

Language & Learning

Read With Me

Reading With An Infant: Ideas For Getting Started

If you haven't already done so, you can start introducing books to your baby. It is never too early to start with books in simple ways. At first, babies may not respond to books in the way we expect. Jim Trelease in *The New Read-Aloud Handbook* (1989; Penguin Books: New York, p. 44) talks about stages in typical infants' responses to reading. These general guides can help you as you introduce the world of books to your baby, including:

- At 4 months, a child has no choice but to listen and observe since she has limited mobility. The parent may be thinking, "This is easy!" Your arms can encircle the baby to convey support and bonding.
- By 6 months the infant is more interested in grabbing the book to suck on it than listening or looking (which he may also be doing). You may want to give him a teething toy to suck on while you share the book.
- At 8 months, she may prefer turning pages to steady listening. Allow her ample opportunity to explore this activity but don't give up on the book entirely.
- At 12 months, the child's involvement may grow to turning pages for you. He may point to a few objects you name on the page or he may make animal noises on cue.
- By 15 months, she is walking a lot and her restlessness blossoms fully. Your reading times may need to be chosen carefully so as not to frustrate her immediate interests.

These are general guidelines for reading to babies. Each infant will differ in how he responds to books. Follow your little one's lead, read his signals, but don't give up. Continue to introduce books and find times when your baby is most receptive to the experience. If enjoying books together is one of your favorite activities, your baby will enjoy it, too.

Anne Krueger's *Parenting: Guide to Your Baby's First Year* (1999; Ballentine Books: New York, p. 220) suggests that parents, "choose cuddly soft books that will feel good to baby's hands, and smooth, sturdy books tough enough for baby teeth." Krueger suggests the following:

- *All Fall Down; Clap Hands; Say Goodnight; and Tickle, Tickle*, by Helen Oxenbury (Little Simon/Simon & Schuster)
- *My Cloth Books*, by Lucy Cousins (Candlewick Press)
Let's Eat; Let's Go; Let's Make Friends; and Let's Play, by Patrick Yee (Viking)