



Understanding Books and Stories

Your child was born to learn! From birth, your child is learning to listen and understand his world. As he grows, he will begin to talk about his experiences.

When your child is able to listen and talk about things he knows, it is easier for him to understand books and stories. Understanding what has been read is called comprehension. This means that your child can connect the people and events in stories to what he already knows. These skills will help your child become a good reader and writer. Learning to read is about figuring out what words say and what the words mean.

You are your child's first and best teacher. With your help, your child can learn to comprehend. Every day moments are learning moments! Try these easy and fun activities with your child:

YOUR INFANT:

- Read to your baby every day. Encourage him to touch the pictures and repeat words or sounds that you say when you read.
- Sing songs and do fingerplays with your baby. Stop to see if he anticipates a certain part of the song. For example, with "This Little Piggy," he may start to giggle before you wiggle his toe and say "...wee, wee, wee all the way home!"
- Choose simple books about real things that your child sees every day.

YOUR TODDLER:

- Go on a trip with your child (to the store, the post office, the zoo, etc.). Recall together what happened. Ask questions. Help him to talk about it. For example, say: "Do you remember going to the grocery store? What did we buy? We bought peanut butter. It's your favorite!"
- Tell familiar stories to your child. Let her tell stories to you. Ask, "Then what happened?" This will help your child put events in order.
- Choose books that are about your child's life experiences. For example, find a book about riding on the bus, the arrival of a new baby sister, or getting a hair cut.
- Help your child find books at the library about his interests. For example, if he likes trucks or bugs, he might like books that have real pictures in them. Be sure to ask *what* and *where* questions. See if your child can answer or point to the picture.

YOUR PRESCHOOLER:

- Read to your child every day. Stop and ask questions about the book. Ask your child to guess what he thinks will happen next in the story.
- Encourage your child to retell parts of the story. For example, read *Curious George*. Ask, "What happened after Curious George took the balloons?" "Then what happened?" "What did the man with the yellow hat say?" "What do the pictures tell you about that?" Then ask him to see if the pictures can help him guess what might happen next.
- Let your child use puppets to practice retelling a familiar story! He will have fun making simple puppets from paper bags, socks, etc.
- Encourage your child to draw a picture about the story. Write down what she says about her picture.