

An Introduction to First Books

The first steps in a lifetime of reading

When should you start reading?

It's never too early to start reading to children, although you might want to wait until they are back home from the labour ward before launching into *Winnie-the-Pooh*. But even very small babies can benefit from being read to.

What will young babies get out of it?

Very young babies will not have a clue what you're talking about when you first start to read to them! But they will enjoy hearing the sound of your voice and will be stimulated by the different colours and contrasts that appear in picture books for the very young.

Reading also promotes lots of body contact, which is important to young babies – and their parents and grandparents.

The first few years

In the first two or three years, it's not about learning to read at all. It's more about using books to develop vocabulary and pronunciation, and having fun learning about everyday people, places and objects.

A lot of children's first words will be recognisable from the books they've been read. The nephew of one Egmont staff member could name every single Mr. Men before the age of two!

Many books for ages 0-3 will tell simple stories about things that children can relate to, such as going to the playground or having a bath. Others will help develop awareness of numbers, letters, shapes and colours in an easy and fun way.

More sophisticated books for ages 3+

Picture books for children aged 3+ still contain stories that children can identify with but they are told using more advanced language and can often feature more abstract characters, like underpants-loving aliens or wild beasts with knobby knees! These books allow children to use their imaginations and can also help them to learn how to express themselves and understand common feelings and emotions.

'I like reading with my mummy because I want to learn my letters and sounds' Louis, age 4

Why it's Good to Read ALoud

Reading aloud to children is very important as it introduces them to the link between words on a page and talking.

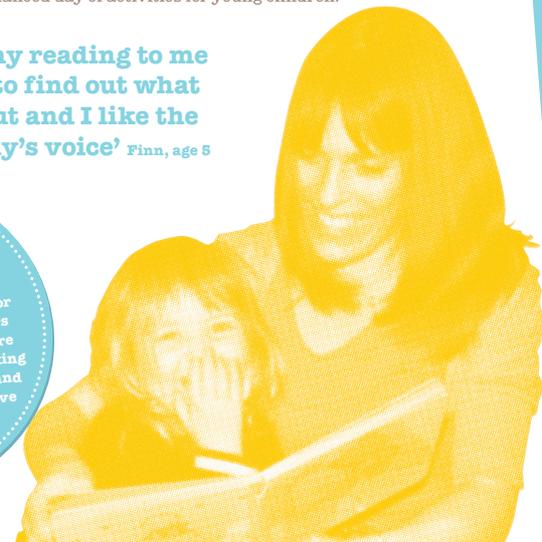
It has also been suggested that children who are read to from an early age develop better listening, thinking and communication skills.

Another great reason to read aloud with children is that it's a lovely way to have quality time together. There's much more interaction than other activities like watching a DVD so it's nice to make reading aloud part of a balanced day of activities for young children.

'I like my mummy reading to me because I want to find out what the story is about and I like the sound of mummy's voice' Finn, age 5

TOP TIP

Reading aloud needn't end when children start to read for themselves. For several years afterwards, you can read more challenging books to them, taking breaks to talk about the plot and characters. It's a very positive activity to run alongside children's own reading.



Six Tips for Reading Aloud

1. It's OK to point!

In the first year or two in particular, point at words as you read them. You will notice that children start to imitate you and it doesn't matter if they talk nonsense as it's all part of learning the basics of language.

2. Children can have short attention spans

Being read to lets children develop a longer attention span and listening skills, but look out for how they respond and what types of books and characters appeal to them so you know what to look out for when buying their next book.

3. Those who can, teach

Use your time together as opportunities to teach. Obviously reading together is the time to start learning new words but it's also a great time to talk about all kinds of things. So if a child asks about something unrelated to the book then don't force them to keep 'on topic'.

4. Encourage interaction

Simple things like getting children to turn pages and point at pictures is all part of the fun. Also look out for chances to discuss what's going on in the book – young children don't understand that books are normally read without interruption, and often like to talk about what they see on a page.

5. Repetition can be your friend

It's quite normal for children to become fixated on certain characters or stories – they take comfort in the familiar. It can also be a sign of development as illustrator Jan Fearnley explains:

'Some children want to revisit a favourite story many times. This is a good thing. It doesn't mean the child is 'stuck', it usually means that other processes of emerging reading are taking place. For example, a child may enjoy a particular page over and over, learning the language by heart by linking it in with the picture. It's one of the key ways in which readers start to decode text!'

6. Bedtime is story time

Reading at bedtime makes sense. Many parents struggle to get their kids to bed at a regular time, so the promise of a story can help create a solid bedtime routine. Most people find that it also relaxes their children and helps them get to sleep.

'When my granny reads she helps me with the words and helps me learn new words and she reads me longer stories that send me off to sleep' Sydney, age 5



THOMAS

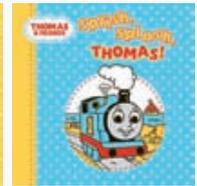
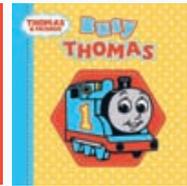
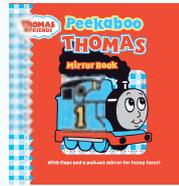
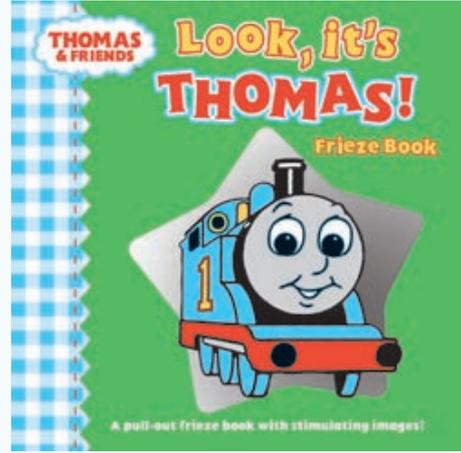
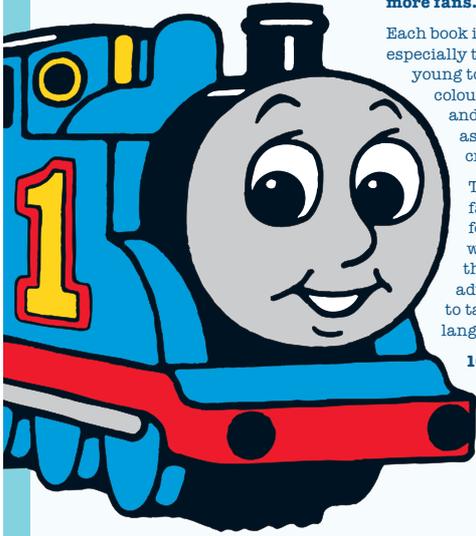
Nursery Range

Thomas has been a favourite for children around the world for 65 years and now the *Thomas & Friends Nursery Range* is winning him even more fans.

Each book in the series is designed especially to engage and stimulate young toddlers, with bright and colourful pictures, bold text and novelty elements such as pull-out mirrors and crinkly textures.

The characters' easy-to-read facial features make it easy for young children to engage with them and understand their emotions. They also help adults to encourage children to talk about the stories as their language skills develop.

10+ months / £7.99



Look, it's Thomas! Frieze Book

9781405847283

Peekaboo Thomas Mirror Book

9781405847269

Busy Thomas Cloth Book

9781405847290

Splash, Splash, Thomas! Bath Book

9781405847276



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