



**A Heathy Child is Read to
Every Day**

Strategies for Implementing Literacy in Early Childhood



We encourage everyone to read to their children every day. Research has shown that reading aloud to young children is the single most important factor in learning how to read.

The main purpose of this guide is to help educators implement daily literacy into their programs as well as develop and strengthen their read-aloud skills. The guide details the importance of providing enriching experiences for children, selecting age-appropriate books, and reading tips for engaging storytimes.

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Providing Enriching Experiences



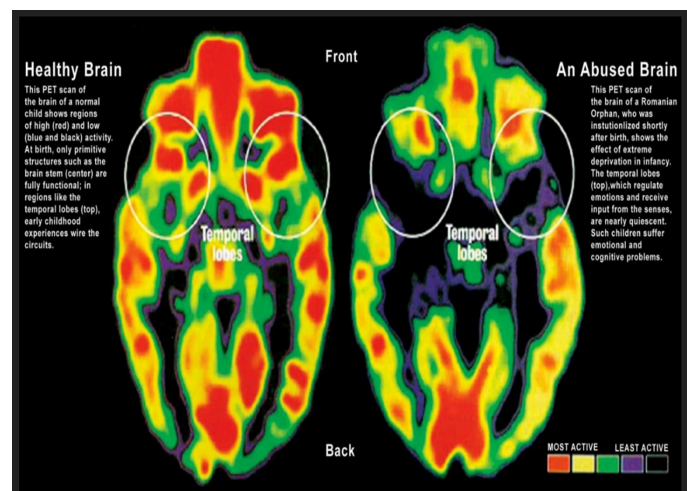
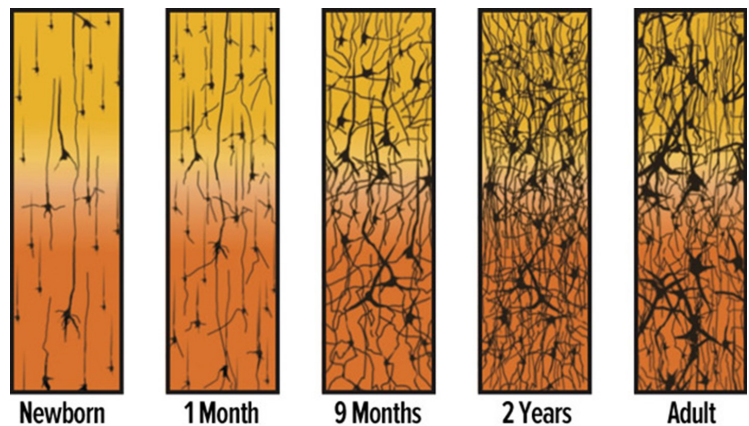
Brain Development

A person's brain is "built" over time and early experiences directly affect how the brain is "wired." How the brain develops depends on a combination between the genes we were born with and the experiences we have. Activity, attachment and stimulation determine how the brain is built and whether a child will have a strong or weak foundation for all future learning, behavior and health.

Warm, responsive caregiving is essential to healthy brain development. Here are a few ways to build a child's brain and make a lasting impact:

- Use children's names each time you speak with them
- Show caring and respect
- Acknowledge and accept a child's emotions
- Ask open-ended questions to encourage children's thinking and language, then give children time to think about how to respond
- Use interesting and varied vocabulary
- Help children make connections to familiar experiences, ideas, or information
- Repeat and extend what the child says
- Talk with children one-on-one about topics of interest to them
- Read with children every day

Remember, what you say and do matters!



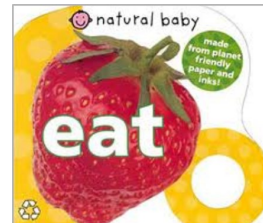
Selecting Age-Appropriate Books



Infants and Toddlers

Infants and toddlers do not have long attention spans, so keep your reading activities short and fun. Be sure that they have access to books by placing them on low shelves so the children can reach them when they want.

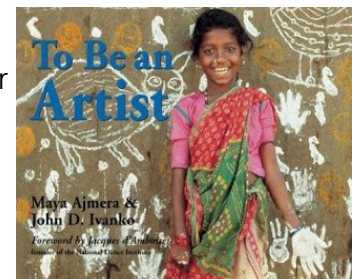
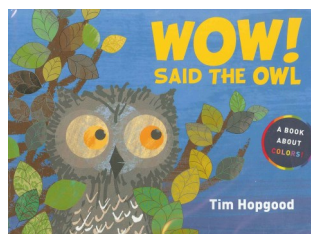
- *Cloth Books* — Pages are made of heavy-duty cloth. These books are durable and perfect for infants— just toss and wash!
- *Soft Plastic Books* — These are also very durable and can even get wet!
- *Board Books* — Pages are heavy, sturdy, and laminated; perfect for little hands. select books that have simple and clear pictures, are brightly designed, and have stories that are simple and short. Babies can chew on the books without causing too much damage.



Preschool

Preschoolers have an attention span that is more developed than infants and toddlers. Most are ready for a more structured storytime and are more able to listen to longer books. Preschoolers often memorize words to a favorite book and can "read" the story out loud. They use the pictures as clues to help them remember the words. These are preschoolers' first step in learning to read, so give them lots of encouragement!

- Have a mix of narrative (fantasy) and informational (realistic) books available to read *to the children* and for children to *read to themselves*.
- Have stories about situations which preschoolers can relate or topics that are familiar.
- Look for ways to naturally make connections to the world around them and the books they read.



Reading Tips



Be Prepared: Read each book ahead of time so you are confident while reading it aloud. Practice the storytime activities beforehand so that you can decide which activities you would like to try, what material you would like to use, or if you need to modify anything.

Getting Children Ready to Listen: Finger plays, poems, and songs are a great way to start storytime. Singing can be effective in getting children to join the storytime area. This also helps to focus the children, introduce a topic, develop fine motor skills, increase vocabulary, learn new concepts, encourage language development and provide children a sense of empowerment.

Related Books: Reading related books to children can reinforce a particular topic. These can be narrative, informational, or a combination of both. Sharing various books about similar topics help children to make connections to their own lives, experiences, and the world around them.

Repeated Interactive Reading: Repeated interactive reading is the process in which children, through multiple readings, are actively listening and responding to the text. The most effective read alouds are ones in which children are actively engaged in the process. Children are provided the opportunity to develop an understanding through questioning, prediction, connection to personal experiences, and retelling the story. A stronger connection increases the potential to expand skills such as concepts of print, alphabet knowledge, and phonological awareness.

Make the Most of Reading Aloud: Storytimes with children can take many different forms: read with a whole group, a small group of children, or one-on-one with a child. When books are available throughout the learning environment, children are encouraged to read everywhere, every day! Be ready to read at a moment's notice, and never pass up an opportunity to share a book or story with your children!



Engaging Children in Storytime



- *Read with expression* — Let your voice, facial expressions, and body language reflect the tone of the story or the personalities of the characters. Don't read too fast. Vary your pace so you can pause for emphasis.
- *Build in time for listeners to respond along the way* — Allow time for children to study the pictures as you read, make comments, and ask questions about the story. Pause and let the children chime in, complete the phrase or tell the story.
- *Encourage predictions* — Ask children what they think will happen next. Help them confirm or revise these predictions as the story unfolds. Try to honor many ideas and interpretations, not just the "correct" ones. Use comments such as "That's one possibility, let's see what the author has in mind." or "Well that's an interesting idea. How did you think of that?"
- *Watch your audience* — Watch the children's expressions and body language and be sensitive to signs of boredom or confusion. You may need to change your reading plan, change the book, or do more preparation next time.
- *Save time at the end of the story to get reactions* — Ask open-ended questions that don't have right or wrong answers and that cannot be answered with a yes or no reply. Find out if the book made the children think of any personal experiences or other books they have heard or read.
- *Point out parts of the story you noticed or especially liked* — Show the children special language patterns or phrases or parts of the text that made you feel or visualize something. Ask children if there were other parts of the book they noticed.
- *Remember that for some children, listening to stories is a new experience*— Some children aren't used to being read to and will need to develop that interest and ability. Start with short, interesting stories with strong pictures. In some cases, allow active children to manipulate play dough or to draw while listening.
- *Encourage discussion about the story* — Ask the children questions about what's going on in the story (discuss the plot.) Be sure, though, not to turn the discussion into a quiz!
- *Most importantly* — Have a good time!

References



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