

Choosing Books for Children at Different Ages and Stages

Birth to 1 year: Small, brightly-colored board books with photos of babies and familiar objects like balls and bottles. Draw children's attention to the objects by saying "Look at the pictures," and asking "What's that?"

1 to 2 years: Sturdier books that children can handle and carry; books with few words on the pages or simple rhyming themes; "good night" books for naptime or bedtime. Talk about the pictures-you don't necessarily have to read the book to tell the story.

2 to 3 years: Silly or funny books work well. Look for subjects like food, animals, and making friends. Simple wordbooks are good choices. Keep these stories short and read them without lots of interruptions. Re-read them-children will begin to hear the rhythmic language.

3 to 4 years: Pick books that tell simple stories with a beginning, middle, and end; stories that are close to children's immediate interests, like getting scared and overcoming it; information books about their interests such as animals. As you read, ask children questions about the story: "What do you think will happen next? Why?" Keep them engaged.

5 to 6 years: Select stories and information books that evoke children's lively imaginations and interests; books about space, machines, time, and other cultures. Encourage children to tell you what interests them most about the story. Use open-ended questions to encourage them to elaborate their ideas. Be sure to let them ask questions as the story progresses.