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Let's Read

Reading with young children

Why should you read with your young child?

- Reading is a vital part of your child's development. Reading aloud with your young child helps develop the skills that are needed when he or she starts school. You are not trying to "teach" your young child to read before they begin school, but rather helping him or her to develop a love of books. Your child will understand how a book works and get to know how much fun they can be.
- Reading aloud is also a time when you can bond with your child. The pictures and the words in the book will give you lots of things to talk about, laugh about, have fun with, while you share some special time together.

When should you begin to read with your young child?

- There is no specific age to begin but the earlier the better. Some say that reading to young children should begin soon after birth, while others say it should start around 4 to 6 months when babies have a degree of head control and can be propped in your lap.
- Your baby will love being held in your arms, listening to your voice, and sharing the pictures in the book, so start as early as possible.

How often should young children be read to?

- There is no magic figure about how long or how often. Young children do like routines so developing an everyday reading routine is suggested. This can be part of a bedtime routine, however you may find that your child will choose books and share reading at any time of the day, just because they like it.

How do I get my young child involved?

- Your young child does like the sound of your voice, so turn off the TV and radio so your child can hear your voice. They will also be less distracted, and can focus on the book you are sharing with them.
- Sit your child close or on your knee so that you are both comfortable, and can clearly see and touch the book. Encourage your child to point to things in the book, and let them turn the pages.
- Let your child choose the books to read. They may like to have the same book read over and over, because they will know what comes next and can be more involved. Imagine how good your child will feel about themselves when he or she tells you the word that finishes the sentence or describes what is going to happen

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next. Their interests will change as they grow, so it is easier to let them choose the book and they will share with you what they are interested in.

- Play games and have fun. You can use the book to get started on lots of different activities. Your young child will like being moved to the rhythm of the book, or doing actions to match the book. There are many stories that are actually songs. Your child will love to sing along to the story.
- Ask questions and point to things in the book. Help your child to explore what they see in the book. Ask him or her to show and tell you about things they like, things they have seen before, the colours they see, and count the things on the page.
- Join the library. Make visiting the library part of the adventure of books. Your child will have fun selecting the books and they will have lots to choose from. You may also be able to go to “read aloud” sessions at the library. This shows your child that there are many people who love reading and you can have lots of fun.

Ends

Notes to editor:

Let’s Read is an early childhood literacy initiative of the Centre for Community Child Health (a key research centre of the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute) in partnership with The Smith Family. Let’s Read aims to improve and measure literacy outcomes in Australia by encouraging parents to read to pre-school-aged children (0-5 years). Let’s Read will be delivered to families through community-based professionals using research-based, emergent literacy techniques and resources.

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More details about Let’s Read can be found on www.letsread.com.au

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