

Learning to read starts earlier than you might think: Five tips from an expert

November 22 2021, by Karen Boardman



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

In the early weeks of their lives and even before birth, babies are skilfully processing important information about the sounds they hear. They are attuning to tones, [patterns of language](#) and distinguishing their own [familiar adults' voices](#). Making sense of sounds, patterns, words and sentences are important skills that will help a child as they progress

towards reading.

[Early reading](#) for under-threes is rooted in their daily lives. It involves lots of listening, communication, speech and language activities—not just [sharing books](#).

As their language and communication skills develop and they build vocabulary, under-threes learn to use pictures, words and sounds, tell and retell familiar stories, and sing songs and rhymes. In turn, these activities help [children](#) navigate pictures, words and sentences they encounter on the page.

Here are five tips to support early reading for children aged under three.

1: Create a "chatty" environment

Encourage and support lots of communication. Research shows that [talking to babies and toddlers](#) helps them build vocabulary, while conversation a child simply overhears does not always contribute to their vocabulary development.

Take turns in conversations and comment on their activities and the routines of the day. This could be when getting dressed, during play, nappy changing or taking a walk through the park. This will enable under-threes to begin to develop [receptive language](#)—the ability to understand others. They will make connections, notice, respond and engage with sounds and images in the environment, all important early reading skills.

2. Have fun with rhythm and music making

Play lots of rhyming games, sing nursery rhymes, comment on rhyming patterns in songs and make lots of music. [Repetition and predictable](#)

[rhyme](#) helps children remember new words.

Alliteration and assonance in poetry and nursery rhymes draws attention to the individual sounds and patterns in words.

3. Share meaningful images

Use images, such as pictures and photographs of familiar places, objects, families and communities, to create meaningful shared experiences for children under three. Make [books](#) with photographs or apps to encourage talk and interaction about children's home cultures and families.

Encourage children to point out the details they encounter in pictures.

[Reading pictures](#) and following images helps children learn to read as they begin to make connections, understand sequences of stories and further develop their comprehension skills. Very [young children](#) are adept at [interpreting visual texts](#) and noticing details.

4. Draw attention to print in daily life

Use your environment and local community to point out words at home, at nursery or out and about. This could be print on cereal boxes, signs or logos. Encountering [print in their environment](#) helps under-threes recognize letters, sounds and images that have meaning.

5. Engage with books frequently

Shared book reading, story time and retelling stories together are valuable points of connection and social interaction for under-threes. When supportive adults encourage the exploration of pictures, draw attention to the text and the conventions of print, and talk about the characters or the sequence of the story, the story comes alive to create

awe and wonder for children.

Choose a range of books—cloth, sensory, [picture](#) books and story books or online [story](#) apps. Ensure that under-threes also have [independent access](#) to these, so they are able to choose books or apps themselves, turn pages or handle interactive technology.

Puppets, props and role-play help to make books or stories and rhymes interactive and help children recreate stories through imaginative play. Under-threes need to relate images, sounds and words to their own experiences, so ensure that the props you use link to the child's culture and daily life.

This article is republished from [The Conversation](#) under a Creative Commons license. Read the [original article](#).

Provided by The Conversation

Citation: Learning to read starts earlier than you might think: Five tips from an expert (2021, November 22) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-11-earlier-expert.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.