

Tips for Choosing Books for Infants and Toddlers

Birth to 6 Months	
Content	Choose books with large pictures or bright and bold illustrations set against a contrasting background. Look for books that have simple pictures, one per page.
Language	Infants will enjoy looking through wordless picture books, or books that have just a single word along with a big picture. But also try books that contain phrases or short sentences. It's important for infants to hear language. Nursery rhymes and verse books are good for this age, too.
Design	Books for infants should be interesting and appealing to look at. Try stiff cardboard books, books with fold-out pages that create colorful panels, cloth or soft vinyl books, and books with handles.
Reading Aloud	Infants want your full attention, so try reciting rhymes and songs that you remember by heart. Also, try reading to infants while she has a toy to hold.
Seven to 12 Months	
Content	Children this age will enjoy books with medium to large photos and bright, bold illustrations. Look for books that have simple drawings of familiar things, actions and events.
Language	Children begin to key into content and can relate pictures to their world. While they still enjoy picture books, try some books with simple stories that have one line of text per page.
Design	Infants this age like to handle cloth and vinyl books and cardboard books with stiff, thick pages.
Reading Aloud	<p>As babies gets older, try this four-part interaction sequence:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Get your baby's attention by pointing out something in a book. ("Look!")2. Ask a labeling question. ("What's that?")3. Wait for your baby to respond, verbally or non-verbally. If necessary, provide the answer yourself. ("That's a monkey!")4. Acknowledge your baby's response. ("Yes" or repeat your baby's word.) If your baby mislabels the picture, correct him in a positive manner. ("Yes, it's brown like a dog, but it's a monkey.") <p>Keep in mind that you may not get through a whole book in one reading. As your child starts to explore books, support her progress by watching, listening and acknowledging.</p>

12 to 18 Months

Content	For children this age, try books with pictures of familiar characters, like animals, children, TV characters or adults in familiar roles. Look for books that have action pictures - your baby is starting to be able to enjoy pictures with more details.
Language	This is a great age to try books with songs and repetitive verses. Books that have a simple story line that relates to your child's own experiences will also have appeal. You might also look for theme books that show a series of related pictures and a few words. These books follow a progression of simple activities, but don't try to introduce a plot or complex storyline.
Design	Even though your baby is growing fast, she'll still enjoy playing with books with handles and books with stiff, thick pages. And she'll still like having these books read to her. Books with thinner pages that are plastic-coated are also a good choice for this age.
Reading Aloud	Your infant will probably still enjoy reading with you as he sits on your lap or close to you in a comfortable chair. This helps your baby associate reading with feeling secure. Connecting sounds with the pictures he sees in the books will make reading together even more fun. Make your own sounds, and don't be surprised if your baby joins in! You may also notice your child looking through the book alone and making noises (sometimes called "book babble").

19 to 30 Months

Content	Toddlers will continue to enjoy books with familiar characters, but they also will begin to take interest in pictures filled with information, action and detail. Try some short stories, cause and effect stories, and fictional books that describe a problem or circumstance to overcome.
Language	Try predictable books with repeated text, words that rhyme, and pictures that correspond to the text. Books with songs and repetitive verses are still a good choice for this age.
Design	Toddlers can enjoy books with paper pages-but will still like books with a picture on every page and just a little bit of text.
Reading Aloud	Let your toddler decide if she wants to sit on your lap while you read, or next to you on the couch or floor. Follow her cues. Talk about the characters and events in the story, relating them to your child's own experiences. Pause when you read aloud to let your child fill in a word or phrase. This works great with rhyming and repetitive books.

Tips provided courtesy of the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL).