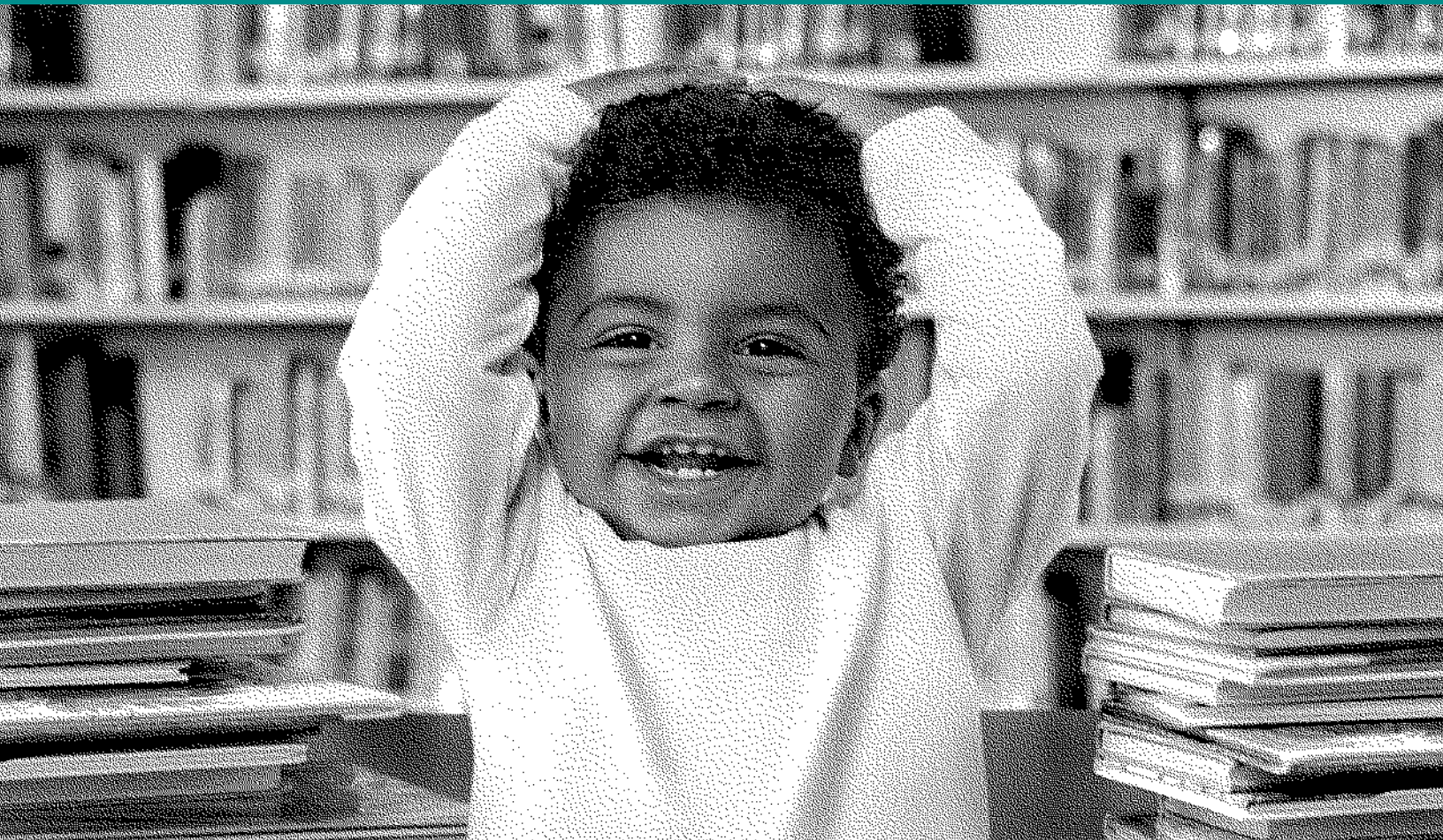


# The First Chapter

SHARING BOOKS AND ACTIVITIES  
DURING THE FIRST FOUR YEARS



# Introduction

## What Is a Story Sampler?

A Story Sampler makes books come alive for children. It is a book-based thematic approach to reading designed to engage children in the book experience. In the years before a child knows how to read, it is important to build the foundation for lifelong reading. This Story Sampler will open up the world of literacy with book suggestions and activities to entertain, captivate, and charm you and your child.

## Why Read to a Baby?

Listening happens long before speaking, reading, or writing, but it is an important building block in children's literacy development. A family that dedicates time to reading to their baby is laying a solid foundation for that child to become a lifelong lover of reading. Studies show that a child who is read to regularly is better prepared for reading and performs better in school—no matter what their home circumstances may be.

Rosemary Wells, award-winning children's book author, said in her speech, *Children at Risk*:

*The child who sits in a reader's lap is more privileged than a child who is given fancy computer games, state-of-the-art sports equipment, or designer clothes.*

*This child can be poor. He can live in the meanest streets of a huge city or a house trailer in the far reaches of the rural hills. But if his father reads to him quietly half an hour a day, this boy is not at risk. He is blessed and will grow up smart and strong.*

Reading is a skill built with practice and develops in stages. No matter how many times a person physically picks up a book, she will not learn how to read it unless someone interacts with the pages and shares the joy within. Furthermore, when a parent interacts regularly with her child and pays attention to the child's literacy development, she is more attuned to delays and potential causes for intervention or advice from a professional. (The Ideas and Information section at the back of the Sampler provides some websites to find more information if developmental delays are a concern.)

## Why Have a Story Sampler for Pre-Readers?

During the first four years of a child's life, development occurs at lightning speed. Physical, mental, and emotional growth changes every few months. Children's interests change as well. How do you, as a parent, keep up with these changing phases and know how to meet each new challenge with developmentally appropriate books and activities?

Furthermore, how does one navigate the sea of bookstores and libraries to know which books will be appropriate and liked by a little one who can't choose for himself? This Story Sampler acts as a road map for five main developmental stages. It provides ideas that will help you engage in daily literacy-rich activities, as well as some sample book titles that will meet the preferences of children of various ages.

Most of the books suggested in this Sampler are the hard, durable cardboard books that are published for small babies. There are also some suggested titles in waterproof vinyl versions, or soft, snuggly cloth versions. Remember that teething and mouth exploration are a part of discovery and these books are made to take a beating.

As your child moves on to new books, don't get rid of old favorites. Keep them on the shelf for your child to pick up later for mastery and confidence-building.

## What's Inside a Story Sampler?

This sampling of titles and activities is not meant to teach your child how to read, but to increase the pleasure of reading through trust, attachment, and bonding. Each section provides:

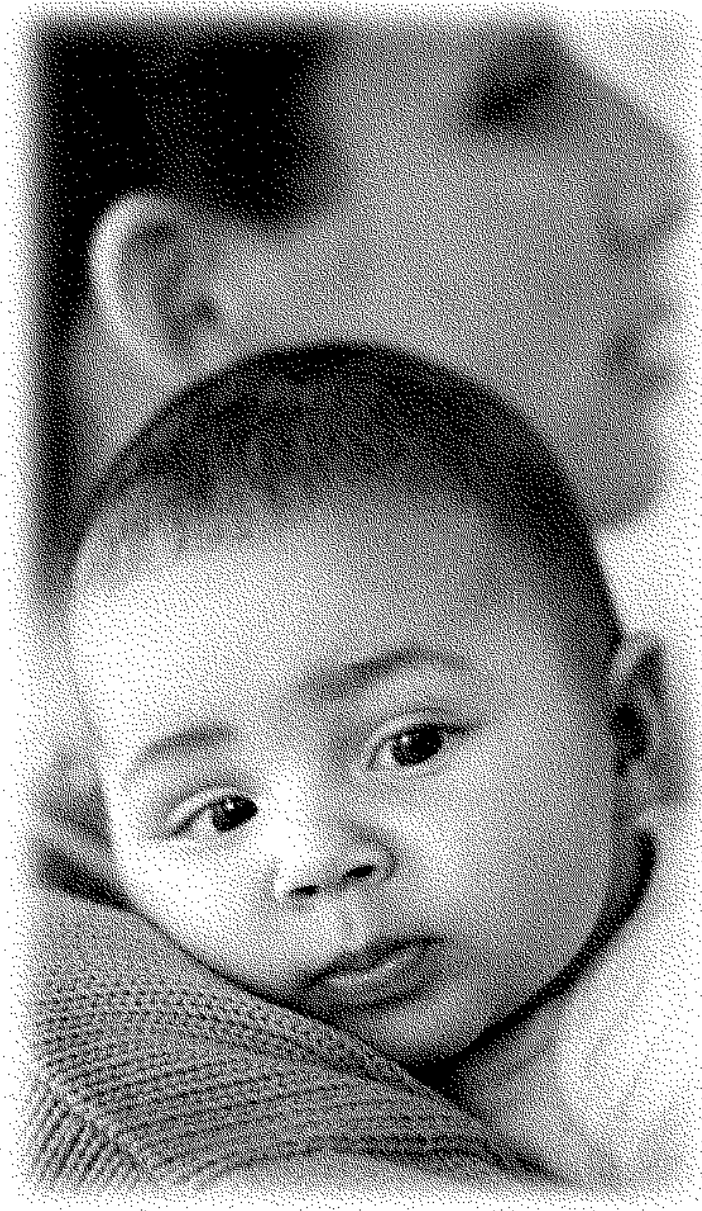
- A description of each developmental stage.
- Ideas about how to nurture literacy within the family and when you are out and about.
- Annotated booklists divided into key genres of books that will appeal to each age.
- Activity ideas to match book titles and developmental achievements for each age.

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## Infants 0-6 Months



### New Experiences

It is hard to imagine the capacity of a newborn's brain when you gaze upon that tiny face, but in these first few months, essential connections are constantly growing in your baby's brain. Reading together regularly will strengthen bonds as well as provide the foundation for listening skills and language. Since eyesight takes time to develop, your infant listens for your familiar voice and feels comforted. She is working to strengthen muscles to lift and turn her head, to grab things, and to become mobile. She is a true inspector of the world. She perceives everything through all of her senses: touch, hearing, sight, taste, and smell.

### Family Interactions

- A happy baby is one who knows that you will be there to meet his needs when they arise. This is the time to set and respect routines—including a regular reading routine.
- When sharing a book, watch how your child reacts to the pictures; try to follow where her eyes are looking. If your child is more interested in other things beyond the pages, she is sending the cue that she is finished reading. Move to something else and return to the book when possible.
- Match pictures in books with their real life counterparts. Allow your child to touch, smell, hear, and when appropriate, taste the item.
- Read the books that you enjoy aloud. Regardless of topic, your voice will be the highlight and you will finally have time to read that novel you have been wanting to get to. There is no better incentive to reading than a parent who enjoys it and takes time to read herself.

### Out and About

- Even moving to another room is an adventure for your baby. Remember that while your baby may not be mobile yet, new views offer stimulation. Try putting a pillow under your baby's arms while she is lying on her stomach, or sit behind her so she can sit up. Place toys and colorful objects around to inspire her to reach for them.
- Outings can be unpredictable so always plan ahead. Remember to bring a set of diapers, clothes, sensory toys, small books, and mealtime supplies.
- Everything is new to your baby in these first few months. Describe what you see and offer opportunities to see things up close, to hear them, or to feel them.

## High Contrast Books With Easy-To-See Pictures

### **Black on White** by Tana Hoban

Simple black illustrations on a white background offer opportunities to talk about objects in your baby's world.

### **Baby Animals Black and White** by Phyllis Limbacher Tildes

Cute baby animal illustrations in black and white will engage your young infant.

### **Look Look!** by Peter Linenthal

More black-and-white illustrations provide simple phrases in red to describe the picture.

### **What Is That?** by Tana Hoban

Featuring familiar objects in white on black, this book provides visuals that even the youngest infant can see and recognize.

### **Funny Faces** by Todd Parr

Happy, sad, and silly faces drawn in bright colors and outlined with bold black lines will attract developing eyes. Use this book to make faces with your baby and watch as she tries to copy.

## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Contrasting shapes.** Cut out snowflakes and put them on black paper, trace familiar objects on black paper, or find interesting patterned wrapping paper to place at eye level by your child's crib or changing table. Move the images after a few weeks to a new location at eye level and watch your baby try to find them.

**Snazzy socks.** Your baby is developing eyesight and mobile skills. Simple patterned socks can be fascinating to young eyes and will help them track movement. Look for patterned socks for you and your baby. Black and white or brightly colored socks will inspire your baby to work at grabbing his feet.

**Motivating mobiles.** Make a simple homemade mobile using plastic containers, toilet paper tubes, or boxes. Draw or cut out three to four geometric patterns such as checkerboards, zigzags, swirls, triangles, etc. Then glue the design inside the container, box, or tube. Punch holes in the objects and use yarn to tie them to a plastic hanger at varying lengths.

## Stories To Snuggle Up With

### **Time for Bed** by Mem Fox

Slow rhythmic text follows mother animals and their babies as they try to put them to sleep.

### **Goodnight Moon** by Margaret Wise Brown

Little rabbit tries to delay bedtime by wishing good night to everything around him in this classic bedtime story.

### **It's a Wonderful World** by Ashley Bryan

A favorite song is matched with beautiful illustrations.

### **I Love You as Much...** by Laura Krauss Melmed

A perfect book to share and bond with your baby; in poetic verse, mothers describe their love for their babies.

### **I Love You Through and Through**

by Bernadette Rossetti Shustak

This book describes parents' unconditional love for their children.

### **Pretty Brown Face** by Andrea Davis Pinkney

When a father wakes up his child, he describes all the reasons why his baby's face is special.

## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Time to talk.** Take advantage of these quiet moments in the first few months and talk to your baby. Turn your baby so that you can look at his face. It doesn't matter at this age what you talk about; what does matter is the sound of your voice and the ability for your baby to watch your face. If your baby chimes in with a coo or a noise, respond as if he were adding to the conversation.

**Mimicking mom and dad.** From a very early age your baby is programmed to mimic the people in her life. Position your baby so you can see her, move your mouth slowly into a position like an "O" or stick out your tongue. Watch to see if she tries to repeat the action. Later, add more complex and silly faces, such as puffing out your cheeks or puckering your lips.

**Animal antics.** Use stuffed animals to get your baby's attention. Move the animal around and have it talk in a funny voice. Alter your voice from high to low and watch how your baby responds.





## Rhythmic Sounds and Repetition

**My Very First Mother Goose** by Iona Opie  
Mother Goose stories provide a great foundation for learning language.

**Sylvia Long's Mother Goose Block Books** by Sylvia Long  
16 favorite nursery rhymes are designed into tiny individual board books that can be read, held, and chewed.

**Animal Crackers** by Jane Dyer  
Poems, rhymes, and lullabies are divided into categories to help parents add a little poetry into their daily activities.

**Arrorró Mi Niño: Latino Lullabies and Gentle Games** by Lulu Delacre  
15 bilingual rhymes from Latin America share the many ways a child is nurtured by loved ones.

**Te Amo, Bebé, Little One** by Lisa Wheeler  
Rhythmic verse sprinkled with Spanish captures the first year between a mother and a baby.

## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Sharing songs.** Were there songs that your mother, father, or grandparents sang to you as a child? Whether it is a traditional, folk, or rock song, you will both enjoy sharing these songs together—even if you are not the best singer (remember, your baby loves your voice best). If you are having trouble remembering the lyrics, the books on this page, as well as *Where Is Thumbkin?* by Pam Schiller and Thomas Moore, or *De Colores and Other Latin American Folksongs for Children* by Jose-Luis Orozco, can provide some classic songs. Or you can search for lyrics on the Internet.

**Bounce to the beat.** A swaying movement comforts a baby and works easily with the rhythmic text of nursery rhymes and poems.

**Rhyme on a dime.** Make up your own rhymes. Talk about what you are doing throughout the day and try creating your own rhyming patterns.

## Books To Interact With

**I Kissed the Baby!** by Mary Murphy  
Black and white pictures touched with splashes of bright color will be easy for young babies to see. Read this book with expression and take time for tickles and kisses.

**This Is the Way We Take a Bath** by Ken Wilson-Max  
Sing your way through the bath with this sing-song book.

**Row, Row, Row Your Boat** by Annie Kubler  
This familiar rhyme becomes a book that inspires play. Sing the verses and “row” those little arms and legs to the rhythm.

**Counting Kisses** by Karen Katz  
Babies will delight in the kissing countdown to bedtime. From 10 kisses on 10 toes to the final kiss on her head, this book inspires lots of love and kissing.

**What Shall We Do with the Boo Hoo Baby?** by Cressida Cowell  
When baby starts to cry, every parent ponders how to help him stop. In this case, cow, cat, dog, and duck try to soothe the baby.

**Show Me!** by Tom Tracy  
Simple text invites parents to nuzzle, snuggle, and kiss their babies.

## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Building muscles.** Help your baby exercise and develop motor skills. Move arms up and down while singing; help him kick high and low by holding a pillow by his feet; and show him how to splash water or hit a drum.

**New noises.** Language is fascinating to your baby and he will quickly adapt to the traditional tempo and sounds of your home language. Try new noises with your baby by popping your lips, whistling, rolling r's, or blowing air through your lips. Watch as your baby concentrates on your mouth and tries to figure it out.



**Peek-a-boo.** At this age, out of sight is out of mind; when something is no longer in their view, they quickly forget it was there. Playing peek-a-boo simply by covering and uncovering your face is a delight when they see your loving, smiling face.



## Small Durable Books To Hold On To and Chew

### **Fuzzy Bee and Friends** by Roger Priddy

Fuzzy Bee is joined by his other textured bug friends for touching and chewing in this cloth book.

### **Flower in the Garden** by Lucy Cousins

Simple, bold illustrations of garden items grace the pages of this cloth book.

### **Are You my Mother?** by P.D. Eastman

This cloth version of the classic tale of a little bird in search of its mother caters to the youngest audience. The little bird can move from pocket to pocket, but be sure to cut the ribbon that attaches it to the book.

### **Rattle Cloth Book Colors** by Roger Priddy

This simple cloth book on colors becomes even more fun when it is joined to a rattle.

### **One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish** by Dr. Seuss

An old favorite is reformed for the youngest of babies. This vinyl book can be taken anywhere, even in the bathtub.

### **Spot Goes Splash!** by Eric Hill

This vinyl version of the Spot book combines a familiar character with bold colors and lots of puddles to splash in.

## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Rousing rattles.** Fill plastic bottles, jars, tennis ball canisters, or metal containers with lids with different items ranging from uncooked rice, dried beans, pennies, or any other small objects. Secure the lids with tape or glue. Shake the items around your baby to attract his attention and to get him to move around. However, if your little one can grab items, it is best to use child-safe rattles he can chew on.

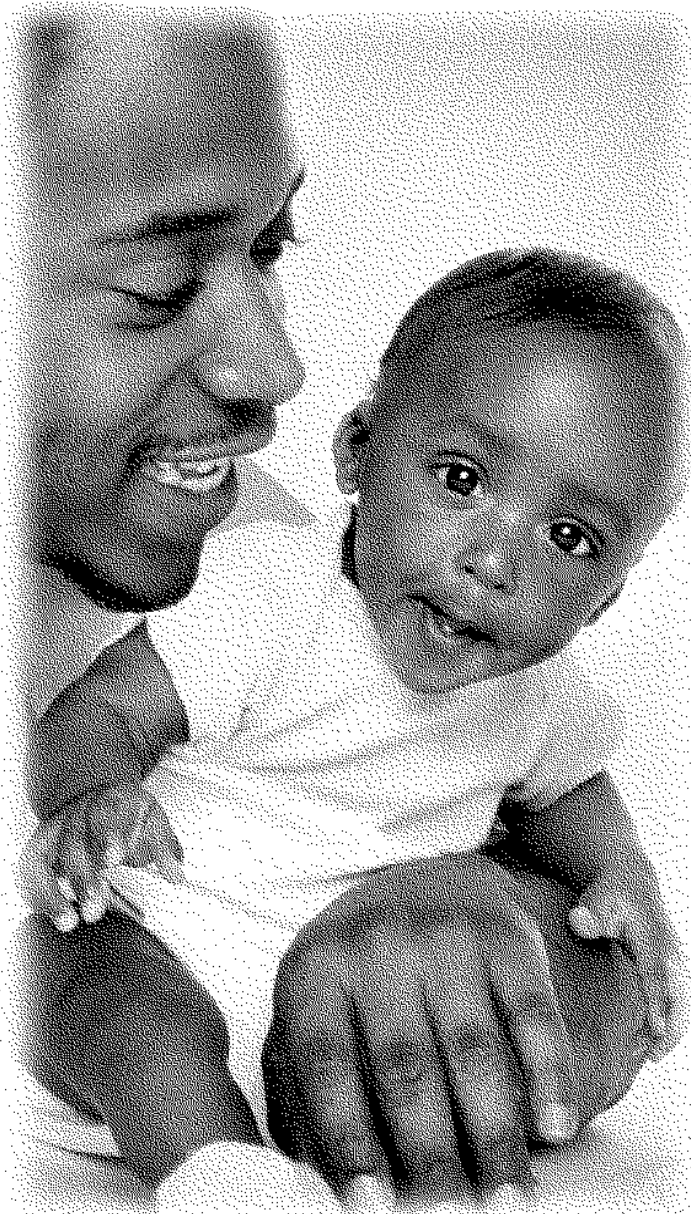
**Water wonders.** Water offers fascinating experiences before your baby can even play. While bathing, pour warm water on your baby using different containers: a watering can, a cup, or a plastic milk jug with holes punched in the bottom will offer new tactile experiences.

**Touching textures.** Gather a box of textured objects like fabric, sand paper, pinecones, leaves, or feathers. Describe the object and gently place it in your baby's hand. When baby is able to grasp, switch to items that are safe for mouths and are choke-proof.

**Following flashlights.** Grab a flashlight and turn out the lights, snuggling close with your baby. Turn on the flashlight and focus it on a nearby object. Wait until it attracts your baby's attention, then move the flashlight slowly to another location. Talk about what you see.



## Infants 6–12 Months



### New Experiences

Your baby's personality is really emerging as he begins to express emotions and parental attachment. He is curious about everything and his newfound mobility offers new opportunities for exploration. Also, all of that grabbing and turning pages will help him develop key muscles for writing.

### Family Interactions

- Now that your child is becoming more mobile, her curiosity will lead her to discover new things. Let her direct the playtime and stick with things as long as she remains interested. Be very attentive to your surroundings and keeping your little one safe.
- Your baby's motor skills are advanced enough that you might want to consider using sign language for items in your baby's world. At this age, your baby often knows exactly what he wants or needs, but does not have the ability to tell you. Sign language offers that opportunity to communicate earlier with your child and does not delay verbal language development. The website [www.signingbaby.com/why.html](http://www.signingbaby.com/why.html) offers information and access to products and online dictionaries to get you started.
- Is reading to your little one getting harder? She will immediately be curious about what you are looking at and may grab at the book. In these times, it is best to have a couple of books on hand—one to read and one for her to hold. Don't worry about reading the complete story; that time will come soon enough.

### Out and About

- When you go out, be on the lookout for things your baby knows as well as new things you can introduce. Get down on his level and point to the object. Tell your baby what it is, describe it, and then link it to something personal. For example, "Look, Austin, there is a truck. That is a very big, red truck. Pop has a big truck too, doesn't he? But his is black, not red."
- Keep your little explorer occupied or he might find some thing inappropriate to play with. Fill your bag with surprises within surprises: put small toys inside clean socks, fill an old picture holder with magazine photos, or place small boxes inside larger ones. By creating small challenges and rewards, your baby will be exploring and occupied for a longer period of time. And of course, don't forget to pack plenty of books.
- Encourage further discovery by collecting small treasures while you are out, such as flowers, leaves, or even insects. Talk to your baby about what you have found and describe its qualities.

## Pictures of Babies or Familiar Objects

**To Be a Kid** by May Ajmera

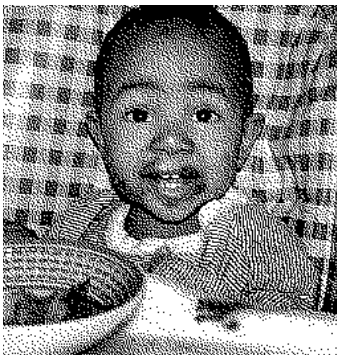
Full color photos of little ones take readers on a voyage around the world.

**Happy Baby: Words** by Roger Priddy

Grouping photos of babies with photos of familiar objects will entrance little ones.

**Wow! Babies** by Penny Gentieu

Babies dressed in colorful diapers are pictured demonstrating two-word emotions and activities.



**Baby Faces: Eat!**

by Roberta Grobel Intrater

Big pictures of baby faces messily eating will engage and stimulate your baby.

**Baby Faces**

by Margaret Miller

Large photographs fill the page with expressive baby faces.

## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Mirror fun.** Your baby is fascinated by pictures of real babies and by his own face as well. Stand in front of a mirror with your baby and point out his body parts and yours. Eventually, your baby will be able to point to his own nose and yours, too.

**Cloth capers.** Babies are beginning to remember objects even if they can't see them. Take a stuffed animal or doll and cover it with a cloth. Ask your baby, "Where did it go?" Your baby may need some help understanding that it is under the blanket. Lift up the blanket and exclaim, "There it is!" and try again. Eventually, your baby will pull off the cloth herself.

**Familiar faces, cozy places.** Create a soft photo collage to tie inside your baby's crib. Print photos of family members onto special iron-on paper found in office supply and craft stores. Arrange the pictures onto a pillowcase or t-shirt and iron them onto the material. Tie the collage securely inside the crib or attach it to the wall at eye level. Your baby will love having the friendly faces of those she loves nearby when she goes to sleep or wakes up.

## Naming and Labeling Items in Their World

**Toes, Ears & Nose!** by Marion Dane Bauer

Baby is bundled in a mountain of clothes! Peek under the flaps of clothing to find out what's underneath.

**Hand, Hand, Fingers, Thumb** by Al Perkins

A reworked board book version of the classic Dr. Seuss book that offers a fun opportunity to name body parts to a peppy beat.

**Buenos Dias Baby!** by Libby Ellis

Simple illustrations are matched with their English and Spanish words.

**My Big Animal Book** by Roger Priddy

Full color photographs will fascinate little ones as they learn the names of items in their world.

**Simms Taback's Big Book of Words** by Simms Taback

This extensive book of words offers simple illustrations of many items in a child's world. Introduce a few pages at a time and keep it handy as your child grows.

## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Explorer chips.** Turn juice can lids into explorer chips. Glue pictures, pieces of fabric, or sandpaper to the lids (make sure there are no sharp edges). Put them in a box to carry with you to talk about and link with real world objects.

**Egg-citing cartons.** Glue tiny pictures of familiar objects to the inside of an egg carton. Fill the egg cups with pieces of cloth or dry finger foods and watch as your baby reacts when he finds the picture at the bottom.

**Baggie books.** Baggie books are great ways to create inexpensive, personal books for your baby. Take four to five resealable sandwich bags and measure four to five pieces of cardboard to fit within the bags. Decorate both sides of each cardboard sheet with photos, collages, or simple words. Arrange the pages in the desired order and then punch two to three holes through the pages. Secure the pages with yarn or plastic rings.



## Safety and Security

### **Owl Babies** by Martin Waddell

When mama owl flies off to find food, her babies worry about whether she will come back.

### **Papa, Do You Love Me?** by Barbara M. Josse

This tale shares the endless lengths that a father will go to protect and care for his child among the dangers of the Serengeti desert.

### **I Love You, Stinky Face** by Lisa McCourt

No matter how bad or scary or stinky her little one, a mother assures him that she will love him no matter what.

### **The Runaway Bunny** by Margaret Wise Brown

When baby bunny threatens to run away, mother rabbit finds ways to always be close in this classic and timeless book.

### **I Love My Daddy** by Sebastien Braun

Beautiful illustrations share the gentle tale of a bear and his cub.

## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Sleepy songs.** Share soft familiar songs with your baby as you get ready for bed as a signal that it is time to settle in.

**Loving words.** Talk about the triumphs and challenges of the day. Snuggle him and tell him how much you love him.

**Sense of security.** Emotions, like fear and anxiety, start to come out in your little one. It is important to reassure and offer praise at this time. Tell your baby when you are going out and when you will return. You will notice your baby will also look to you for acknowledgement and praise. By getting excited about the new things your baby tries, she will have more confidence to take risks and try new things. Routines are also very important at this age; predictability creates a sense of security.

## Interactive Pages To Touch and Play

### **Peek-A-Who?** by Nina Laden

This die cut book is full of rhymes and surprises.

### **Where is Baby's Belly Button?** by Karen Katz

Keep the tape close at hand. This interactive book shows various body parts.

### **Whose Nose?** by Jeannette Rowe

Infants and toddlers can discover noses throughout the animal world.



### **Animal Kisses**

by Barney Saltzberg  
Animals with fuzzy, sticky, and rubbery mouths provide interactive enjoyment.

### **Pat the Bunny**

by Dorothy Kunhardt  
This classic allows children to experience the book tactilely.

### **Fuzzy Yellow Ducklings** by Matthew Van Fleet

Fuzzy ducklings and bumpy toads delight new explorers in this touchable, fold-out book that explores textures, colors, shapes, and animals.

## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Nesting cups.** Stores sell nesting cups, but you can make your own by looking around the house. Collect laundry bottle caps, cooking spray container lids, or plastic containers (be sure that none of them fit into a mouth and could be choked on). Set these out and watch your baby arrange them and play with them.

**"I Spy" bottles.** Clear plastic bottles can be transformed into fascinating entertainment for your baby by making "I Spy" bottles. Take an empty water bottle, remove the label, wash, and dry it completely. Fill the bottle halfway with salt and whatever odds and ends you can find, such as colored paperclips, beads, buttons, plastic animals, or erasers. Glue on the lid and watch as it changes when you turn it upside down. Or fill the bottle with equal parts water and vegetable oil, and add a few drops of food coloring before gluing on the lid. The water and the oil won't mix and will captivate your little explorer.

**Discovery box.** Tear strips of magazine pages, tissue paper, different textured materials, bubble wrap, and plastic cellophane and put them inside an empty tissue box. Your baby will enjoy discovering the different textures and look inside for more. If your baby is still doing a lot of mouth exploration, fill the discovery box with odds and ends that cannot be chewed or swallowed, such as alphabet letters or larger swatches of fabrics.

## Inspire Activity and Movement

### **Pots and Pans** by Patricia Hubbell

A sing-song rhyming text that demands a little clanging of your own.

### **Clap Hands** by Helen Oxenbury

Sweet illustrations and simple text inspire a baby to work on coordination skills.

### **Baby Danced the Polka** by Karen Beaumont

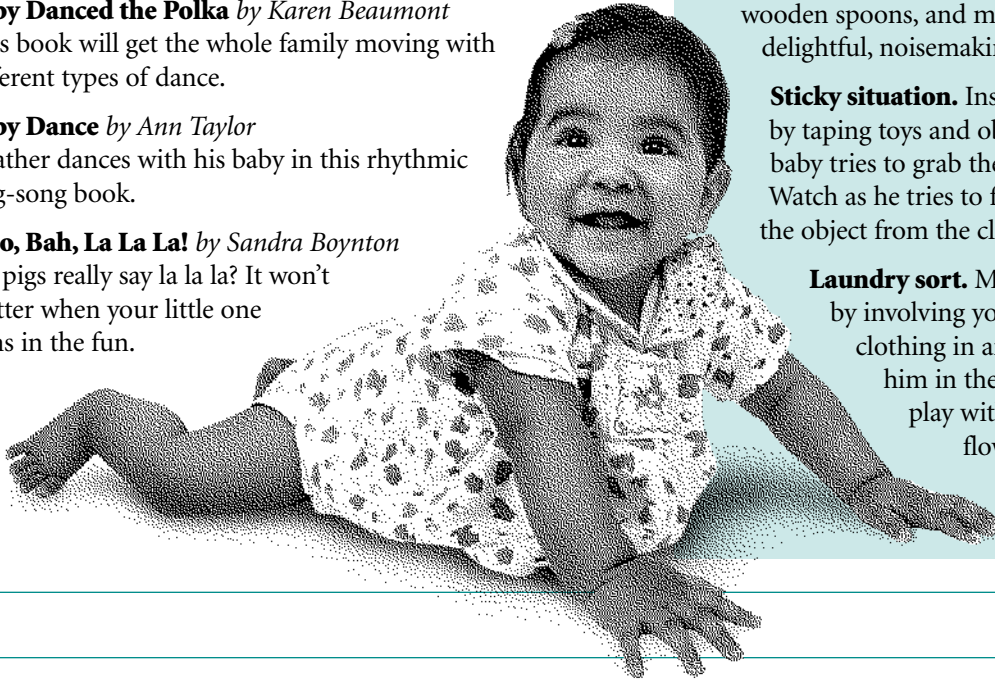
This book will get the whole family moving with different types of dance.

### **Baby Dance** by Ann Taylor

A father dances with his baby in this rhythmic sing-song book.

### **Moo, Bah, La La La!** by Sandra Boynton

Do pigs really say la la la? It won't matter when your little one joins in the fun.



## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Making a ruckus.** Have fun making a ruckus by clapping, playing pat-a-cake, banging on the table, or stomping. It is great fun for a little one and will help develop motor skills.

**Cabinet raid.** Set aside a safe drawer or cabinet that your baby can raid while you are in the kitchen. Your baby will love emptying out the cabinet and playing with its contents. Pots and pans, plastic containers, wooden spoons, and measuring cups offer tons of delightful, noisemaking fun.

**Sticky situation.** Inspire problem-solving skills by taping toys and objects to a cloth. When your baby tries to grab the object, it will not come off. Watch as he tries to figure out how to separate the object from the cloth.

**Laundry sort.** Make laundry day more fun by involving your baby. Let your baby take clothing in and out of the basket. Set him in the middle of the sheets and play with the edges to allow air to flow underneath. Or play peek-a-boo with the various items of clothing.

## Rhythmic Sounds and Repetition

### **Read-Aloud Rhymes for the Very Young** by Jack Prelutsky

A treasure of rhythmic treats to share with your baby.

### **Me Baby, You Baby** by Ashley Wolff

Two mothers take their babies out for the day in this soothing, rhythmic text.

### **Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?**

by Bill Martin, Jr.

Repetitive text with colored animals will encourage your child to say the text along with you.

### **Is Your Mama a Llama?** by Deborah Guarino

Rhyming descriptions of animal mothers help a baby llama learn about other animal families.

### **The Itsy-Bitsy Spider** by Rosemary Wells

This book will inspire the song and the familiar hand motions that go along with it.

## BOOK BOOSTERS

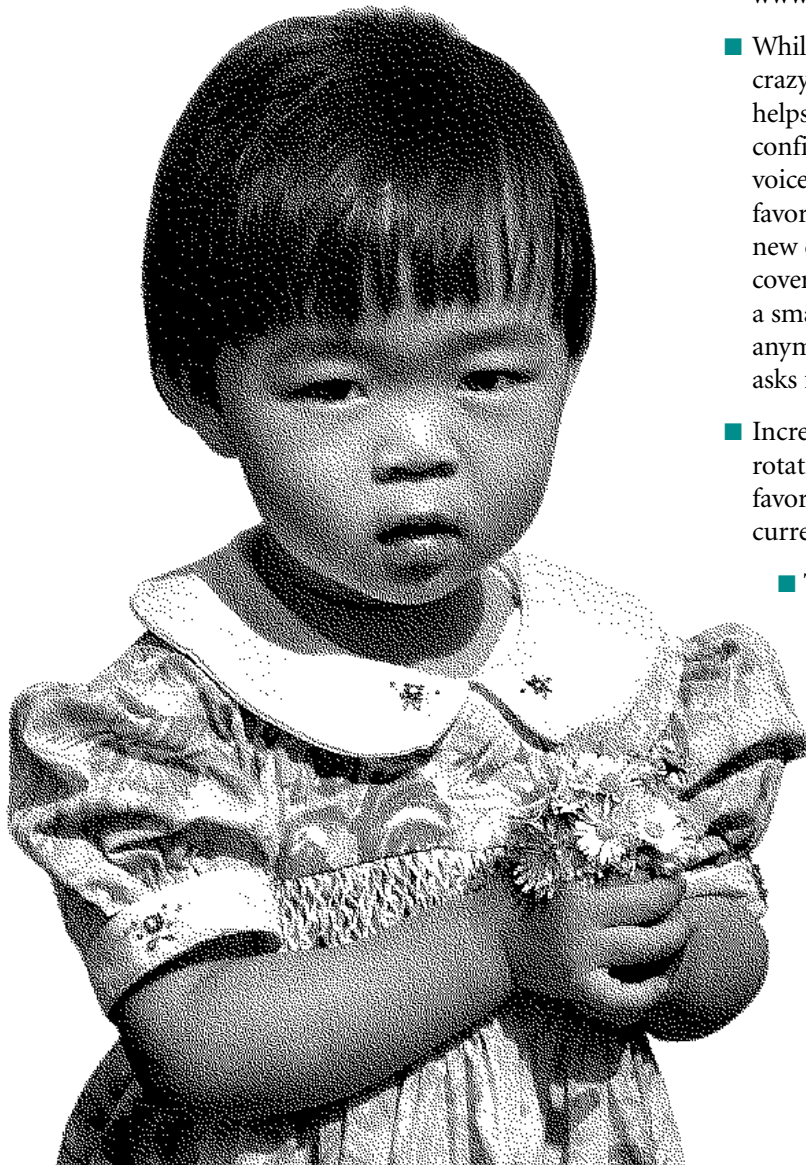
**Pinching pasta.** Help develop finger coordination by sharing some cold cooked spaghetti noodles with your child. Instead of putting them in a bowl, put them directly on the clean surface of her high chair tray.

**Box bonanza.** This is definitely a time when the box may be more interesting than the gift inside. Fill some boxes with toys or interesting objects and keep others empty. Your child will enjoy looking inside and may start playing with the box or sorting the objects inside.

**Popsicle puppets.** Cut out magazine photos (or draw your own), glue them to small pieces of cardboard, and then tape them to Popsicle sticks. As you recite or read the rhyme, move the puppets along with the rhyme. When your baby is old enough, let him hold the puppets or practice lining them up.



## Young Toddlers 12-24 Months



### New Experiences

Your young toddler craves repetition. She knows what she wants and doesn't want and may be too restless to sit still for a whole story. Reading time will be more successful when she is in her high chair or working on something else. At bedtime, let your toddler choose her favorite books even if you have read them over and over again. By now, she is able to turn pages and you might find her looking at books on her own and chattering to the pictures. Knowing and predicting the story makes her feel confident and will help her greet new books more easily in the future.

### Family Interactions

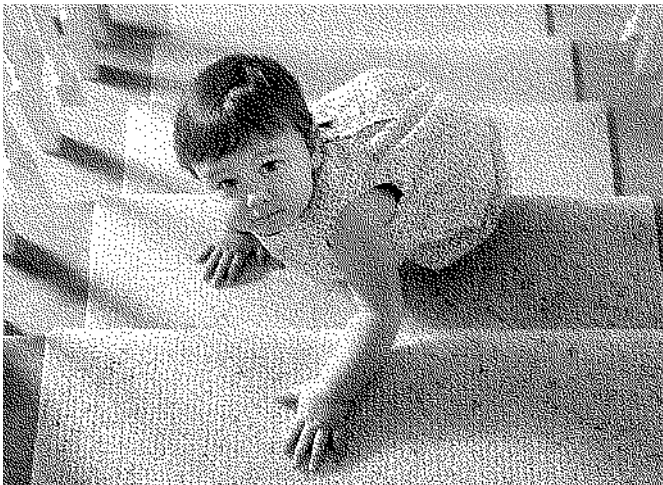
- Do you remember doing the hand motions for the *Itsy, Bitsy Spider* or *Where is Thumbkin*? These are called finger plays. While they are fun, they are also very good at developing the fine motor skills that will be important for writing later. Samples of finger plays can be found in the book *The Eentsy, Weensy Spider: Fingerplays and Action Rhymes* by Joanna Cole or on the website at: [www.nncc.org/Curriculum/fingerplay.html](http://www.nncc.org/Curriculum/fingerplay.html).
- While it may feel like your toddler is trying to drive you crazy by repeatedly asking for the same book, repetition helps him master tasks, understand meaning, and build confidence. Mix things up by reading books in different voices or in new spaces, or have a faraway relative read a favorite story on tape. It is also important to encourage new discoveries. After reading a favorite book, share the cover of a new one, but only look at the cover and perhaps a small peek inside. Tell your toddler that he can't see anymore of it until tomorrow. Then see if your toddler asks for that one as well.
- Increase the impact of your toddler's toys by periodically rotating them. Your toddler will be delighted to see old favorites return and will work hard to master those that are currently available to him.
- Toddlers are always on the go and it may seem impossible to get them to sit still for a story. Don't stop reading just because they can't sit still; instead invite them to sit down with you, and read the story aloud. If they get up in the middle, you may stop or keep reading. While they are working on feeding themselves, feed their brain too with a little high chair reading. This is also true of the time they are in the car seat or still awake in their crib.

## Out and About

- Your child is working hard to learn the vocabulary of his world in preparation for speaking, and repetition will help those words jell. Increase access to more words by bringing a “discovery pouch” to collect things on your outings. The pouch can be made by sewing together pieces of an old t-shirt or recycling an old purse or even a plastic soap dish. When you return home, take out your discoveries and talk about your day.
- Take along books that have similar stories or objects to go with your outing. Use the book to reinforce the things you see while you are out and about. At the grocery store, bring along a book with different food items, point to the fruit and vegetables or the pictures on boxes and cans to go with the pictures you find in the pages.

- How is it that even the most familiar faces suddenly send your little guy straight to mom or dad? At this age, you may notice that your child is starting to show preference for one individual and apprehension toward others, even beloved family members. One way to inspire your little toddler to want to interact with other people is to have them ignore your baby initially. Give the adult a favorite book or toy to read or play with near the baby. His innate curiosity will help him warm up and want to interact.
- Keep little fingers busy by making an interactive bag. Take an old pair of children’s jeans and cut off the legs. Add Velcro, snaps, buttons and ties to the four pockets. Decorate the jeans with decals, ribbon, fabric markers or patches. Then place little treats inside each of the pockets to inspire your toddler to work at zipping and buttoning which helps with problem-solving and fine motor skills.

## Pictures of Children Doing Familiar Things



### **No, David!** by David Shannon

David can’t seem to stay out of trouble. Toddlers will delight in hearing about David’s troubles instead of their own.

### **Please, Baby, Please** by Spike Lee

A toddler keeps her parents on the run with her mischief.

### **This Is the Baby** by Candace Fleming

Mother and child struggle to get dressed in this repetitive story.

### **Tom and Pippo Go for a Walk** by Helen Oxenbury

Tom brings his favorite stuffed monkey with him on an afternoon walk.

### **The Snowy Day** by Ezra Jack Keats

A young boy delights in the freshly fallen snow.

## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Making marks.** Teach your child how to express his artistic side in the appropriate place. Tape a dark border around a piece of paper and attach it to an easel. Explain that colors go on the inside of the border. You may also designate a special “art spot” and hang a clothesline with clothespins to hang masterpieces. Ask your child to choose a favorite from each session to hang. (Rotate out older pieces when the line is full.) Don’t forget to keep a few to reminisce about these first forays into writing.

**Personalized puzzles.** Puzzles are a good way to help your hard worker master tasks. Puzzles can take many forms. An old shoe box can become a three-dimensional puzzle. Trace common household items like toilet paper tubes, cookie cutters, or measuring cups onto the lid of a shoe box, cut out the shapes, and replace the lid on the box. Have your toddler try fitting the items into the cut holes. Or glue a picture onto a piece of cardboard and cut the cardboard into four to five pieces. When your child masters these puzzles, make new ones with more pieces.

**Explaining expectations.** You might notice that your toddler is acting defiant and testing you. It is important to make decisions about what behaviors are acceptable. Use books or examples in real life to reinforce your message. Reenact the bad behavior you have witnessed or read about it together with a stuffed animal. Pretend the animal was behaving badly and explain the punishment for that behavior. Tell the stuffed animal what a better choice would have been.



## Goodnight Books for Bedtime

**How Do Dinosaurs Say Good Night?** by Jane Yolen

Your child will giggle when he sees dinosaurs trying hard to thwart their bedtimes.

**Snug in Mama's Arms** by Angela Shelf Medearis

A mother tells her child in lilting rhyme about how parents in the animal kingdom put their animals to sleep.

**Polar Bear Night** by Lauren Thompson

When little bear has trouble sleeping, he goes for a moonlit walk where arctic animals are sleeping.

**Hush! A Thai Lullaby** by Minfong Ho

A desperate mother tries to quiet the noises around her sleeping baby.

**Ten, Nine, Eight** by Molly Bang

This countdown to bedtime shows a father helping his daughter to bed.

**Llama, Llama, Red Pajama** by Anne Dewdney

Llama goes through the typical nighttime routines including the fear of being away from his mama.

## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Daily recap.** As you and your toddler are getting ready for bed, tell stories about the day, starting with the morning's activities. Since your toddler was a part of some of those activities, this simple modeling will help your child join in the storytelling when she is able.

**Making choices.** Your child already has some strong opinions about what he likes and what he doesn't. Encourage independent thinking and decision-making by allowing your toddler to choose between a couple of options. For instance, put books on a low shelf and ask your baby to choose the book you will read before bed. Or pull out a couple of books and have your baby choose one.

**"Baby's" bedtime.** Make an empty shoe box into a tiny bed for a beloved stuffed animal or doll. Add blankets and ask your child to "tuck in the baby" and give it a good night kiss.

## Things to Point Out and Find in Books

**Each Peach, Pear, Plum** by Allan Ahlberg

This takes familiar fairy tales and creates an "I Spy" game using characters from the stories and a simple rhyming pattern.

**Goodnight Gorilla** by Peggy Rathmann

The zookeeper moves from cage to cage wishing the animals good night, but little does he know there's a surprise in store. Tiny details of a recurring banana and balloon will encourage your toddler to sit still and find them.

**I Spy Little Book** by Jean Marzollo

Less complex than some of the older I Spy books, Walter Wick's photographs feature easy-to-find items.

**Ten Little Ladybugs** by Melanie Gerth

With each turn of the page, a ladybug disappears. Little fingers will love to play with the ladybugs.

**Piñata!** by Rebecca Emberley

Piñatas are filled with delightful treats and this bilingual story will capture the attention of little eyes.

## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Where's the...** Your little one may not be able to talk yet, but she is an expert at knowing the names of things. Increase confidence and vocabulary by lingering over the pages in the book and asking the question: "Where's the...?" She will love to point out everything she knows.

**Swatch match.** To create a matching board, cut out two small squares from various wrapping papers and fabrics. Glue one of each of the squares onto a piece of cardboard, leaving the top of each square open to form a pocket. When it has dried, give your child the board and the matching swatches. Work together to put the swatches in the matching pockets. See how your child reacts when you put a swatch in the wrong pocket.

**Buried treasures.** Sandboxes offer incredible opportunities for your child to experiment by pouring, digging, and building. When weather or situation does not allow for a sandbox, create a contained indoor version. Fill a 13x9 pan with rice, couscous, or kosher salt. Set out cookie cutters and measuring cups for your child to play with. For additional fun, bury small treasures within the pan such as stickers, erasers, or plastic toys. Remind your child not to put these small items in his mouth.

## Children Experiencing Similar Emotions

### Where's My Teddy?

by Jez Alborough

When Eddie loses his teddy, Freddy, he stumbles across a great big bear who has also lost his teddy.



### Knuffle Bunny

by Mo Willems

Trixie is delighted to go with her dad to do laundry, until her favorite Knuffle Bunny goes missing.

### Sam's Teddy Bear

by Barbro Lindgren

Young toddlers will relate to this simple tale of Sam and his teddy bear.

### My Somebody Special

by Sarah Weeks

Childcare is filled with fun activities, but the most important moment is when a child's "somebody special" comes to pick them up.

### Come Along, Daisy!

by Jane Simmons

Daisy's mother wants her stay close, but the pond is full of things to look at and discover.

### Jamaica's Find

by Juanita Havill

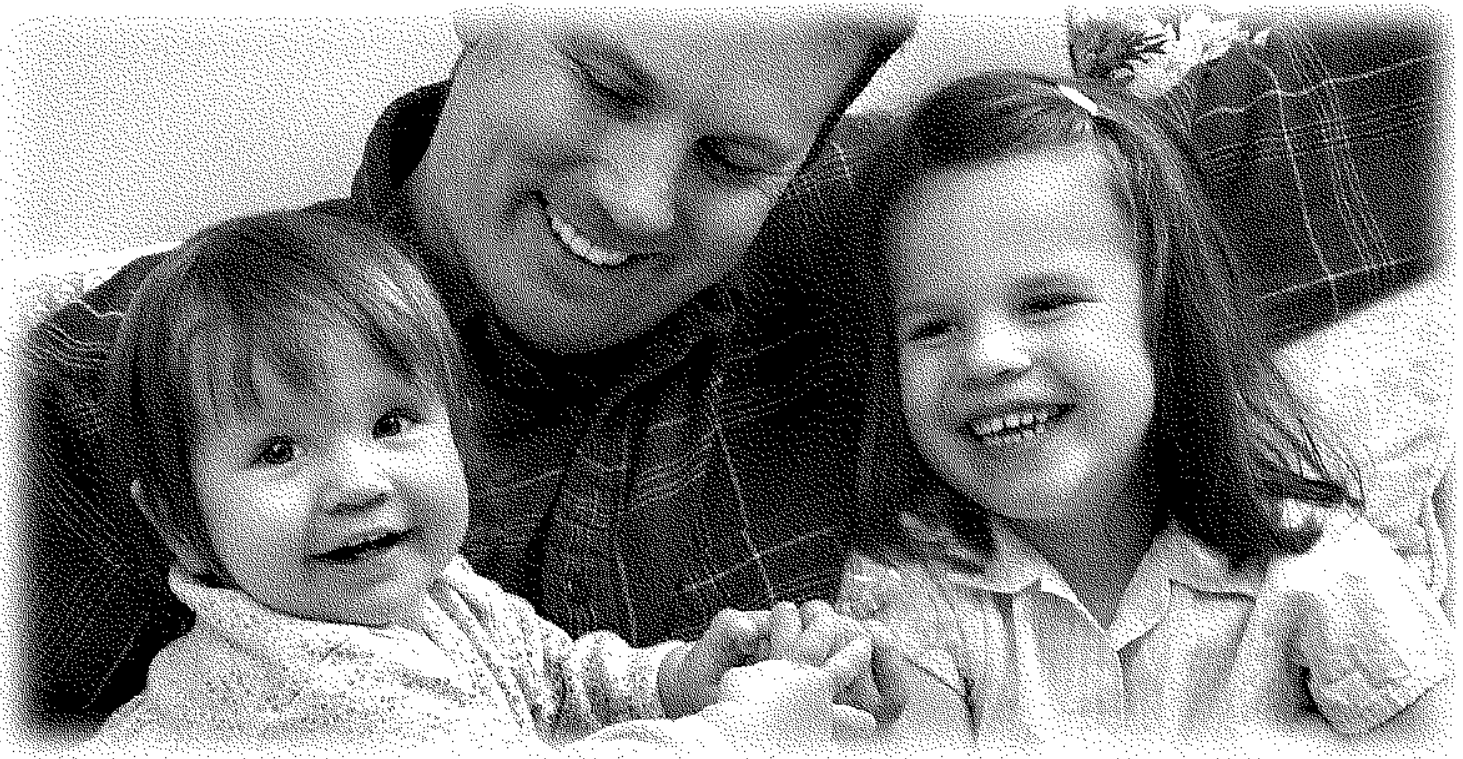
When Jamaica finds a little stuffed dog on the playground, she wants to keep it.

## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Separation intervention.** Fear and insecurity are new emotions for your little one. As a result, you may see an increased attachment to a special toy or person. Reinforce your child's feelings of security with books that talk about losing things or saying goodbye. Talk to your child about times when you are going to be apart. Minimize distress by trying to stick to routines and keep beloved toys or blankets nearby.

**Face plates.** Help your toddler learn about feelings by making emotion faces. Draw happy, sad, angry, scared, embarrassed, or worried faces onto paper plates. Glue a Popsicle stick to the back of them and while reading or watching a show together, ask your child to find the face that matches the character's emotion. This may also be helpful when your own child is experiencing strong feelings and can't quite express them. Strategize ways your child can deal with the emotions when they arise.

**Canister story.** Stories can come in many shapes. Create a cylindrical version by covering an empty oatmeal container, coffee can, or breadcrumb canisters with paper. Then select a group of photos that tell a story, such as pictures of a family trip or baby's first time seeing snow. Glue the pictured onto the canister in order so they show the story as you turn the canister. You provide the story as you look at the pictures.





## Few Words and Predictable Text

### **Trucks, Trucks, Trucks** by Peter Sis

As a boy plays with his trucks, they get bigger and mightier.

### **I Went Walking** by Sue Williams

A young boy's walk takes him through an odyssey of animals and colors.

### **One Bear, One Dog**

by Paul Stickland

Featured are different animals, including the final mirrored page to show your baby's face. This is also a good book to introduce early math concepts.

### **When the Elephant Walks** by Keiko Kasza

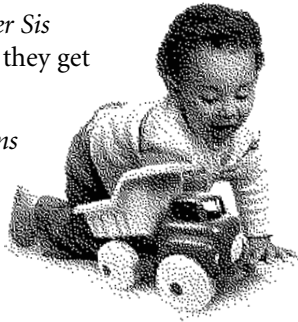
What happens when the elephant walks? At every turn of the page, there is another surprise.

### **My Car** by Byron Barton

Simple, bright illustrations and plain text share the story of Sam and his car.

### **I Read Signs** by Tana Hoban

Photos of real signs from around the community share simple, meaningful words and phrases.



## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Inspecting illustrations.** Illustrations are particularly important at this age as your child is just starting to understand that print has meaning. Linger over the pictures while you read, point out colors and shapes, and talk about the objects you see on every page. Ask questions about pictures on prior pages and ask your little one to help you find them.

**I wonder...** Predictable text will help your child gain confidence as he anticipates what is on the next page. Help your child become a thoughtful and predictive listener or reader by asking "I wonder" questions. These questions do not necessarily require answers; they should be phrased like you are thinking aloud. For instance, you can say, "I wonder what will happen when the elephant runs into the bear?"

**Finding favorites.** Your toddler has certainly expressed some favorites by now. Whenever possible, look for books that explore her favorite things. A visit to the library is a great way to stock up on new titles. Old magazines, catalogues, and calendars can be used to find pictures of all of the things that excite your little one.

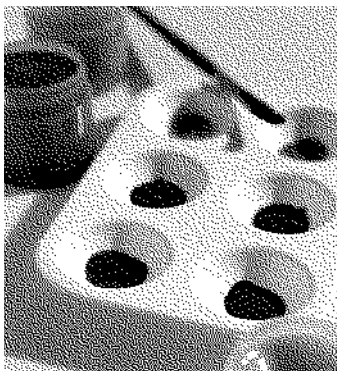
## Colors

### **A Color of His Own** by Leo Lionni

Every animal has its own color except for the chameleon.

### **Mouse Paint** by Ellen Stohl Walsh

Three white mice play with paint colors to demonstrate what happens when red, blue, or yellow mix.



### **Razzle Dazzle Colors**

by Chuck Murphy

This board book features colorful objects enhanced with Mylar paper.

### **Freight Train**

by Donald Crews

Multi-colored freight train cars dash across the cities and towns carrying loads.

### **Is It Red? Is It Yellow? Is It Blue?** by Tana Hoban

Real life photographs allow children to identify and point out the colors they see.

## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Plenty of painting.** Convert your child's high chair tray into a palette by mixing cornstarch, water, and drops of food coloring into a loose paste. Set out small trays with red, blue, and yellow or put them directly onto the tray for finger-painting fun. Or mix tempera paint with a couple drops of liquid soap and let your toddler paint in the tub.

**Colors all around.** Practice with colors by asking your child to help you find simple colored items around the house. For example, "We have green and red apples. Ally, could you please bring me a red one?"

**All sorts of sorting.** You might notice that your toddler is obsessed with sorting things and grouping items. This need for order and logic demonstrates early problem-solving and math skills. Provide clear containers like boxes, jars, or cups and ask your child to help put away socks and crayons, or even stuffed animals and shoes. Remind your child that she is not to put small items in her mouth.

# Sounds

## **Barnyard Banter**

by Denise Fleming

Throughout the barnyard, animals share their tune, but where's goose?

## **Barnyard Dance!**

by Sandra Boynton

Boynton's playful animals take part in a dance where they share their special sounds.

## **Bark, George**

by Jules Feiffer

When George tries to bark, other animal sounds come out instead.

## **Moo Moo, Brown Cow**

by Jakki Wood

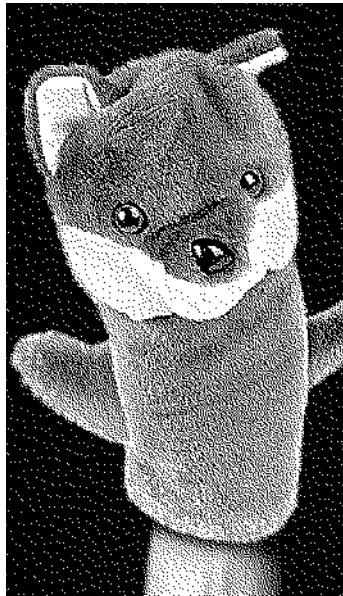
Evoking the familiar tune "Baa, Baa Black Sheep," animal babies of different kinds have their say.

## **Big Red Barn** by Margaret Wise Brown

This classic picture book offers simple prose and colorful scenes of a peaceful barnyard.

## **We're Going on a Bear Hunt** by Michael Rosen

An ordinary family goes on a bear hunt, stomping and tromping all the way.



# BOOK BOOSTERS

**Sound on!** Your little one is becoming more and more vocal as she learns to express herself. Animal noises offer great opportunities to work at those tough sounds, but many other noises can be practiced as well. Ask your child: What sound does a (train, dog, door, etc.) ... make?

**Paper bag puppets.** Using markers, crayons, construction paper, and glue, decorate two lunch-sized paper bags to look like characters or animals. When the puppets are dry, put one on each hand and have them talk to each other. If your child is able, have him provide the sounds for one of the puppets.

**Old MacDonald's farm.** "Old MacDonald" is a terrific song that is both repetitive and offers fun with sounds. Sing this song with your child and have her moo, baa, and quack with you. As she grows older, she will sing with you, and may even be able to request the next animal on the farm.

**Felt stories.** Buy felt in a variety of colors. Glue one color inside the lid of an old shoebox as your background. Take the other colors and cut out animal shapes—each in a different color. You may also choose to trace animal shapes using cookie cutters. Following the story, you and your toddler can pull out the box with the felt pieces and use it to talk about the story. Add new felt shapes from other stories as you read them.

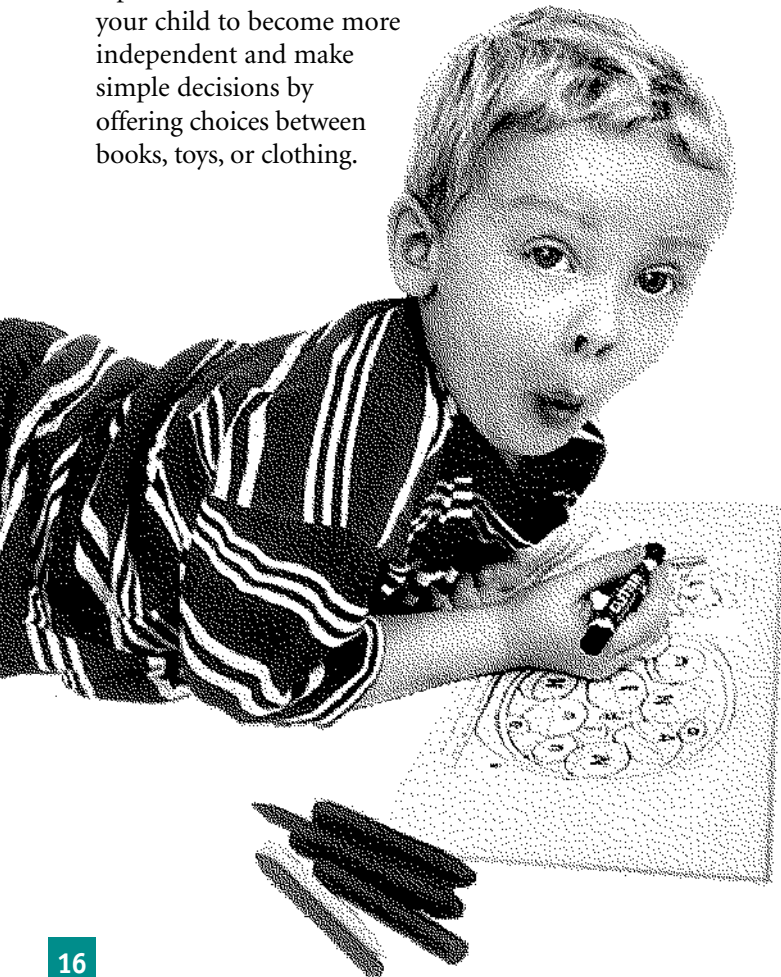




## Toddlers 24–36 Months

### New Experiences

Your two-year-old is becoming more confident and independent as his dexterity and speech improves, and he loves to perform and be praised. Help engage his imagination by playing, drawing, and pretending with your child and offering opportunities to boost self-esteem. Pay attention to likes and dislikes and try to find books and activities that will tap into those interests. Allow your child to become more independent and make simple decisions by offering choices between books, toys, or clothing.



### Family Interactions

- This is a delightful time when your child's ability to imagine and pretend is really starting to flourish. Help tap into the fun by setting aside a box for imagination play, such as clothes for playing dress up.
- In this year, you will witness your child's language increase by leaps and bounds. Set up a tape recorder to record your child about once a month and don't listen to the tape until you have a full year's worth of recordings. Then listen to it to fully realize how much your little one has developed. If you do not have a tape recorder, you can keep a journal of quotes.
- Your child will be experiencing a lot of emotions at this age and might have a hard time dealing with disappointment and challenges. She also might be expressing shyness and apprehension in new situations. Ease her fears by reading books about new things like potty training, and talk about how to bravely deal with new situations.
- While this age is filled with delightful advances in abilities, behaviors such as testing boundaries and difficulty controlling emotions are normal as children learn to assert their independence and self-control. Set boundaries and be clear and consistent with your expectations. It won't stop incidents from happening, but it may minimize their duration or frequency. Find books that help your child deal with new experiences and label the feelings you are witnessing.

### Out and About

- Arrange for opportunities for your little one to play with other children around his age. The opportunity allows for new experiences, provides real-life situations to practice sharing and self-control, and will help your child learn from others. While each child develops at a different rate, seeing another child do something might inspire your child to make the big leap to try it as well. For example, your child might suddenly become interested in potty training while playing with a child who uses the bathroom by herself.
- Before you go shopping, go through the cupboards with your child and make a shopping list. While you make yours, give your child a piece of paper and pencil to make his own list. Ask him to write down the items and while you are shopping together, ask him to check them off the list as you get each one.
- Encourage your child to pack a "busy bag." Tell her to bring a couple of books and some small toys for your outing. Ask her to show you the items she has chosen before you head out so you can add additional items if needed.

## Silly Stories, Rhythms, and Rhymes

**¡Hola! Jalapeno** by Amy Wilson Sanger

Colorful collage takes you through a menu of Mexican food delights.

**Tumble Bumble** by Felicia Bond

This jaunty rhyme is fun to read aloud as animals gather together for a not so peaceful nap.

**Sheep in a Jeep** by Nancy E. Shaw

The sheep are in for a wild ride in the jeep in this repetitive rhyming text.

**Jamberry** by Bruce Degen

Berries are celebrated in this fun romp with real and made up words.

**The Day the Babies Crawled**

**Away** by Peggy Rathmann

With its rhythmic rhyming text and its black contrasting cutouts, this delightful story tells how an older sibling saves the day.

**The Napping House**

by Audrey Wood

The whole house is ready to take a nap except for the flea in this silly tale.



## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Story mix-up.** Rereading beloved stories helps build your child's confidence. The next time you read a familiar story, change the story by changing a word or skipping a page. Allow your child to correct your mistake and continue on until the next one.

**Routine rhyming.** Rhyming books can take on new life with a talking toddler. Return to some of the early poetry you read to your young infant. Teach your child rhymes from your own childhood, such as "One, two, buckle my shoe..." Play with rhymes by making up simple patterns throughout your day. While having dinner you can say "Peas, peas, we love peas. But when we want more, we say please."

**Tasty sculptures.** Work tiny muscles by making cookies or playing with edible peanut butter dough. Make the dough by mixing 2 cups peanut butter, 6 tablespoons honey, nonfat dry milk or a combination of milk and flour until you reach the desired consistency. Chocolate chips, sprinkles, and other edible treats can be used to decorate. Set up an area with waxed paper, rolling pin, and cookie cutters. Show your child how to roll out snakes and balls and other shapes and then eat the results. (The peanut butter dough is edible without cooking.) If your child has peanut allergies, use oatmeal cookie dough. (Recipe adapted from *The Toddler's Busy Book* by Trish Kuffner.)

## Wordless Books for "Reading"

**Good Dog, Carl** by Alexandra Day

When mother steps away, Carl is left with a very adventurous baby.

**Pancakes for Breakfast** by Tomie dePaola

A woman decides she wants pancakes for breakfast but must go through a lot to find the ingredients.

**The Flower Man** by Mark Ludy

Black and white drawings turn to color when an old man spreads kindness throughout the town.

**Hug!** by Jez Alborough

Baby monkey searches for a very special hug that only a mother can give.

**Rosie's Walk** by Pat Hutchins

When Rosie sets off on her walk, she has no idea that she is being followed by a fox.

## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Greeting card reincarnation.** You and your child can make your own wordless picture book by recycling greeting cards. Select the ones your little one likes best and punch holes along the side. Tie the pages together with yarn for your own flip-and-tell book.

**Story comes alive.** Your little performer loves to pretend, and props help make her even more inventive. After reading a story, assemble props that will allow you and your little one to act it out.

**What happens next?** Your child will love to tell stories from wordless picture books. While reading, ask your child: What happens next? See how he predicts the pages that follow.



## Sing-a-Long Books

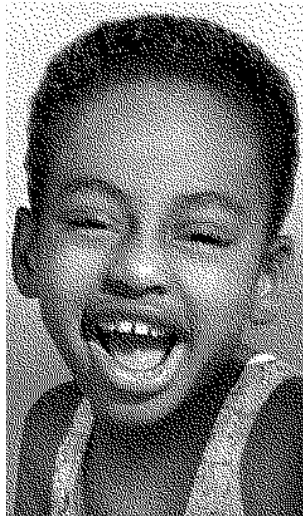
**He's Got the Whole World in His Hands** by *Kadir Nelson*  
Beautiful illustrations provide a child's perspective of this familiar spiritual.

**The Wheels on the Bus** by *Paul O. Zelinsky*  
This sing-a-long story is made even more captivating by its moveable parts.

**I Ain't Gonna Paint No More!** by *Karen Beaumont*  
A little boy's body parts get covered in paint despite his promises not to paint more.

**Charlie Parker Played Be Bop** by *Chris Raschka*  
Simple text plays out the rhythm of bebop music.

**Dinosaurumpus!** by *Tony Mitton*  
These dinosaurs are ready to party in this lively, fun book.



## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Bring on the band!** An empty coffee can easily be turned into a drum with wooden spoons. Convert a shoebox into a guitar by stringing rubber bands across the open box. A toilet paper tube becomes a microphone. Assemble your instruments and sing some favorite songs together or play along with the radio.

**Word wisdom.** While you are reading a well-known book with your child, follow words with your finger. Every once in a while, pause and let your child fill in the missing word.

**Musical memories.** Share your own musical preferences with your child. Listen to your favorite songs, show the CD cover and talk about your favorite songs, and dance to the music with your little one. Sharing music together will create fun and loving memories for you both.

**Imaginary spaces.** Your little one will love to show off her new talents, so the next time you have sheets to wash, set up a stage using the sheets as the curtain or cover a table and chairs to make a fort.

## Early Number and Alphabet Books

**One Duck Stuck** by *Phyllis Root*  
Swamp creatures come to the rescue to help a stuck duck while adding numbers and noises on each page.

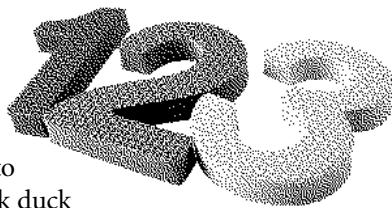
**The Very Hungry Caterpillar** by *Eric Carle*  
This treasured tale of a caterpillar's life offers a touch of science, counting, colors, and food items.

**Chicka Chicka Boom Boom** by *Bill Martin, Jr.*  
In swinging rhyme, the ABC's have never been so fun.

**Five Little Monkeys** by *Eileen Christelow*  
Your little one will quickly be singing along to this rhyming introduction to counting.

**Dr. Seuss' ABC: An Amazing Alphabet Book** by *Dr. Seuss*  
Big and little letters get paired with simple phrases.

**A to Z** by *Sandra Boynton*  
Simple two-word phrases and clever illustrations trace the alphabet from A to Z.



## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Eating the alphabet.** On an open-faced peanut butter or cream cheese sandwich, use letters from an alphabet cereal to spell out messages to your child. Help him "read" the message by identifying the letters with him.

**Shape game.** Make playtime lots of fun by cutting out shapes from colored paper and taping them to the floor. Ask your child to move to a certain colored shape and stand on it. You can also play musical shapes—when the music stops, ask your child to name the shape she is standing on.

**Daily counting.** Add simple math and counting to your everyday activities. For example, your child can count silverware while setting the table, count stairs while you go up or down, or count the number of cookies you are going to eat.

**Learning the letters.** Letter recognition is an important skill your toddler will acquire at this age. Help your child link text and letters by singing the ABC song together or by pointing to letters and asking your child to identify them.

## Books to Inspire Scribbles and Writing

**Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!** by Mo Willems  
This delightful tale of a very determined pigeon is made even more delightful by its simple illustrations. Encourage your child to try to draw his own pigeon and make up a new story.

**Riley and Rose in the Picture** by Susanna Gretz  
Riley and Rose have two very different approaches to how they see the world and approach art.

**Bunnycakes** by Rosemary Wells  
When Max and Ruby want to make a cake for their grandmother, they each have their own way of doing it. This book demonstrates different stages of writing development Max uses to make his list.

**Mouse Colors** by Jim Arnosky  
Mice work with color to create a painting all their own.

**Harold and the Purple Crayon** by Crockett Johnson  
When Harold uses his purple crayon to draw, he opens a world of possibilities.

## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Play dough art.** Use play dough to shape lowercase and uppercase letters and numbers, or roll small balls of dough and count them. Homemade play dough can be made simply by mixing 1 cup water, 1 cup salt, 2 teaspoons vegetable oil, and food coloring to desired intensity. Then slowly add 3 cups of flour and 2 tablespoons of cornstarch until it is the right consistency. (Recipe adapted from *The Toddler's Busy Book* by Trish Kuffner.)

**Noodle necklaces.** At the grocery, choose pasta with holes such as macaroni, ditalini, mostaccioli, penne, wagon wheels, ziti, or rigatoni. Paint different noodle combinations with tempera paints and allow them to dry. Have your toddler string them onto a long piece of yarn for an eye-catching necklace.

**Outdoor art.** Concrete walkways offer a perfect canvas for your young artist to express himself with colorful sidewalk chalk, available at your local office supply or drug store. If the weather has turned cold and snowy, fill spray bottles with water dyed with food coloring and spray onto the white snow.

## Stories about Experiences They Are Going Through

**When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry** by Molly Bang  
Sometimes Sophie gets angry and she needs some time to cool off.

**Sometimes I'm Bombaloo** by Rachel Vail  
Often Katie is happy, but when things upset her, she must learn to deal with her emotions.

**Where the Wild Things Are** by Maurice Sendak  
When Max is sent to his room for being wild, he imagines a place where the real wild things are.

**If I Were a Lion** by Sarah Weeks  
When a little girl is put in time-out for being wild, she explains to her mother what wild really means.

**It is the Wind** by Ferida Wolff  
This soothing story helps to calm nighttime worries.

**Oh No, Gotta Go!** by Susan Middleton Elya  
Spanish and English mix in this tale of a family's attempts to find a bathroom for their daughter.

## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Kitchen helper.** Look for opportunities for your little one to have a role in cooking or baking. He can help with stirring, pouring ingredients, or even counting out eggs. Use recipes and teach your toddler the difference between the measuring cups. If you can't directly involve your child, you can help him pretend by giving him a bowl of his own and the scraps from the meal, such as onion skins, potato peels, or orange rinds.

**Places with place mats.** At this point your child might insist on sitting at the table with the rest of the family instead of in her high chair. Mark the occasion by making place mats for each family member. Decorate construction paper each person's name on the place mats. When mealtime comes, have your child set out the place mats at each setting.

**Props for pretending.** Extend your child's ability to imagine and pretend by assembling a box of props and costumes—fun hats, old jackets, purses, etc. Before you get rid of old clothing or household items, ask yourself if your child might enjoy playing with that item.



Her muscle development will allow her to have more control for practicing writing and drawing. Take frequent trips to the library to find books that interest her, including books about making friends, going to school, and about other children.

## Family Interactions

- Your little one is becoming bigger and more independent every day. As her role in the family becomes stronger, it is time to find small household chores for her to do. She can help gather and sort laundry, help with the grocery list, and perhaps feed a family pet. She will love the opportunity to sort and deliver mail when it arrives and will enjoy the “junk mail” that most of us despise. She can help cut coupons and put her toys away. All of these things will help her understand her contribution to the family.
- Now that your child is such a capable communicator, you will want to help him develop his ability to tell stories. Each day, ask him to share what has happened during the day. Ask him to tell you about those issues that were challenging and discuss some solutions. While bonding with your little one, you will help him communicate better too.
- You might start seeing your child become more and more confident with books. She may be chiming in and may even have some favorite books memorized. As children start to enter preschool, more and more focus has been placed on phonics and teaching reading before children are ready. Minimize using phonics, flash cards, or quizzing your child. Letter and word recognition can be fun for a child, but only if they seem to be enjoying it. By keeping them turned on to reading, you are building a lifelong reader.

# Preschoolers 3-4 Years

## New Experiences

The communicator manifests itself this year. Your child will start speaking in whole sentences, asking questions, and trying to learn new words. She will understand and be interested in hearing whole stories, both old and new. She will start to recognize letters and numbers and may be able to recognize some words.



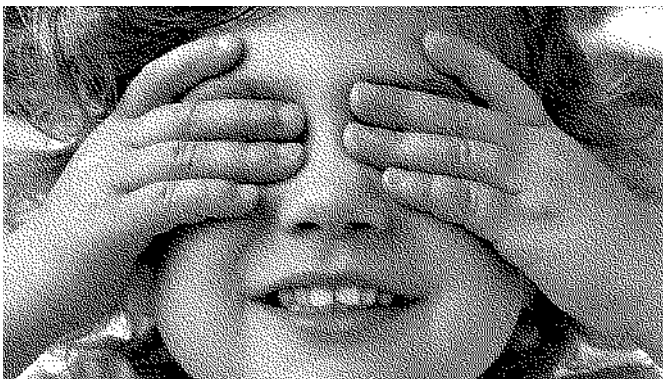
- The things your child remembers at this age will amaze you. Her brain is as rich and active as it will ever be, so talk about things that happened in the past and see how much your child recalls from that time. Even at times when your little one could not communicate well, her mind was absorbing everything around her and she will probably tell you all about it now.

## Out and About

- Your child is becoming a great helper and that desire to help can be used to strengthen reading skills as well. While at the supermarket, refer to your list and have your child help find the items you need in that aisle. Many grocery store items are clearly labeled and have pictures of their contents.

- While you are out, transform waiting in a line into a fun game. Play “I Spy” with your child by looking around the room and identify an object that is a certain color that starts with a particular letter. For example, “I spy something yellow that starts with B.” Have your child look around and identify the object. Take turns and have your child pick out the object for you to identify.
- Set up a special time each week or month to have a one-on-one “date” with your child where you go on a special outing, such as a picnic, a movie, or a trip to the park—it need not require money or a lot of time. This time will allow you to get away from distractions and really focus on one another. It will build self-esteem and remind your child how important he is, especially if he has siblings.

## Counting Books



### **Just a Minute: A Trickster Tale and Counting Book**

by Yuyi Morales

When the skeleton Señor Calavera arrives at Grandma Beetle's door to take her with him, she stalls and tricks him into doing a number of projects around the house.

### **Teeth, Tails, and Tentacles: An Animal Counting Book**

by Christopher Wormell

Animals from around the world offer opportunities for counting and animal discovery.

### **Fish Eyes** by Lois Ehlert

Count the dots, fish, and eyes with these bright neon sea creatures.

### **Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin** by Lloyd Moss

This rhythmic fun book adds an instrument to the orchestra on each page.

### **One Is a Snail, Ten is a Crab: A Counting by Feet Book**

by April Pulley Sayre

This clever approach to early math counts feet in the animal kingdom and does simple addition.

## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Game night.** Have a game night with the whole family. Games like Chutes and Ladders, Uno, Candyland, and Go Fish combine instructions, letters, numbers, color recognition, and counting.

**Home economics.** When you are passing out cookies or setting the table, ask your preschooler to make sure you have enough of what you need. Have your child determine the number of items needed either by counting one or two per person or by dividing a unit into pieces. Push the concept further by adding another item or taking one away.

**Sew by numbers.** Reuse greeting cards with simple illustrations by turning them into sewing cards. Select a couple of cards, punch holes around the design, and label each hole with a number. Using a long string of yarn, tie a knot at one end. Your preschooler should then sew the card in numerical order. First he must go up the 1 hole and then down the 2 hole, and so on. After he has finished, follow the yarn with your finger from number to number.

**Telling time.** Create a schedule for typical events such as getting up, leaving for school or work, having dinner, or going to bed and put it in a place everyone will see it. If you have a digital clock, write the time in the same format as the clock: 9:00. If you have an analog clock, draw the time as it looks on the clock and the digital time below it. Ask your child to be the time keeper; helping you will help him learn how to tell time and use numbers.



## Books about Feeling Good about Yourself

**I'm as Quick as a Cricket** by Audrey Wood

A child dreams big as he explores the animal kingdom.

**Alice the Fairy** by David Shannon

Alice is not a real fairy but she has a very good time being a fairy-in-training.

**Happy to Be Nappy**

by bell hooks

Whether plaited, twisted, or straight, children rejoice in the hair they have.

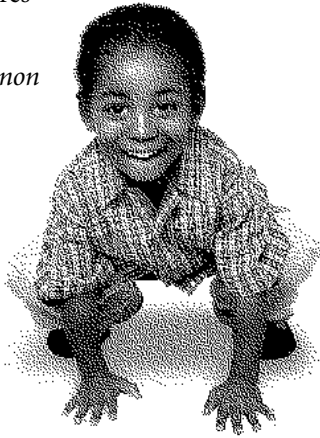
**Violet's Music**

by Angela Johnson

Violet enjoys music even more when she shares it with her friends.

**Ish** by Peter H. Reynolds

Ramon loves to draw until his older brother mocks it.



## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Retelling tales.** After reading a book, flip through pictures and cover the words. Start out by talking about what happened first in the story, then have your child add what happened on the next page. Go back and forth until you have retold the whole story. Do this from time to time and as you get better at it, you may choose to do it without looking at the pictures.

**Super stickers.** Take a blank sheet of adhesive labels and some markers and discuss with your child what design he would like to make. Pull out a couple of books as inspiration and allow his creativity to flow. Post-its can also be used to practice writing and labeling objects such as the bed, door, or chair.

**Recognition rewards.** While you are busy recognizing your preschooler's many accomplishments, teach her about the importance of recognizing others for their good deeds. Using paper plates, markers, stickers and ribbons, have her design an award for someone she knows. This reward can be for a favorite babysitter or for the cookies a neighbor brought over.

## Books about Families

**My Family and I** by Gladys Rosa-Mendoza

This bilingual book takes us into Emma's family.

**The Hello, Goodbye Window** by Norton Juster

A little girl enjoys visiting her grandparents' home where a window provides opportunities for greetings and imagination.

**Tell Me a Story, Mama** by Angela Johnson

A young girl asks her mom to tell her a story, but does all the telling herself as she shares familiar tales from her mother's childhood.



**Julius, the Baby of the World**

by Kevin Henkes

Lilly is not so happy about her new brother until she sees that he may be better than she thought.

**Full, Full, Full of Love** by Trish Cooke

It is hard for Jay Jay to wait for Sunday dinner at Grannie's.

**Bee-bim Bop!** by Linda Sue Park

A little girl helps the family prepare for one of her favorite meals, bee-bim bop.

## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Family stories.** Take out the family album and sit closely with your child to look at the pictures. Tell stories about the events or people within them. Talk about where your family came from and how other families might be different.

**Family collages.** Collect photos of the people in your family, a few magazines or catalogues, glue, and some construction paper. Talk about each member of the family and discuss their likes and dislikes. Using the photo and pictures cut from the magazines, create a collage about that person.

**Phone the family.** Now that your little one is talking more and more, it is a perfect time to phone a family member. Designate a special (and patient) person to call. Talk with your child about what he might share during his call. Show him how you look up the phone number and how to dial. Sit closely while the conversation takes place to offer prompts or intercept if necessary. Explain that the phone may only be used while you are present.

## Sharing Favorite Stories New and Old

### **The Little Engine that Could** by Watty Piper

A little blue engine saves the day when toys need to be delivered to town. New illustrations by Loreen Long breathe new life into an old favorite.

### **Harry the Dirty Dog** by Gene Zion

Share this classic tale of the dirty dog, Harry, who hates baths.

### **Bear Snores On** by Karma Wilson

While the bear sleeps, the other animals take advantage of his warm cave and prepare a party.

### **The Big Hungry Bear** by Audrey Wood

Little mouse has found a delicious strawberry but he must keep it away from the big, hungry bear.

### **The Mitten** by Jan Brett

See what happens when Nicki loses his white mitten in the snow.

### **How I Became a Pirate** by Melinda Long

Jeremy is swept away on a pirate adventure.

## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Predictions.** While you are reading, stop in the middle of the story and ask about what is going to happen next. Certainly if your child has heard the book before he will be able to predict the outcome, but this will only boost his self-esteem.

**Sock puppets.** Turn two old (clean) socks into puppets by drawing faces with markers, or sewing or gluing fabric, buttons, or beads onto the socks. The two puppets can chat about the story you read or they can reenact the plot.



**New life for old favorites.** You and your child will enjoy reading a few of your beloved books from childhood. If your favorites are no longer in print, you may be able to acquire a used copy through [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) or [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

## Alphabet Books

### **Bad Kitty** by Nick Bruel

Bad Kitty shows how much he despises vegetables in this original alphabet book.

### **I Stink!** by Kate McMullen

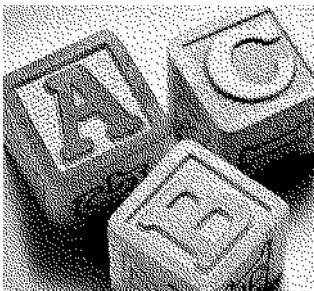
This garbage truck personification shares the important work he does gobbling up trash from A to Z.

### **The New Alphabet of Animals** by Christopher Wormell

26 fascinating animals grace the pages of big and little letters.

### **Calavera Abecedario: A Day of the Dead Alphabet Book** by Jeanette Winter

This book takes a new approach to sharing the alphabet by putting it in the context of the Mexican Day of the Dead celebration. Each skeleton acts out an action in Spanish.



### **Alphabet Under Construction**

by Denise Fleming

Little Mouse is very busy as he works his way through constructing the alphabet.

## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Writing every day.** Encourage your child to do a writing or drawing activity everyday. Convert scrap paper into a practice journal and inspire writing by asking your child to draw a picture of her lunch or write a note to put in mommy's bag for tomorrow. Use old cards, calendars, deposit slips, or menus to inspire writing practice.

**"Apple starts with..."** Your child will become more and more familiar with the alphabet and its letters from the constant exposure through reading. Keep working with the alphabet by saying a word and asking what letter it starts with. Understanding the alphabet is an important building block to reading, but only play these games if they are fun for your child.

**Name game.** Your child will love to see her name in print and practice writing it. Tell your child why you chose her name and what it means. Play with the individual letters of the name by writing acrostic poems. For instance, Grace becomes: Grab, Run, Act, Climb, Eat.



## Books about Making Friends

**A Splendid Friend, Indeed** by *Suzanne Bloom*

Bear and duck have different interests—bear wants to sit quietly and duck wants to chatter. How will they ever get along?

**Leonardo, the Terrible Monster** by *Mo Willems*

While Leonardo is no good at scaring, he is good at being a friend.

**Ella Sarah Gets Dressed** by *Margaret Chodos-Irvine*

Ella Sarah has a unique sense of style and is happy to find someone else who also has her own sense of style.

**Margaret and Margarita** by *Lynn Reiser*

Margaret speaks English and Margarita speaks Spanish. When they meet in the park, they realize that friendship can blossom in any language.

**Miss Spider's Tea Party** by *David Kirk*

Social Miss Spider wants to have a tea party, but the other insects are afraid she might eat them if they come. This book combines a sweet story of making friends with counting opportunities.

**Wemberly Worried** by *Kevin Henkes*

Wemberly worries about everything, especially school. But when she shows up, she discovers she's not the only one who worries.

## BOOK BOOSTERS

**Play dates.** Making friends becomes especially important at this age, especially if your child spends time in childcare or preschool. Help facilitate the process by getting together with other children your child's age. The more your child plays with other children and learns to share, collaborate, and resolve conflicts, the better friend she will become.

**Understanding empathy.** While reading, pause intermittently to ask your child what is happening in the story. This will help your child with reading comprehension. You may also ask about the character's feelings. This will help your child empathize and may lead to a discussion about when he felt the same way.

**Postcard recommendations.** Following a story, recommend the book to a friend by making a postcard. Take out a 3x5 index card and have your little one draw a picture with crayons or markers to capture the story on one side of the card. Then turn over the card and have your preschooler dictate what she would like to say about the book. Write it on the card as well as the address. Have your child write her name, put on the stamp, and then mail it to her friend.

## Understanding the World with Nonfiction

**Actual Size** by *Steve Jenkins*

Preschoolers will delight in learning how they measure up to animals.

**What Do You Do with a Tail Like This?**

by *Steve Jenkins and Robin Page*

Tails, eyes, ears, and more are compared among animals.

**Big Bugs, Small Bugs** by *Alex Lluch*

A fascinating look at the differences and similarities between bugs.

**Hooray for Fish!** by *Lucy Cousins*

Adjectives abound in this underwater adventure where fish have their own special characteristics.

**Mister Seahorse** by *Eric Carle*

A trip underwater explores how various sea creatures—particularly fathers—care for their offspring.

## BOOK BOOSTERS

**What's in the bag?** Have some tactile fun by gathering both familiar and new objects, such as a soft stuffed animal, a pinecone, a brush, or an apple. Place each item in a brown paper bag and have your child reach in to feel it without looking. Ask: What's in the bag? Have your child guess at the answer and ask him questions about the object's characteristics.

**Nonfiction field trip.** Match a favorite nonfiction book with a field trip such as a book about animals that you take to the zoo or pet store or a book about the past that you take to a museum. Ask questions about the story and draw comparisons between what is described in the book and what you see in real life.

**Adjective hunt.** Make a list of adjectives, such as "small" or "ugly" and try to find examples of them. For instance, a search for small things might include pictures of a mouse, a paperclip, and a ring. Use catalogues or magazines to help you find the items on your list.

# Where To Go for More Ideas and Information

## BOOKS AND MAGAZINES

*Babybug Magazine*. Carus Publishing.

The creators of Cricket children's magazine offer a magazine made especially for babies. From the rounded-corner cardboard construction to the simple stories within, this magazine will become a hit with your family.

Codell, Esmé Raji. *How to Get Your Child to Love Reading: For Ravenous and Reluctant Readers Alike*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: Algonquin Books, 2003.

Codell's light-hearted look at reading to children offers booklists for every age and interest.

Fox, Mem. *Reading Magic: Why Reading Aloud to Our Children Will Change Their Lives Forever*. New York: Harcourt, 2001.

In simple, engaging prose Mem Fox explains the delight of reading aloud with your child, as well as how to do it best. Her website [www.memfox.com](http://www.memfox.com) provides audio examples.

Kuffner, Trish. *The Toddler's Busy Book: 365 Creative Games and Activities to Keep Your 1- to 3-Year-Old Busy*. New York: Meadowbrook Press, 1999.

This compact volume provides a ton of fun and easy activities to interest active toddlers. She has also written a volume for preschoolers.

Odean, Kathleen. *Great Books for Babies and Toddlers: More Than 500 Recommended Books for Your Child's First Three Years*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2003.

Written by a children's book expert and former chair of the Newbery committee, this is the quintessential tool to help you separate the great books from the not-so-great.

Raines, Shirley, Karen Miller, and Leah Curry-Rood. *Story Stretchers for Infants, Toddlers, and Twos*. Beltsville, Md.: Gryphon House, 2002.

Beloved titles for the youngest book lovers are matched with age appropriate activities to stretch your reading experience.

Reitzes, Fretta and Beth Teitelman, with Lois Alter Mark. *Wonderplay: From the 92nd St. Y Parenting Center*. Philadelphia: Running Press, 1995.

This slim volume offers a variety of quick activities to encourage interaction in all age groups.

Silberg, Jackie. *Games to Play with Babies*. Beltsville, Md.: Gryphon House, 1993.

This book offers a wealth of fun, easy games to play with babies throughout the first year.

Trelease, Jim. *The Read Aloud Handbook*. New York: Penguin Group, 2001.

In this handbook, Trelease shares research, warm success stories, and booklists to reach every reader.

## WEBSITES

**[www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)**. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is dedicated to issues that affect young children; the website features "The Early Years Are Learning Years" section, where parents can find printable information about key literacy topics.

**[www.pbs.org/parents](http://www.pbs.org/parents)**. In addition to information about children's programming, this website also offers terrific literacy resources for parents, such as advice on how to raise a reader and have a literate home.

**[www.reachoutandread.org](http://www.reachoutandread.org)**. The Reach Out and Read website provides pertinent information about literacy milestones as well as tips and booklists to share with children.

**[www.rif.org](http://www.rif.org)**. Head to the parents section on the Reading Is Fundamental website to find age-specific information including reading milestones, tips on selecting books, and even a reading check-up for pre-readers.

**[www.rosemarywells.com](http://www.rosemarywells.com)**. Author and illustrator Rosemary Wells has worked diligently to inform the public of the importance of reading aloud to children by creating beloved children's books and memorable characters. Her website provides information about why reading to your child is so important.

**[www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)**. The premier online resource for all things baby, the Zero to Three website offers parents a ready reference for ideas and research about raising babies. Sections like Brain Wonders, The Magic of Everyday Moments, and Parenting from A-Z offer terrific suggestions and tips.

## FOR INFORMATION ABOUT LEARNING DELAYS

**[www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/child/devtool.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/child/devtool.htm)**. The National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities website provides information about developmental screening to diagnose a learning disability, information about the Individuals with Disabilities Act, and links to relevant articles.

**[www.firstsigns.org/index.html](http://www.firstsigns.org/index.html)**. First Signs addresses developmental delays, developmental disabilities, autism, screening, diagnosis, early intervention, and the first signs.



## ABOUT RIF

**Reading Is Fundamental, Inc. (RIF)**, founded in 1966, motivates children to read by working with them, their parents, and community members to make reading a fun and beneficial part of everyday life. RIF's highest priority is reaching underserved children from birth to age 8. Through community volunteers in every state and U.S. territory, RIF provides 4.5million children with 16 million new, free books and literacy resources each year. For more information and to access reading resources, visit RIF's website at [www.rif.org](http://www.rif.org).

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