

# Talking with Parents About Books



Having books in the examination room allows the pediatrician to directly model book sharing and to comment on the child's response to the book. Here are suggestions for brief anticipatory guidance, combining information about the child's emerging literacy with other developmental and behavioral issues.

## 6-12 MONTHS

- Comment while baby is looking at pictures. "She's really looking, moving her arms with excitement, and making sounds. Even infants love picture books."
- "You can make story time part of your baby's routine, before bed or naps."
- "You're teaching your baby that looking at books feels good."
- "Babies love rhymes and songs."

## 12-18 MONTHS

- "When you ask, 'What's that?' and name the picture in a book, it teaches your baby that things have names."
- "Once babies start to walk, trying to hold them on your lap can be a struggle. Some babies will want to be up and around during a story. That's OK."
- "Offer stories each day, but let your child be in charge of how long you read."
- "When your child grabs the book, he is showing a healthy drive for independence. He's not being bad."

## 18-36 MONTHS

- "If your toddler listens to a story for five minutes, that's a long time. Stories are a good way to help toddlers increase their attention spans."
- "Sometimes you don't have to read what's actually written in the book. You can just talk about the pictures instead."
- "Your toddler will want to pick the book, the time, and the person to do the reading. Let your toddler make choices within the limits of what's OK."
- "Children learn by imitating. Does she ever read to her teddy bears or dolls?"

## 3 YEARS AND UP

- "One way children learn to read is by hearing the same story over and over. It might be boring to you, but it isn't to her."
- "Your child might want to tell you a story, and it may be a very different one from the one you thought you were reading! Each time he retells the story, he is practicing using language in a very important way."
- "Play writing is the first step toward learning how to spell. Does she ever pretend to write or ask you to show her name?"

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