

Especially for parents of toddlers!

Magic of Catalogs and Magazines

Symbols and Letters

Before children learn to read, they must learn that printed letters and words stand for spoken words. This guide suggests ways to help your toddler understand that letters and words have meaning. This is a major step in learning to read.

What is the practice?

Toddlers who often see printed material (pictures, letters, words) come to realize that print is connected to meaning. Let your young child explore magazines, catalogs, and fliers while you point out how words and their meanings go together. Even at times when books aren't available, find ways to include print in your daily routines. Children need to learn the purpose of symbols and print before they can learn to read letters and words.

What does the practice look like?

Seeing the link between print and its meaning is important. This happens whenever you and your toddler talk about pictures or print from magazines, grocery fliers, newspapers, and brochures. Help your child cut or tear pictures or words from them to make simple stories or shopping lists. There are many activities that can help you talk about what printed words and pictures mean.



How do you do the practice?

Notice everyday opportunities for your toddler to learn about print. These include looking freely at brochures, circulars, magazines, books, newspapers, and signs on buildings and roads.

- Start by finding out what types of print material are most interesting to your toddler. For example, bright colors might catch the eyes of some children. Others might like paper that has a glossy finish.
- Use printed materials in many ways. For instance, help your toddler find pictures of food he likes in grocery ads. Cut out the pictures and help him tape or paste them on paper to make play menus or shopping lists.
- Have your toddler sit with you at a computer as you browse children's Web sites. Look for sites designed for young children and sites about things your child finds interesting. When something on a Web site catches your child's attention, stop and talk about what he sees. Read from the screen while pointing to the words. This helps your child make the connection between written words and pictures.
- Ask your toddler to name what he sees in a magazine. If he sees a picture of a duck, for example, show him the word *duck* on the page, too.
- Smile and comment on your toddler's efforts. Your child is more likely to stay involved with a little praise from you.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your toddler want to look at and talk about magazines or catalogs with you?
- Does your toddler seem pleased about his attempts to "read" printed material?
- Does your toddler ask you about the words and pictures in magazines and catalogs?

More fun with magazines and catalogs

Grocery-Store Fun

When waiting in a check-out line at the market, 23-month-old Carrie and her mom look at magazines on display. Carrie is seated in the shopping cart. Her mom points to a picture on a magazine cover and asks about it. "What do you think this girl is doing?" she asks. Finding a C in big type, Mom points to the letter and says, "Look, here's a C like in *Carrie*." Mom knows her daughter enjoys the activity since Carrie often points to something printed and asks, "What's that?"



Shopping Flier

Every week, Courtney's grandmother saves the grocery ad inserts from her newspaper. Sometimes Grandma asks 30-month-old Courtney if she wants to help make a shopping list. If Courtney says yes, she gets the ad pages, scissors, paper, and tape. Grandma asks, "What do we need to buy at the store?" Courtney cuts out food pictures, and Grandma helps her tape them on the paper. She knows Courtney enjoys this activity because the toddler asks to take her picture "list" when they go shopping.

Favorite Sections

Davy, who has a hearing loss, sometimes has a hard time letting his mom know what he wants. Each week Davy brings his mom the comics and advertising sections from the Sunday paper. Together, using the pictures, they sign and talk about Davy's favorite comic strips. Then they look at the ads. Davy shows Mom what he would like from the grocery store. They often use this as a way to learn new words and ideas. When they go shopping for food, Davy likes to bring the ads. He helps his mom look for the items they marked.

