



where great stories begin™

PARENTS' GUIDE

How to support your child's literacy development

The first year

- Babies love your gentle voice: sing and talk to him as often as possible.
- When your baby can sit on your lap, point at and name things in the pictures. You will see that she's listening and looking, moving her arms with excitement, and "talking." This is how babies learn.
- You are teaching your baby that sitting on your lap and being read to feels good and that books are fun.
- It's okay if your baby puts the book in her mouth! This is how babies explore and learn about their world.
- Older babies love picture books and especially books with rhymes.

12 to 18 months

- Ask **What's that?** and point to and name a picture. Use additional words to describe things, like *the red ball* or bigger words such as *the gigantic cloud*.
- Once babies start to walk, they will want to move around during a story. Some might want to stand and look at the book you are holding. That's OK!
- Read stories every day, but let your child help decide how long you read.
- When your child grabs the book, he's not being bad. He's practicing!

18 to 36 months

- Stories help your toddler increase his attention span. If he listens for five minutes, that's a long time. As he grows, he will sit longer.
- You don't have to read all the words on a page. You can talk about the pictures – or make up a story about what's happening.
- Children learn by watching you. Does she see **you** read? Does she ever read to her teddy bears or dolls?
- Children learn to read – and learn new words – by hearing the same story over and over. It might become boring to you, yet it isn't to him. Toddlers enjoy repetition, and the growing brain needs it!

3 years and up

- Talk about the pictures and the story. Ask **who**, **what** and **where** questions. Remember to give your child time to answer!
- Your child might want to tell **you** a story. Every time she retells a favorite story, or changes the story, she is practicing using language.
- Scribbling and pretend writing is the first step toward real writing. Does he ever pretend to write? Do you ever show him the letters in his name?
- Books open up the world to a child. **Do you have a library card?** Note your preschooler's interests and let her help choose which books to take home from the library.

Reading aloud and talking together *every day* creates secure relationships and a strong foundation for learning.

Books should be part of every family's naptime, playtime, and bedtime routines!