

# Toddler Reading Time

## What Are the Benefits of Reading to My Toddler?

Kids who hear a lot of language do better in school. And being read to is one of the best ways to hear language.

Reading to toddlers sets the foundation for later independent reading. Reading problems can be challenging to fix when discovered in elementary school. But many reading problems can be prevented if reading starts in the toddler and preschool years.

Before children can read by themselves, they need early literacy skills. These include:

- having a large vocabulary of words and knowing how to use them
- understanding that words are made up of smaller sounds (called phonemic awareness)
- understanding that marks on a page represent letters and words
- knowing the letters of the alphabet

You don't need games, flashcards, or special instructions for a toddler to learn these skills. Reading to kids as often as possible is the best way to help them learn to read by themselves.

## Helping Your Child's Move to Toddlerhood

Reading aloud is also an important way to help kids move from babyhood to toddlerhood. Between the ages of 1 and 3, toddlers have celebrations and challenges. So it can help for them to hear stories about other kids and how they faced their fears about what's under the bed or learned how to use the potty.

Kids make big leaps in vocabulary during this time, and learn about letters, shapes, colors, weather, animals, and seasons. This can be strengthened through books. Choose books with many pictures that your child can point to and name.

But while they're excited to learn about the world and experience it, your toddler also needs a strong connection with you. Reading together regularly can strengthen that connection, helping your toddler feel safe and comfortable.

## When and How Should I Read to My Toddler?

Reading to toddlers often (if possible, at least once a day) is a great goal. Choosing regular times to read (especially before naps and bedtime) helps kids learn to sit with a book and relax. But you can read anytime your child seems in the mood.

If your toddler will let you, hold them in your lap when you read. This helps your toddler feel safe, happy, and relaxed. It also shows you're giving your full attention as you show your child new things, and encourages your child to participate.

Toddlers like to do things on their own. Encourage this by putting out three or four books and asking your child to pick one. Praise your child's selection. Let your toddler help you turn pages, and ask for help as you find things on a page. Your child will love to finish sentences in books with familiar or repetitive phrasing or rhymes. When you come to a familiar or repetitive phrase or rhyme in a book, pause and let your child finish.

Here are some other reading tips:

- Read whatever books your toddler asks for, even if it's the same book every night for weeks and weeks (and weeks and weeks).
- Read slowly so your toddler can understand the story.
- Read expressively, using different voices for different characters, and raising or lowering your voice as appropriate.
- Choose sturdy board books or cloth books. You can let your child use these books without having to worry about pages getting ripped.
- Use puppets, finger plays (like the "Itsy Bitsy Spider"), or props while you read.
- Encourage your toddler to clap or sing when you read rhythmic, sing-song books.
- Talk about the pictures. Point to items and name them. Then ask your child to name them with you and praise them for their response.
- Ask open-ended questions: "Why do you think the lion is going into the woods? What do you think will happen next?" This helps your child to think about the story and to ask questions.
- Use your child's name as the name of a character in the book.
- Have fun! Show your child that reading is enjoyable.

## Sitting Still Is Not Required

Trying to read to a toddler who won't sit still can be frustrating. Be patient and keep trying. Find a book or a few pages that are interesting. If that doesn't work, don't force the reading but be sure to try again later. Remember that toddlers love repetition — if your child doesn't seem interested in books, you may need to find a favorite and read it over and over again.

Some busy toddlers like to stand up while you read to them. Others like to look at a page or two before moving on to something else. Keep the book out — kids might want to return to it later, which you should encourage.

It's OK if your child can't sit still for an entire book — toddlers' attention spans will get longer soon. You might want to keep reading even if your child moves around. Before bedtime, allow your child to touch and play with favorite toys while you read aloud. The sound of your voice will be a soothing reminder of the bedtime routine and that books are a part of it.

You may find that your child sits still while coloring or playing with a favorite toy while you read. Some kids might not look at you or the book, but that doesn't mean they're not interested or listening.

You want your child to have positive associations with reading. If you feel tense or your toddler resists, consider setting the book aside and returning to it later.

Reading to your toddler is only one way to build early literacy skills. You also can:

- Talk to your child throughout the day.
- Sing songs together, play rhyming games, and make up your own stories together.
- Provide paper and crayons so your child can practice writing.

Also, consider limits on screen time use, whether that's a TV or other electronic devices.

## What Should I Read to My Toddler?

Toddlers want to feel included and capable. So choose books they can follow along with, especially those with familiar or repetitive text so they can fill in words. Keep your toddler's interest by choosing books with small amounts of words on the page and books about topics that you know your child will like.

For younger toddlers (12–24 months):

- You'll want sturdy board books with pictures (especially photos) of kids doing the things they do every day. Books about bedtime, baths, or mealtime are all good choices; so are books about saying hello or goodbye. Keep active hands busy with lift-the-flap pages and textures to feel.

For older toddlers (24–36 months):

- Kids this age are starting to turn paper pages, so it's a good time to move beyond board books. Choose books that are repetitive and easy to memorize so that they can "read" along.

By now you will start to know what your toddler likes. Whether it's trains, unicorns, or stuffed bears, find books about these things. Kids this age also like books about children, families, and animals.

Toddlers love to look at homemade books, scrapbooks, or photo albums full of people they know (try adding simple captions). Poetry and songbooks are good choices for this age group too. You may find that storytime turns into sing-along time.

## Easy Ways to Keep Books Available

Toddlers love to choose and look at books on their own. Keep books in a basket on the floor or on a low shelf where your child can reach them and look at them by themselves. Keep some books in the car and always have a few handy in your bag for long waits at the doctor or lines at the grocery store.

Visit the library or the bookstore and let your child pick books to read at home. Many libraries and bookstores have toddler storytimes that kids enjoy. And let your child see you reading for fun. It's a great way to be your toddler's reading role model.

**Medically reviewed by:** Kandia N. Lewis, PhD

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Post Test – February 2025

**Please keep this test and certificate in your files for Licensing.  
You do not need to send it in to our office or the State.**

1. Reading to toddlers sets the foundation for \_\_\_\_\_ reading.
2. Before children can read by themselves, they need early literacy skills like knowing the letters of the alphabet.  
True or False?
3. It can help a child to hear stories about other kids and how they faced their fears about what's under the bed or learned to use the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Read \_\_\_\_\_, using different voices for different characters and raising or lowering your voice as appropriate.
5. Encourage your toddler to \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ when you read rhythmic, sing-song books.
6. It's a problem if your child can't sit still for an entire book, toddlers' attention spans will get longer soon.  
True or False?
7. You can build early \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ by singing songs together, playing rhyming games or make up your own stories together.
8. Books about bedtime, baths or \_\_\_\_\_ are all good choices; so are books about saying hello or goodbye.
9. Keep some books in the \_\_\_\_\_ and always have a few handy in your \_\_\_\_\_ for long waits at the doctor or lines at the grocery store.
10. Let your child see you reading for fun. It's a great way to be your toddler's reading \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_.

January 2025 Quiz Answers. 1.False 2.FDA 3.True 4.Ingredients  
5.Creditable 6.Sugar 7.False 8.Bran 9.Germ 10.Nutrition Facts



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Training Coordinator  
Southwest Human Development Services