

Especially for parents of infants!

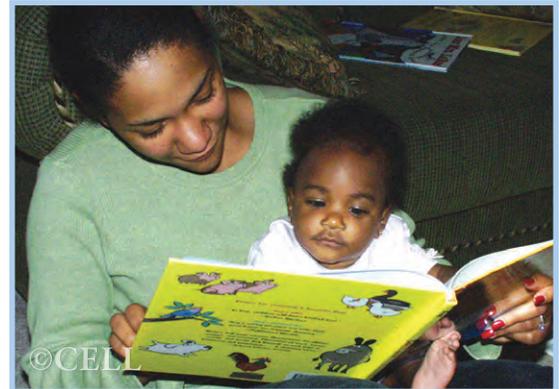
Baby's First Picture Books

Stories and Listening

Can your baby sit on your lap and reach for things in front of her? Great! She's ready for looking at picture books. Check out the following ideas to introduce picture books to your little one.

What is the practice?

Infants are most interested in books when looking at pictures of people and things they see every day. Imagine the joy of a baby looking at things that are familiar and interesting. This is why book reading can be such fun!



What does the practice look like?

A baby sitting on an adult's lap is looking at a board book with pictures of baby animals. The child reaches and pats a picture of a kitten. The parent says with delight, "Yes, you see the kitty!" Together they look at another page. Again, the baby reaches and touches the picture. The parent describes what the baby sees. The back-and-forth activity enchants the baby. He enjoys looking through the book over and over.

How do you do the practice?

Try these simple ideas for helping your child discover the joys of books:

- Identify things that always catch your child's attention. This can be pictures of baby faces or photographs of familiar people. It also can be animal board books, books of familiar objects, or anything your child seems to like.
- Board books and other picture books can be especially engaging. Public libraries often have books especially for babies. You can also make your own picture book! Small photo albums are good ways to show your infant pictures of familiar people, objects, and activities. Search the Web using **how to make books for babies** and you'll find many other ideas.
- Introduce new books to your baby when she is alert and attentive. Nestle your child in your lap or against your arm. Try putting her in an infant seat or prop her in a sitting position in the corner of an armchair.
- Show your child the book. Point at the first picture while saying its name. Follow your child's lead. Describe in short sentences what she looks at or touches. Book-reading times should be like a game of give-and-take. First, you do something (turn the page, for example). Then your child does something (smiles and gets excited). Keep the game going by saying, "The baby is looking at you!" The more your child looks, touches, and enjoys the book-sharing activity, the better.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Is your child paying attention longer during reading times?
- Does your child reach, pat, or point at the pictures in books?
- Does your child recognize pictures of things she has seen before by smiling and getting excited?

Take a look at more ways to share picture books

Books Are Exciting

Jody, who is 8 months old, is cuddled in his mother's lap. Mom shows him a book of baby faces. She turns each page slowly. She waits for Jody to show some sign that he notices what he is looking at. Each time Jody moves and gets excited, his mom points to and describes the pictures in the book. The more they look at the book, the more absorbed Jody becomes in the parent-child activity.



Noisy Books

Five-month-old Sara, loves to bang things to make noises. Her mother drums her fingers on different toys when Sara is playing to encourage this. Mom starts a new game by showing Sara a book that has pages with different kinds of noise makers. She opens a page and pats the noise maker. The sound grabs Sara's attention. It's not long before Sara reaches and tries to make the sounds herself. Her mother helps her make the sounds. She also describes the pictures Sara sees and the noises that she makes.

Picture Book Delights

Sean, age 16 months, loves playing lap games with his parents. However, it is hard for Sean to hold his head up, even for short periods of time. His mom and dad, avid readers, are eager to help Sean enjoy books. They lie down with Sean, propping his head in the crooks of their arms to help with head control. Sean's parents know he really likes pictures of animals. The very first time he saw an animal picture book, Sean got excited. He loves every new picture he sees and every word and animal sound he sees and hears. The family enjoys looking at pictures and sharing picture books together.



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Baby's First Word Books

Stories and Listening

They say a picture is “worth a thousand words.” But seeing how one picture and one word go together is how reading begins. Here are some ideas about how to use word books to help your baby get on a path to reading.



What is the practice?

Picture books that pair each picture with a single word introduce an infant to printed text. Show your baby pictures of interesting things while naming and talking about the pictures. This will make book reading an enjoyable activity. This kind of reading helps infants learn that words mean the same things they see.

What does the practice look like?

A baby's first word book has pictures of familiar and interesting people, places, and things. First word books should have only one picture and one word per page. Read the words to your child while pointing at the picture and printed text. This will encourage him to point to or touch the picture. Any time your child points or touches the picture or word, say “Yes, that is a (name of the picture).”

How do you do the practice?

Here are some ideas you can use to build your child's interest in word books.

- The best first word books are ones with pictures of things that are both familiar and interesting to your child. Faces, toys, and other objects that your child sees regularly work best. Choose books that have one picture and one word on each page.
- You can make your own word books using a small photo album. Write the names of the people or objects under the pictures. Albums with plastic sleeves work well.
- Settle into a comfortable position where you can hold the book directly in front of your child. Show one of the pages and name the picture while pointing to the printed word. Ask questions like “Do you see the ___?” Any time your child reaches, touches, or points to the picture or printed word, repeat the word. As your child becomes more involved in the activity, say something new to encourage your child's interest in the pictures.
- You do not need to go through an entire book. It is best to stop before your child loses interest.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your child touch or look at the pictures in a book more often?
- Does your child sometimes babble or try to say the words after hearing them?
- Does your child want you to go through the book one more time?

Take a look at more first word books for babies

Words About Me!

Seven-month-old Ethan loves to look at himself in mirrors. Noticing this interest, his mom makes a word book with pictures of Ethan. The book includes eight pictures of Ethan. Each picture has one word describing his expression—happy, sad, joyful, crying, and more. Ethan's mother shows him the first page, which really excites him. She points to the picture while saying, "Yes, that's Ethan. You are such a happy baby!" Ethan loves looking at the pictures and having his mother talk about him.



Reach and Touch

Antonio, age 11 months, is on his mother's lap. Mom shows him a book of familiar animals—cats, dogs, birds, etc. As he looks at each animal, Antonio babbles and giggles. His mom holds the book in front of Antonio who reaches and touches one of the pages. Mom says, "Do you see the cat? You do!" She shows him each page one at a time. She follows his lead by saying the name of the animal he touches. She also describes what the animal is doing. When he loses interest, Mom tells Antonio that all the animals are going to sleep and puts the book away.

Computer Word Book

Nico's mother has found a fun way to share word books with him. It really keeps Nico's attention! Mom put digital photos of Nico's favorite toys on her computer. Each picture includes the name of the toy. She then added her voice reading the toy's name. Nico can see and hear the names of each picture when he pushes a touch-sensitive pad. Mom holds Nico on her lap in front of the computer. She shows him how to make each of the pictures "talk." The combination of pictures, words, and speech keeps Nico's attention for quite a long time. Mom helps him "turn the pages" by guiding his hand to the touch pad.



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Tell Me More, Tell Me More

Stories and Listening

Infants delight in hearing the same story over and over. Hearing the same story over and over helps a child become familiar with words, phrases, and sayings.

What is the practice?

Storytelling is simply a way of making something a fun, interesting, and enjoyable activity for your child. Infants tell us they want us to “tell me more” by getting excited when they hear a familiar story. Phrases such as “once upon a time” let your child know she is about to hear a story. Children like to hear the same story a lot! The more she likes the story, the more she will try to get you to tell the story again.

What does the practice look like?

Storytelling with infants involves short “stories” or phrases that are very repetitive. They can be made-up stories like telling your child about they day her or she was born. They can also be stories in books you read to your child. Use exaggerated facial and body movements and highly expressive sounds and words to bring the story to life! Ham it up. Your child will love it.



How do you do the practice?

Here are some ideas for introducing stories to your child:

- Pick a story that is about something familiar and interesting to your child. Children like stories about family members, pets, favorite foods, or toys.
- Keep the story simple, short, and repetitive. Your child's first stories should be only about three or four sentences.
- Make your child the star of the story! Make up stories about your child. When using a book to tell a story, pretend the story is about her.
- Use funny gestures, silly voices, and exaggerated facial expressions when telling the story. Make the story entertaining.
- Look for signs that your child wants you to tell her the story again. If your child wants to hear the story again, say “Do you want me to tell you the story again?” Repeat the story as many times as your child seems interested.
- Encourage your child to become part of the storytelling. Ask simple questions and answer them for the child. “Did you like the story about [child’s name]? You are a superstar!”
- Your child does not need to understand the story to be part of the storytelling. The idea is to use storytelling to make “talking” and listening fun. Hearing the same words and phrases over and over will get your child’s attention.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your child get excited when you are about to tell a story?
- Is your child especially attentive to the words and your movements?
- Does your child smile and vocalize as part of hearing the story?

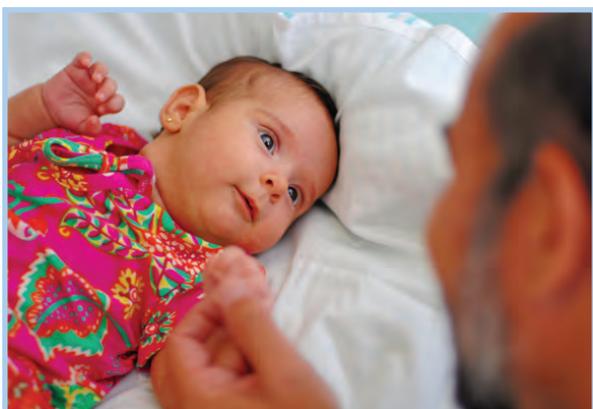
Take a look at more storytelling with infants

All About Me!

Six-month-old Ananda's mother is holding her in her arms in a cuddling position so she can see Mom's face. This has become a favorite position for Ananda to listen to her special story. Mom starts by asking in an exaggerated tone, "How is my big girl doing today?" She continues in lively *Parentese*, "Ananda is so big and so, so strong! Ananda is also sooooo, sooooo, cute!" Mom laughs and asks, "You like your story, don't you?" Then she repeats the story in a sing-song manner with exaggerated facial expressions, "Ananda is so-big, so-strong, and sooooo cute!" Ananda "hangs onto" every word by listening, smiling, vocalizing, and moving about showing how much she likes *her* story.



A Touch of Parentese



Lauren is 8 months old. Her father tells her a story about how much he and Lauren's mom wanted a little girl. "Once upon a time, Mommy and Daddy decided to have a baby." (Lauren looks intently.) "They so hoped it would be a little girl. And guess what?" (He waits for Lauren to respond.) Then Dad continues in *Parentese*, "We got our little Lauren! You are just what we wanted. We are sooooo, sooooo very lucky!" Dad tells the story, but waits at the end of each sentence. He does this so that Lauren can say or do something like vocalize or smile. Whenever she does, Dad responds, "You like your story, don't you?" Lauren has become more and more involved in the story the more she hears it.

Listen Up!

Jamie was diagnosed with a visual impairment when she was 2 months old. She has learned to listen intently to sounds as a way of knowing what is going on around her. Jamie's mother uses her daughter's keen listening skills as part of a storytelling game they play together. Mom holds Jamie on her lap facing her. She starts the story by saying "Once upon a time, Jamie went for a ride with her mommy." Mom holds her daughter on her legs and moves her about. "Jamie listens to everything around her," Mom continues. "What did she hear? A dog?" (Mom says, "Woof.") "A cat?" (Mom says, "Meow.") "A cow?" (Mom asks, "What does the cow say?"). The story continues while Jamie responds to her mom's questions by smiling, vocalizing, and wiggling.



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The Right Touch

Stories and Listening

Infants love to reach and grab anything they can get their hands on! Touch-and-feel books can be a fun way to combine reaching, touching, and reading. Touch-and-feel books are a great way to introduce stories and books to young children.

What is the practice?

This practice uses touch-and-feel books to involve an infant in looking at, touching, and exploring books. Just tell your child a story as she plays with a touch-and-feel book.

What does the practice look like?

An infant who loves to reach, grab, and touch everything in sight is shown a touch-and-feel book. The infant is on her mother's lap facing away from her. Mom holds a book in front of the child. The baby girl immediately reaches for and pats the book. Mom opens the book. To her daughter's surprise, she sees the fluffy tail of a rabbit! She runs her hand over the tail. Mom describes what she is doing. "You feel the bunny's tail. It's so soft!" Page after page, the little girl gets more and more excited.



How do you do the practice?

The best touch-and-feel books include things that your child likes and enjoys. Search the Web using *homemade touch-and-feel books* for ideas about how to make a special book for your child.

- Start by thinking about the things your child especially likes to look at and touch. The more interesting the book's pages are to your child, the better she'll love her new book.
- Look for books that include as many favorite things as you can find. Make a special "Touch Book" for your child.
- When you show her the book, position your child so she is comfortable and can move her hands freely. Talk about and describe what she is looking at and touching.
- Repeat any movements or sounds your baby makes. This will encourage her to continue looking at the book.
- Make book reading as fun and enjoyable as you can.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your child reach for and grab the book?
- Does she get excited when she sees things familiar to her?
- Does your child vocalize more and "talk to" what she is looking at?

Take a look at more touch-and-feel play

A Touching Treasure

Victoria, who is 7 months old, often lies in her crib after waking up from a nap. She likes to rub and touch whatever is in her crib (blanket, stuffed animal, crib rails). She especially likes the feel of different kinds of materials. Mom remembers a favorite touch-and-feel book she read to Victoria's older brother that included different animals and textures. She knows Victoria likes looking at pictures of animals. She decides to see what her daughter will do with the touch-and-feel book. Victoria is beside herself! Right away she is grabbing, touching, and babbling at the animal pictures. Her mother describes what Victoria is doing.



Touchy-Feely Book

Gavin's mother knows how much her 1-year-old son loves to touch and feel different things. She also knows that Gavin likes things that move when he touches or pushes them. She gathers different things that her son likes to touch to make *Gavin's Touchy-Feely Book*. The book has just 10 pages. It has pictures of his favorite things. Each picture is on the left side of the page. The fabric or material that "feels like" it is on the right side. One of these pairs is a picture of a bird and several small feathers. Mom describes what Gavin is looking at. She makes up sounds to go with each of the pictures. Gavin reaches and grabs the book and makes different sounds as he plays with it.



In Touch

Physical difficulties make it hard for 9-month-old Antonio to reach for things in front of him. His mother has found a way to read to him using touch-and-feel books that Antonio especially likes. His mother describes what she is looking at and then gently rubs his nose or cheek with the book page. Sometimes she uses stuffed animals or other materials to show Antonio how different textures feel.



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Baby's First ABC Book

Stories and Listening

Learning about the alphabet starts long before a child can even say or recognize letters. ABC books are one way to turn story time into a fun time filled with sounds, words, and letters.

What is the practice?

Parents can use store-bought or homemade ABC books to involve their babies in learning to enjoy stories. You are not wanting to teach your child the ABCs. You just want to let your child see the letters.

What does the practice look like?

Show your child pictures of familiar or interesting objects that include the first letters of the words. Read or tell your child a story. Recite an ABC rhyme. Or use a book as part of a made-up story. ABC books simply introduce your child to letters as part of a story. The more your child hears the sounds of words and letters, the more he will learn to notice different sounds.



How do you do the practice?

There is no right or wrong way to use ABC books with your child. The main idea is to read a story with pictures of familiar things that include letters of the alphabet.

- Start by finding or making ABC books with pictures of things that are interesting to your child.
- Read to your child when he is alert and interested in sitting on your lap. Or try reading to him which he is lying on the floor next to you.
- Show an ABC book to your child. Read or talk about what is on each page. Read to your child in an expressive manner.
- Introduce the ABCs through storytelling. There is no need to go through the whole book at one time. Start with a few pages. Add one or two pages each time you and your child read the book.
- Encourage your child to be part of the storytelling. Let him touch, hold, bang, and yes, taste the book!

How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your child look at or touch pictures that are familiar to him?
- Does your child make sounds or try to repeat things you do or say?
- Does your child point to books he wants you to read to him?

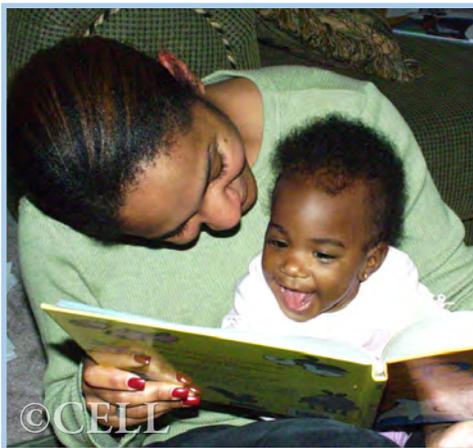
Take a look at more first alphabet books

ABCs Just for Me!

Nick's father has collected pictures of his 15-month-old son's favorite toys, people, and animals. He chooses eight of the pictures for Nick's first ABC book. He writes the first letter of each person's or object's name under the picture. He uses a small photo album to make the book. He says, "Daddy has a special treat for Nick—your very own ABC book!" He and Nick find a comfortable place to sit and look at the book together.



Dad sits on the floor with Nick sitting between his legs. Dad shows Nick the book with the title on the cover: *Nick's ABC Book*. He reads the title while pointing to it. "Let's read your book!" Dad says. He opens the first page which has a picture of Nick's big sister. Nick reaches for and pats the picture while Dad says, "You see Abby! Look, Abby starts with an A." Nick and his father go back and forth pointing, "talking," getting excited, and just having a fun time.



"Chicka, Chicka..."

Jada's mother sits in a chair with 9-month-old Jada on her lap. They are about to read a favorite storybook, *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*. It is about letters racing up a coconut tree while playing a game of tag. "A tells B..." Mom reads, and asks Jada, "What comes next?" Mom recites the book's rhyming chant, pausing between verses to ask her daughter to "guess what happens next." This excites Jada, especially when she hears the names of the letters she remembers. At the end of the story, Jada babbles as Mom reads, "Chicka, chicka, boom, boom, they all fall down!"

My Favorite Things

Megan has both a physical disability and some visual difficulties. This, however, does not stop her from loving to hear her father tell stories. She especially likes stories about herself that her father "makes up." Dad has collected digital photographs of some of Megan's favorite activities. He has added the first letter in large print to each photograph of a person, object, or action. He has even added sound clips describing the photographs (for example: "Megan's favorite toy is a bear. *Bear* starts with a *B*"). Dad holds Megan in front of the computer screen seated on his lap. He shows her how touching any of the keyboard keys "starts the story." Megan becomes excited and starts vocalizing and smiling each time she makes the computer "talk." Dad introduces new photographs each time he and Megan "read the book." This especially captures Megan's attention and interest.

