

Which Book is Right for My Child Right Now?

Sometimes it's tricky to choose a book for your child. This little grid can help you think about what children your child's age can do and what they might be interested in. You can use this to help you select a "just right" book.

Age of Child	What Your Child Can Do	What Kind of Books to Choose
Birth to 6 months	Newborns and very young babies don't see very well. They sleep a lot and have little control over their muscles. As a result, they depend on you for everything. This phase is all about building a bond. Snuggling, talking to, singing to, and reading to your baby is very important. As your child gets older, you'll notice she looks at the pictures and even follows your finger as you point things out. Babies love faces. At first yours is all they care about but soon, they are attracted to baby faces, too. By 6 months, your baby can pat the pictures and even start to hold and chew on the board book pages.	• High contrast books with few words • Song books that you sing while holding the baby and maybe even dancing • Books with everyday objects in them that can be found in your home (cup, ball, dog) • Word books that feature animals • Baby faces books
6 months to 12 months	Older infants can start to hold their own books. You can show them how to turn pages. Children this age are learning that when they can't see something, it still exists. That's why they love playing peek-a-boo with you. They're relieved you're still there! Try books that help them with this idea.	• Peek-a-boo books • Word books with all kinds of things in them

Age of Child	What Your Child Can Do	What Kind of Books to Choose
12 months to 18 months	Toddlers are increasingly interested in the world around them. Labeling things as you see them on walks or looking at books can help your child start to build her own vocabulary. Toddlers are interested in their bodies so it's important to have books that talk about parts of the body and represent children that look like your child as well as children of other races. Children are starting to have big feelings. Helping them to know the names of those feelings can help them talk about them later. Toddlers are starting to be able to make sounds and have very early speech. Books with animal noises and letters and numbers give them a chance to try out those sounds.	• Counting books • Alphabet books • Word books (such as <i>My First 100 Words</i>) • Books about body parts • Feelings books • Animals sounds books
18 months to 24 months	Older toddlers love to MOVE! They may have a hard time sitting through a whole book but are still interested in the words and ideas in the books. Simple stories that your child can act out with you can be fun. Finger puppets help your child think about characters in a story when you use them to tell the story. Beginning fact books may be interesting for your child, too.	• Movement books • Animal books • Short, simple stories • Books about food or other things your child is interested in • Finger play books (poem or song books that have hand movements)

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24 months to 30 months	This is the time when your child's vocabulary starts to explode! Children learn hundreds of words during this time but only if you're talking and reading with them. Singing songs is still a good way to play with words and for your child to learn what new words mean. She is also starting to be able to understand simple stories about friends, people in her community, and the world around her.	• Simple stories with few words to a page • Alphabet books with photos of things she's familiar with • Song books • Rhyming books
30 months to 36 months	Your child's attention span is lengthening. He still needs to move around and books should be quite short still, but he's able to follow a story and talk about it. He might also be interested in learning more about things. This is the stage when children ask MANY questions. You might use fact books (also called informational text) to answer some of those questions. Like the stage before this one, your child is learning new words at an amazing rate. Reading to him will help expose him to new words. Asking him what he thinks a new word might mean helps him start to think about what he knows and how to figure out new words. It's an exciting time!	• Stories about friends • Stories about school • Stories about things your child is interested in • Informational books about whatever topics your child wonders about (sharks, ballerinas, trains, princesses, etc.) • Alphabet books with facts on each page • Counting books with a story to tell