

Reading to Your Children

Tip – A particularly important by-product of reading aloud to children is the strong bond that grows between parent and child as they share a mutually enjoyable story.

We've earlier looked at some of the advantages to reading to your children and ways you might instill a love of reading in your family. This month let's look at specific strategies that will help you read to your baby or young child.



Tools – We can start reading books to our children while they are very young babies. In Shari Steelsmith's *Peekaboo . . . and Other Games to Play with Your Baby*, she offers many tips to successfully engaging a young child's attention toward books:

- Always read the book to yourself first, before you read it to your child. Think about which pages or pictures will be most engaging. Be prepared to point these out or comment on them.
- Only read for as long as your baby or child pays attention. Don't force her to finish the story.
- Be willing to read the same book over and over again—for as long as your child has attention span to follow it. Read the same book each day, if he wishes. He needs time to develop his "favorites." Familiarity breeds affection, in this case.



- Leave books out and around for your child to flip through and look at. Books are not for keeping high on a shelf—they're for reading and playing with. If you're worried about them getting ripped or hurt, buy board or cloth books.
- Young children respond strongly to rhyme, rhythm, and repetition. Nursery rhymes are popular with young children for this very reason. Toddlers, particularly, enjoy books about what is familiar in their own lives—going to bed, playing, eating, getting dressed.

- Find books that use the text of a song. Some young children are reluctant to settle down for reading a story. If you can engage them by singing the text, they often attend quickly. We do this very thing in the Feelings for Little Children Series—singing the text to the tune of "When You're Happy and You Know It."
- Lots of parents read to their young children, but many stop when the child starts reading chapter books alone. Don't let this happen—simply have them add the read-alone time to their daily schedule and keep on with the reading together time. Steelsmith remembers when her 9-year-old daughter was reading a chapter book on her own and listening to her mother read *Little House on the Prairie* in the evenings. Even teens enjoy sharing a favorite author or story with parents.

You'll find more practical tips you can use right now in *Peekaboo . . . and Other Games to Play with Your Baby* by Shari Steelsmith.