

Especially for parents of toddlers! 

Looking at Letters

Symbols and Letters

Before your toddler can begin to read or write, she needs to become familiar with the look and sound of the letters in the alphabet. Alphabet books help children ages 18-36 months become interested in the alphabet. They help teach letter recognition, letter sounds, and words that begin with the same letter.

What is the practice?

Reading alphabet books with your toddler is an important pre-reading activity that introduces her to letters and their sounds. Alphabet books come in a variety of styles. Choose one that is easy for your toddler's small hands to handle, such as a board book or an oversized book, and look for one that has bright and colorful pictures. Children who can identify letters and recognize letter sounds have an advantage in learning to read. Reading alphabet books to your toddler helps prepare her for reading.

What does the practice look like?

Let your toddler choose the ABC book she wants to read. It helps to point to the letters as you say them, such as "A is for *apple*." Engage your child. Ask her to help you sound out the letters. "A makes the sound *Aaa, Aaa, Aaa*. Can you make this sound with me?" This will help her become familiar with the letters in the alphabet and help her make connections to letters and their sounds. Children who can identify the alphabet have an easier time learning letter/sound pairs.



How do you do the practice?

Make it fun! Follow your toddler's interest in the activity. Be patient with your toddler and offer encouragement for her efforts.

- Keep an alphabet book in the car and ask your toddler to "read it to you," helping her with the different letters and sounds.
- Read an alphabet book to your toddler at bedtime and point to each letter while making the letter sound.
- Provide your toddler with alphabet toys such as magnetic letters for the fridge, ABC blocks, and alphabet puzzles.
- Reread the book. The more your toddler hears the alphabet the more likely she will become familiar with it.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Is your toddler pointing to or showing interest in letters?
- Does your toddler show more interest in books?
- Does your child appear to enjoy looking at letter books?

Take a look at more fun with alphabet books

Making Connections

Two-year-old DeAndre loves to play with cars and blocks. DeAndre has a set of alphabet blocks that he likes to stack up and knock over with his cars. Every night before bed, DeAndre's mother reads him an ABC book. She points to each letter as she names it and makes the letter sound. She asks DeAndre to help her name the picture beside each letter. Next to the letter C in the book is a picture of a car that always catches DeAndre's interest. She tells DeAndre, "These letters are just like the letters on your blocks." DeAndre's eyes light up when he makes this connection. The next day, DeAndre brings his mom the C block and says, "Look, Mom! Car!" DeAndre's mom smiles and says, "Yes, sweet boy, good job! The word *car* does start with the letter C."



The Alphabet Song

Twenty-two-month-old Lars likes to look at books. Lars's dad brings home an ABC book and asks if his son would like to look at it with him. Lars nods eagerly. As they sit down on the couch to read, Dad asks Lars if he knows how to sing *The Alphabet Song*. Lars nods "yes." "Let's sing the song after we've looked at the book," Dad suggests. Lars's face shows excitement. "Okay," he says. Lars's dad goes through the book pointing to each letter and naming the picture. "A is for *Apple*." He does this quickly enough to hold Lars's attention. After they have finished the book, Lars's dad asks Lars, "So, are you ready to sing *The Alphabet Song*?" Lars's eyes light up and he nods. "Sing it with me," Dad starts. "A, B, C, D..."

Got a Feeling...

Thirty-four-month-old Kevin has a vision impairment. Kevin loves to listen to the books his mom reads to him, and he also enjoys listening to music and singing songs. Right now his favorite book is a textured ABC book. Kevin repeatedly asks his mom to read this book to him because he likes that she guides his finger to the raised letters and he enjoys feeling the different textures. "A is for apple," his mother reads. "Do you feel the bumpy A?" When they finish reading the book, Kevin says, "Now let's sing," and enthusiastically begins singing *The Alphabet Song*.

