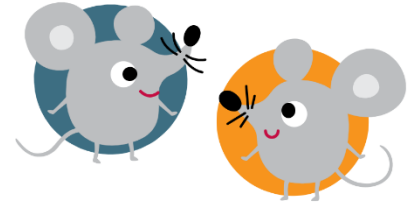


Reading books to your child can help improve their communication skills. Here are some tips on how to use board books and picture books to help your child with understanding and talking about the world around them.



Tips for Using Books to Help Your Child with Understanding

little listeners

- For very young children and older children who have short attention spans, start with board books that don't have a lot of words. Point to objects in the pictures and name them. If you have a matching object near you (for example, a ball), hold it up or point to it while naming it and then point back to the picture and name it again.
- As your child gets older or as their attention span increases, begin adding more words to describe the objects in the pictures. For example, instead of just saying "Ball," say "Red ball" or "Bouncy ball." Continue pointing out similar objects around you.
- When your child can sit with you for a bit longer, begin reading the words written in the book. Still point out objects to your child as you go along.
- The next step is to begin asking your child where objects are in the pictures. It's very helpful to ask about the same object in different books so that your child begins to understand that words don't mean just one thing (for example, they learn that balls come in all different colors, sizes and textures). If your child doesn't point when asked, simply point out the object yourself and move on.
- As your child gets older and can consistently point to the objects that you name, start introducing words showing actions (verbs) as well as feelings and descriptions (adjectives). Say things like, "That dog is running" and "The girl looks sad."
- When you introduce books with more things happening in the pictures, begin asking your child to find examples of actions, emotions and ways of being. For example, "Find a bird that's flying," "Show me a person who's happy," or "Which car is going fast?"
- As your child becomes more confident and is able to point to things you ask about, begin "teasing" your child to make the process more fun. For example, point to a picture of a dog and say, "Look at that big cat!" Your child will likely laugh and correct you.

- As your child gets older and can sit through stories in the books, begin asking them to take guesses about what will happen next or what the characters might be feeling when reading new stories. No matter how your child answers, praise them for their thoughts and then turn the page to see what happens.
- When your child has a good understanding of lots of different words, ask them what they think words you read might mean. Start out with words that you think your child understands but then begin to challenge them with words they might not yet know. Help them to figure out the meaning by using information in the pictures or pieces of information that you've already read.

Tips for Using Books to Help Your Child with Talking

- Before your child starts using words, try to read some books with words that name a sound but also sound like that sound (onomatopoeias). This includes animal noises as well as words like "Splat," "Beep," and "Boom." Use funny voices while making the sounds to really engage your child. These sounds are often the easiest for children to say when they begin talking.
- When your child starts using words, they will likely start imitating words after you say them and point to objects in pictures. You likely won't have to ask your child, "What's this?" in order for them to begin naming things you've named in books you've read to them before. Get excited when your child says anything to name a picture. For example, smile, clap and nod if your child says "Ba," "Mo," or "Pa," while you point to a ball in the picture.
- If your child is close to saying a word correctly but not quite there, just say the word they were trying to say. For example, if your child says, "Ba" when you point out the ball, say, "Yes, it's a ball." However, if your child continues to have trouble saying words clearly after trying this for three months, ask your child to look at your mouth while you say the word or use a mirror so that you can both see each other's mouths while talking. Getting to see how your mouth forms the word sometimes helps children who are struggling with getting all the sounds right.
- As your child starts saying more words, begin using books that have words or phrases that are repeated a lot in the story. After you've read the story to your child many times, begin pausing to see if your child will fill in the next word of a familiar phrase. For example, if you're reading *Five Little Ducks*, read the line

“Mother Duck said, quack, quack, quack...” and wait to see if your child will say the final “quack.” If they don’t, just say the word yourself and move on but keep trying this strategy. When your child can say longer phrases and sentences, pause earlier so they can fill in more of the sentence (for example, “And Mother Duck said...”).

- When you start asking your child questions about the stories or things in the pictures, you can help them with their talking as well as their understanding. If your child answers your question with just one word, expand on what the child says. For example, if the child says “ball,” say, “Yes, it’s a ball” or “It’s a big ball.” This helps your child learn more words and ways to think about the world.
- Try to make using these strategies as fun as possible and try not to make every reading experience into a quiz. Your child will love it if you use funny voices, big facial expressions and gestures, and when you say things that are clearly wrong to prompt them to correct you.