

Especially for toddlers with disabilities

Book Reading Made Fun for All

Storytelling and Listening

Listening to stories and looking at books are activities most toddlers enjoy. Some toddlers have trouble paying attention. They need help to enjoy and learn from book reading or story telling activities. This practice guide includes ideas to help a toddler with a disability enjoy listening to stories or reading a book.

What is the practice?

This practice focuses on how to read books or tell stories in ways that include your toddler in these activities. You can change how you read a book or tell a story to encourage your child to join the activity.

What does the practice look like?

This practice guide includes ideas for *where* you read, *when* you read, and *how* you read a book. These ideas make it easier for your toddler to be part of the activity. Children learn the most from book reading when they are part of telling the story.

How do you do the practice?

Here are some things you can do to involve your toddler in book reading and storytelling.

- One good way to keep your child involved is to use stories about things your child likes. Think of all your child's interests and pick a book that is about an everyday routine or activity he enjoys.
- Toddlers who are easily distracted will find it easier to look at books in a room where it is quiet. Your child may find it fun to read in a darkened room with a flashlight. The flashlight beam can help focus her interest on the pictures. Your child might need to play with the flashlight before she settles to read.
- Sometimes changing *when* you read makes it easier for your toddler to stay "tuned in" to the story. The best time to read a book or tell a story is when he is rested and alert. If he needs to "get some energy out" first, plan to read after some outside time. When a child is alert, he will pay more attention to things you are doing and saying.
- If your toddler has vision problems, try books with interesting textures and books with clear text and pictures. Big pop-up books might help. If your child wears glasses, be sure she has them on looking at a book.
- One good way to involve your child in reading a book is to ask questions. If he only says a few words, ask him to point to a picture to answer a question. Or ask *yes* or *no* questions that he can answer by nodding his head.
- Toddlers who are distracted by noises around them can listen to stories using headphones. Many toddlers especially like hearing a story when you talk into a microphone.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Is your toddler listening longer when you read to him?
- Is your toddler excited about reading a book or telling a story?
- Does your toddler recognize familiar pictures or familiar phrases?



Take a look at more fun with books and stories

Stay Focused with Movement and Touch

Jaime is a 32-month-old toddler with developmental disabilities that make it hard for him to sit and read a book. Jaime's mom wants him to learn about books and stories because later it will help him learn to read. She often chooses to read after Jaime has had time outside to run off some energy. She always has three or four of Jaime's favorite books on hand. If Jaime loses interest in the book they are reading, she has another favorite ready to read. Mom lets Jaime pick the book he wants to read and she reads it quickly. She often asks Jaime to answer questions about what was read, like, "Where did the ball go?" She sometimes asks Jaime to act out some part of the story so he can move around. Often Jaime holds or plays with a small toy that is part of the story while mom reads. She has noticed it helps Jaime stay focused when his hands are busy.



Look to the Library for Special Books

Reading stories helps toddlers learn more words, but it also helps them learn about print and letters. David, who is 36 months old, has a vision problem and wears glasses. His mother uses books with black print on white paper and simple, uncluttered pictures and letters. This helps David begin to learn about print. The children's librarian at the local library helps David's mother find books that are good for him. David also enjoys books on tape and books with texture. When they visit the library, they pick out five or six new books with these special features to enjoy.

Taking Our Time for Reading Fun

Nicky is a 30-month-old toddler with Down syndrome who enjoys reading books with his dad. Nicky's dad knows that young children learn a lot from reading books when they get involved in the reading. He asks Nicky to point to pictures or answer simple questions about the story they are reading. For example, he will ask Nicky to point to which house he likes. He then waits. He knows that Nicky needs extra time to move his arm and point to the house he likes best. When dad asks Nicky a question, he waits and gives Nicky plenty of time to answer it all by himself. Dad's reward for waiting is not just having Nicky answer the question, but seeing Nicky's big smile.

