

# Bedtime Books

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Bedtime routines are rhythms. Pyjamas, teeth, song, then books, then prayers then sleep. These rhythms become both comfortable and comforting. They help a child roll into sleep, just like he did the night before. Books should be an important part of that cycle. No child is too young to be read to. While bedtime is of course not the only time that's right for reading, it is a perfect time for calm quiet closeness. Your child will enjoy being held, hearing your voice, and there is even connection through looking at and talking about the same thing - the pictures on the page. From these warm and comfortable experiences, your child will come to look at books with fondness. These experiences for children have long been shown to help them become better and more avid readers. As developing listeners, there is powerful experience in being read to for all ages, and this experience is the fuel for your child's language development.



Let your child choose the books. You might have a guideline about how many are read each night, but this should be a guideline and not a rule. Try to leave your child wanting just a little more. Giving them enough but not too much will peak their love for books.

As you let your child choose the books, you will begin to know his taste. This will help you hunt for books at the library or book store. A weekly trip to the library is a fantastic addition to your child's calendar. Let him spend lots of time looking for books that he would like to take home. When you are buying books it is okay to look for books that entertain you as well. The more fun you both have together reading, the more powerful the experience will be for your child.

Reading and rereading, and then rereading the same book is okay. Every child goes through this stage and it is important to their learning. They find comfort in the repetition, and language learning is reinforced during these times.

You don't have to finish the book. Treat each page as a conversation. Feel free to leave the text on the page behind and talk about what you see. Pause and give your child time to make his comments. Ask what he thinks will happen next.

Remember that infants only focus on one thing for a few minutes. Read for short periods, but look for lots of times to do it during the day. Move up as your child gets older.

Use lots of emotion in your voice and make faces. Use funny voices for different characters. Use long pauses to add drama.

For some books it is okay for your child to sit or lie quietly, just taking it in. For other books, make sure your child has lots of opportunities to talk.

The most important thing about bedtime books is to...have fun!

