

Especially for parents of infants!

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.

