



Selecting Books for Infants Birth to 18 months

Long before children can walk and talk, they will listen closely to the rhythmic rise and fall of their caregiver's voice. Before six months, the baby's experience with stories and poems is closely tied to music and rhythm experiences. Babies older than six months still enjoy rhythmic sounds and repetition. Reading nursery rhymes and simple stories to babies will help develop their language skills and offer a change in the words and sounds they hear every day. Reading to babies also will help them learn to listen and to tell the difference between sounds.

Cloth books, soft plastic and board books, simple story books, and wordless picture books offer babies something to feel, touch, look at, and think about. By looking at books, babies will learn that pictures have meaning. As you point out things in the pictures, they will begin to use their eyes to connect pictures with words.

A six-month-old is ready to sit in your lap and can reach out to touch and feel the book as you point to the pictures. By nine months, most babies will try to help you turn the pages. Turning the pages of a thick board book will help infants feel good about what they can do, as well as help develop their small muscle coordination. Choose a book with a short, simple story, a lot of rhythm, and repeated words and phrases.

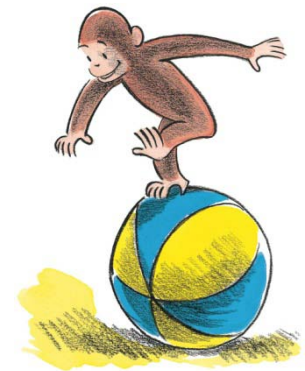
Books for Infants

Simple story books, nursery rhymes, poems, wordless picture books, cloth, and board books are good choices for babies. Young infants will enjoy picture books made of cloth or cardboard that have pictures of things they know. They like eye-catching colors such as red, blue, or yellow, and pictures with high contrast like simple black and white drawings. From about 15 to 18 months, you can start to read simple stories with plots. Books that children can take part in, like *Pat the Bunny*, delight older babies. Books that introduce ideas like up/down, in/out, big/little, and over/under are good for older infants as well.

Ask for these and other books at your local library:

- *Baby Danced the Polka*, by Karen Beaumont
- *Baby Born*, by Anastasia Suen
- *Baby Faces* series, by Margaret Miller
- *The Baby Goes Beep*, by Rebecca O'Connell
- *Baby Sleeps*, by Janet Ahlberg and Allan Ahlberg
- *Black on White* and *White on Black*, by Tana Hoban
- *Buenos Dias Baby!* by Libby Ellis

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- *Clap Hands*, by Helen Oxenbury
- *Everywhere Babies*, by Susan Meyers
- *Global Babies*, by Maya Ajmera
- *Hello Baby!* by Mem Fox
- *How a Baby Grows*, by Nola Buck
- *Motown Baby Love* series, by Charles R. Smith
- *My Colors/Mis Colores*, by Rebecca Emberley
- *My Very First Mother Goose*, by Rosemary Wells
- *Pots and Pans*, by Patricia Hubbell
- *The Runaway Bunny*, by Margaret Wise Brown
- *Shapes*, by Little Scholastic
- *Te Amo, Bebé, Little One*, by Lisa Wheeler
- *Where is Baby's Belly Button?* by Karen Katz



Types of books for infants:

- Board books—pages are heavy, sturdy, and laminated; perfect for little hands. The pictures are simple and clear; the books are brightly designed; the stories are simple and short. Babies can chew on sturdy books without causing too much damage. Clean books by wiping with 1/2 cup bleach per gallon of water. You can also wipe with a little window cleaner or rubbing alcohol.
- Cloth books—pages are made of heavy-duty cloth. Pages aren't as easily turned as those in board books, but the books are durable --just toss and wash.
- Soft plastic books—again these are durable and can even go in the bathtub.

How you can help

Infants do not have long attention spans so keep your reading activities short and fun. It also is a good idea to have board books on low shelves so babies can reach them when they want. Try reading, singing, or reciting poetry and rhymes or doing finger plays during bath or feeding times. Remember that children of this age love to have things repeated over and over, so be willing to recite the same rhyme a number of different times. Soon babies will respond to the different tones and rhythms and may try to repeat the rhyme or do the finger play along with you.

It is the language and social interaction that surround the reading, not just the words and pictures of the book itself, that foster literacy development. So, have fun with books! Re-read old favorites again and again. Share a wide variety of books with your child—storybooks, concept books, information books, poetry books, books about people like you and about people who are different.

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