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## **Ages and Stages of Reading Development – Infants and Toddlers**

Infants and toddlers learn from and thrive on face-to-face interactions—leaning into a crib, cooing and telling a baby how much he is loved, or holding an 18-month-old close and playing a game of “peek-a-boo.” This kind of interplay is key to your child’s brain development. As your child’s first and most important teacher, one of your goals should be to surround your child with talk. This exposure happens naturally – when you are singing a song or lullaby, reading a story, or just responding to your baby’s coos, laughs, and cries.

### **Milestones**

#### **Your infant/toddler should:**

- Communicate first with gestures and expressions, then with simple sounds and words;
- Enjoy listening to stories, songs, and rhymes and playing language games;
- Learn to talk and respond to others for the pleasure of interaction;
- Love repetition or hearing the same sounds and stories over and over and over;
- Begin using language to explain what she wants, ask questions, and express her feelings and ideas.

#### **You can try this:**

- Talk to your infant throughout the day—during diapering, bathing, feeding and bedtime. Give simple explanations of what is happening and what will happen next.
- Make eye contact and show lots of emotion when you talk. Use a higher pitch and long, drawn-out vowels (for example stretch the “I” in Hi or the “O’s” in Good). This helps your baby hear and learn distinct sounds.
- Read stories aloud every day, sing songs or rhymes, and play language games to introduce your baby to the sound of words.
- Create a reading ritual, whether it is before you go to work, after dinner, or at bedtime. Find a comfortable space such as a chair, rug, couch, or bed. Draw your child close to you on your lap. This is important to making reading a lifelong habit.
- Use words she is not familiar with and explain what they mean.

#### **When choosing books for your infant or toddler, look for:**

- Stories and songs with simple rhymes and repeated sounds;
- Words and features that are interactive such as touch and feel, pop-up books, and books with sound;
- Bright pictures of concepts they are familiar with such as animals and colors;
- Sturdy pages made of cardboard, vinyl, or washable cloth;
- Books that are comfortable for your infant or toddler to handle.