

Tip Sheets

Infants and Toddlers: The Importance of Reading and Exploring Books



Reading aloud to infants and toddlers and engaging them in books by labeling pictures, commenting on the

pictures and text, and asking questions provides them with positive nurturing experiences that promote the understanding of oral language.

By being read aloud to on a regular basis, in the context of nurturing and supportive relationships, infants and toddlers are exposed to:

- Increased vocabulary
- Rhythms and patterns of speech
- Opportunities to develop creative and imaginative thinking

The American Academy of Pediatrics promotes reading aloud to infants and toddlers as a way to:

- Develop positive and supportive relationships
- Encourage language skill development
- Prepare them to become ready to read

Reading aloud to young children has also been shown to enhance the development of executive function skills such as the ability to focus attention and self-regulation.

Tips for Reading Aloud to Infants and Toddlers

- Hold the book close enough to the infant to enable the child to look intently at the pictures.
- Sit close enough to actively engage toddlers in the activity of reading and encourage questions and discussion.
- Repeat back comments made by the child.

- Direct the child's attention by saying "look at this..."
- Label and name objects and comment on characteristics. For example, you could say, "That is a ball. The ball is yellow."
- Relate to the child's experience by connecting a picture or part of a story back to the child's own life.
- Avoid overtly correcting a child. Instead, gently redirect the child. For example, if the child labels an orange as a ball say, "That looks like a ball because it is round. It is an orange."
- Provide positive feedback.
- Ask open-ended questions or questions that require the child to provide more than a yes/no answer.
- Gauge the length of time spent reading aloud on the child's engagement and interest level.
- Read books that are repetitive and predictable to allow children to participate in the reading.

Additional Resources

Zero to Three

<http://www.zerotothree.org>

For more information, visit www.inclusivechildcare.org.

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