptively simple look at friendship and difference.



Eat Your People!

Author: Lou Kuenzler

Dinnertimes can be difficult in any household - even Monster households.



Everybunny Dance!

Author: Ellie Sandall

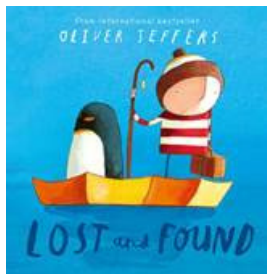
As a group of exuberant bunnies dance, sing, make music and generally have lots of fun, a fox is watching them from afar!



Kiki and Bobo's Sunny Day

Author: Yasmeen Ismail

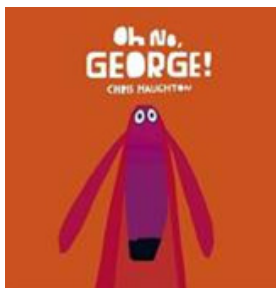
Join bouncy Kiki and shy Bobo for a day at the seaside in this charming lift-the-flap story, perfect for very young children.



Lost and Found

Author: Oliver Jeffers

Once there was a sad, lonely penguin who appeared at the door of a young boy. The boy decides the penguin must be lost and tries to return him. But no one seems to be missing a penguin.



Oh no George!

Author: Chris Haughton

George is a dog with a big personality and he LOVES cake, rubbish bins and chasing Cat.



Pants

Author: Giles Andreae

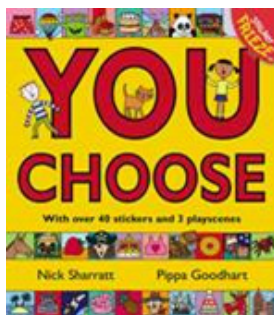
From hairy pants, scary pants and fairy pants, to loose pants, tight pants and lighting up at night pants.



The Gruffalo

Author: Julia Donaldson

In this much-loved picture book, a little mouse walks through the woods and encounters a fox, an owl and a snake.



You Choose

Author: Pippa Goodhart and Nick Sharratt

Children love to create their own stories with this brilliant interactive book full of detailed, colourful illustrations.

All books are recommended on the Book Trust website
See website for further details <https://www.booktrust.org.uk>



