

Let the reading begin...early and often!

What does research tell us about the effects of how early in life and how often infants and toddlers experience shared reading?

Research findings back up the assertion that “the sooner, the better” applies when it comes to reading to infants and toddlers.

Findings from an analysis of 11 studies including 4,020 child participants, conducted by the Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL), demonstrated a positive relationship between the age of onset of adults reading to children and the strength of children’s long-range language and literacy development. In addition, the more often these adult-child reading interactions happened, the more they benefited children’s language and literacy development.

In sum, the findings from this research synthesis provide empirical backing for those who claim, “it is never too early to begin reading to infants and toddlers.” The younger the children were when adults began reading to them, the better were their literacy and language skills as determined in follow-up evaluations.

The analysis of this group of studies was somewhat limited, according to CELL researchers, in that the primary study reports provided inadequate information about the types of reading experiences the children had and the places in which the reading occurred. This made it impossible to describe fully the best conditions and methods for providing these early reading opportunities. Nevertheless, sources of tips and recommendations for reading to young children abound.

An Internet search for *reading to infants and toddlers* identified more than 37 million sources of information!



Smiles, excitement, and closeness are part of the fun when parents and caregivers share colorful interest-engaging picture books with infants and toddlers.

Among the tips offered by many early reading experts are: (1) read with enthusiasm, (2) respond to children’s attempts to look at and play with books, (3) read stories with rhythmic and rhyming text, (4) follow children’s interests, (5) read children’s favorite books again and again, and (6) read only as long as children remain engaged in the activity.

This *CELLnotes* summarizes findings reported in Dunst, C. J., Simkus, A., & Hamby, D. W. (2012). Relationship between age of onset and frequency of reading and infants’ and toddlers’ early language and literacy development, *CELLreviews* 5(3), 1-10.

Acting on the Evidence

Download free, two-page *CELL*practices guides in versions for parents or practitioners at www.earlyliteracylearning.org

Staff of CELL have created a number of practice guides especially for parents and early childhood practitioners to encourage putting this research evidence to use in home, community, and classroom settings. All of the two-page practice guides listed below are available for free download on the CELL project web site: www.earlyliteracylearning.org. At this web address you can also find interactive posters called *CELL*pops and multimedia practice guides such as videos that illustrate practices supported by this research.



Especially for PARENTS

Infants:

Baby's First ABC Books
Baby's First Picture Books
Baby's First Word Books
The Right Touch

Toddlers:

A Book By Its Cover
Book Reading Made Fun for All
Looking at Books Together

Preschoolers:

Book Is the Word
Let's Read Together
Word Wise

Especially for PRACTITIONERS

Infants:

ABC Books for Beginners
First Picture Books
First Word Books
Touch-and-Feel Books

Toddlers:

A Picture Book for Learning
Letters and Books
Picture Book Fun
Reading Together Out Loud

Preschoolers:

Words Everywhere
Read and Repeat
One for the Books