



Early Childhood Recommended Reading List 2022-2023 | oppl.org/kids-lists

Babies & 1-year-olds

Beer, Sophie. *Love Makes a Family*. What is love? It can be expressed in lots of different ways with so many different people. This makes for a lovely bedtime story and opportunities to share stories about love experienced in your own day.

Dominguez, Angela. *I Love You Baby Burrito*. With sweet illustrations and charming bilingual text, this book celebrates the act of swaddling a newborn into a "baby burrito." You can also use it to name body parts with your baby and toddler in English and Spanish.

Grover, Lorie Ann. *I Love All of Me*. Big, bright, beautiful toddlers dance around the page, celebrating their favorite parts of themselves, from blinky eyes to brain so wise. This is a great book for talking about body parts and acting out the words to explore and learn language.

Hughes, Susan. *Up! How Families Around the World Carry Their Little Ones*. An Upsy-Daisy refrain connects families throughout the world, and beautiful collage art styles will make this one for kids and caregivers to pore over.

Matsuoka, Tatsuhide. *Jump!* Lots of animals jump, with fun expressive BOINGS! Babies and toddlers will love jumping along with creatures big and small, and shouting along with the refrain. How high can you jump?

Pinkney, Andrea Davis. *Peek-a-You!* Peek-a-boo is a great game for babies and toddlers! Cuddle with your little one and act out this delightful book. You won't be able to resist the adorable rhymes and endless brown baby energy and fun.

Stevenson, Robin. *Pride Colors*. Babies and toddlers will love the bright vibrant colors and gorgeous photographs of children and families enjoying time together. Go on color walks to extend the learning fun!

Van Camp, Richard. *Kiss By Kiss / Ocêôtôwina*. Introduce your children to counting in English and the Plains Cree language, while sharing lots of opportunities for smooching. Beautiful photographs showcase a variety of loving families and appeal to the youngest of babies, too.

Yuly, Toni. *Ollie Feels Fine*. Ollie the octopus has a lot of feelings and he struggles to understand them. This is a great way to introduce emotions to babies and help your little one identify how they are feeling.

2-year-olds

Atinuke. *Baby Goes to Market*. Kids will cheer for cheeky Baby, who counts his way through free gifts given to him by kind merchants in their Nigerian market.

Beer, Sophie. *Kindness Makes Us Strong*. Two-year-olds are learning how to be friends and develop empathy. Share this book to talk about ways to be kind. It can look like taking turns and saying hello!

Lenzo, Doug. *My Mama is a Mechanic*. Mamas are a lot of things: surgeons (of toys), architects (of blocks), and superheroes to their sons (and daughters). Celebrate all of the fun things moms do in this delightful book.

Finison, Carrie. *Don't Hug Doug (He Doesn't Like It)*. Some people love hugs; other people don't. Everybody gets to decide whether they want a hug or not! This is a great book to talk about consent and asking permission—and letting kids tell grownups they don't want a hug.

Gates, Mariam. *Goodnight Yoga*. This beautifully illustrated book doubles as bedtime story and gentle wind down bedtime stretches.

Grimes, Nikki. *Bedtime for Sweet Creatures*. This darling bedtime story will feel familiar to kids and caregivers alike, from a NO NO NO drumbeat to a clingy koala who doesn't want to say goodnight and sly wolf getting one last glass of water. How do you and your toddler act like different animals throughout the day?

Leung, Hilary. *Will Ladybug Hug?* Everyone has boundaries, from babies to grown-ups. Help your little one practice setting theirs along with Ladybug, who wants to hug her friends. But not every friend wants a hug, and that's okay!

Medina, Juana. *I Am: A Book of Reminders*. You are wonderful! This delightful and inclusive book helps kids and grownups practice recognizing their own strengths, and that of the people around them.

Rosen, Michael. *Tiny Little Fly*. This delightful adventure is great fun. Trace Fly's progress, wink your eye, act out the animal responses and more!

Sammurtok, Nadia. *In My Anaana's Amautik*. Babies and toddlers all over the world know the comfort of being carried, and this book is an ode to the warmth and joy of feeling safe and cozy with a loved one. What words does your two-year-old use to express their thoughts? This is a lovely conversation starter.

Wan, Joyce. *Dream Big*. This is not only an ode to dreams of the future, but also to the women who have come before us. What will you dream?

Wenzel, Brendan. *Hello, Hello!* Sometimes it's easy to see how animals are different, but can you find all the similarities, too? This is a great conversation starter with wildly engaging art.

Whittingham, Jane. *Wild One*. The text is filled with active fun that kids love at the playground, paired with animals to imitate. Get your wiggles out!

Williamson, Sarah. *Where Are You?* Can you spot the pink snake hiding on each page? This book encourages interaction with the text and images in a fun way.

3- & 4-year-olds

Castillo, Lauren. *Nana in the City*. Cities can feel big and overwhelming to a lot of kids. This grandmother shows a little boy the joy and fun a city can bring, without shaming his fears. What are you afraid of?

Cotterill, Samantha. *This Beach is Loud!* This little boy has been waiting forever to visit the beach, but when he gets there, it's loud and busy and overwhelming. Luckily, Dad is there for support. This is a great book to talk about preparing for hard moments, and developing empathy.

LaRocca, Rajani. *I'll Go and Come Back*. A tender, beautifully illustrated story about a girl in America and her grandmother in India, whose love stretches between languages and cultures—and across the world. This beautiful intergenerational story highlights family, shared time, and how love covers all distances!

López, Rafael. *We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands / Tenemo el Mundo entero en las Manos*. This familiar song is paired with gorgeous art showing kids from all around. Sing and start conversations about families who don't look like your own. Research shows it's best to name differences in skin tone, disability, dress, etc. and normalize different ways of experiencing the world. This is a beautiful place to start.

Maier, Brenda. *The Little Blue Bridge*. This sequel to *Little Red Fort* brings back fearless, creative and curious Ruby and her brothers in a retelling of Billy Goats Gruff.

Maillard, Kevin Noble. *Fry Bread*. Fry Bread is not only delicious, it's an important part of cultural history. What food is important to your family? Talk about it and cook it, along with the included fry bread recipe!

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3 & 4-year-olds cont.

Makatini, Bella. *The Big Five*. Danny loves the African animal masks his grandfather displays on the wall, and his grandfather teaches him about one every day they spend together. How can you describe animals for your kids to name and learn?

McGinty Alice B. *Bathe the Cat*. The family is frantically cleaning for Grandma's visit, but the cat will do anything to not get washed. Kids will love the humor of the mixed up chore list!

Miller, Pat Zietlow. *Be Strong*. Tanisha wishes she could climb the wall, but her muscles aren't strong enough. But there's more than one way to be strong: "Strong people care. And sometimes cry. They help people, and let other people help them." How will you be strong?

Murray, Lily. *Hello Hot Dog*. This zany story about a hot dog who realizes their fate is to be lunch will keep everyone in tears of laughter.

Nielsen-Fernlund, Susin. *Princess Puffybottom...and Darryl*. Princess Puffybottom has the perfect life: her subjects serve her delicious meals and wait on her hand and foot. Life is good, until Darryl arrives. This hilarious romp with a cat and her new puppy brother will have kids laughing and thinking about their own sibling experiences.

Parker, Lindsey Rowe. *Wiggles, Stomps and Squeezes Calm My Jitters Down*. The vibration in her feet when she runs, the tap-tap-tap of her fork on the table, the cool water running over her hands: these are the things that calm her jitters down. Many kids will see themselves and their sensory needs here, and adults will understand them a little better.

Pumphrey, Jarrett. *The Old Truck*. A little girl grows up on a farm with an old truck, and then becomes the farmer with the old truck. What old things do you have in your family?

Thompkins-Bigelow, Jamilah. *Mommy's Khimar*. This delightful ode to imagination and love is filled with gloriously bright and cheerful illustrations that will delight kids and caregivers alike.

Woodgate, Harry. *Grandad's Camper*. Grandad doesn't feel like adventuring like he used to before Gramps died, but his granddaughter has some ideas. This is a wonderful book about grief, family, and empathy!

Woolf, Julia. *Duck & Penguin are Not Friends*. Children Betty and Maud are best friends and they assume their stuffed animals are, too. WRONG. It's okay not to like everyone all of the time, and it's also okay to change your mind.

7 days / 7 ways with the Very Ready Reading Program

Sharing these seven ideas with kids will help them grow into readers. Focusing on one a day will keep it fun. Below are some of our favorite tips.

Do these tips help kids read as toddlers or preschoolers? Nope! That's not the goal. We want to help kids be *ready* to learn when they are in school. Kids learn best by playing and exploring, not in formal lessons. Introduce them to the world, talk to them, and you're doing it right. Layer routines to help you and your child succeed.

Pick one routine your family already has, like bath, wakeup, snack times, and start to share a BOOK during it. When do you give the most instructions? Set them to a SONG: kids pay better attention, and they hear how words are built with each note. Build RHYMES into a different routine, maybe transition times, or meal times. It helps kids hear how language works. Nighttime is a great time to build a STORY routine: review your day using the first, next, then, last format, which helps prepare kids for books! How are these early literacy routine additions feeling? Celebrate your efforts with some good PLAYTIME with the kids! You deserve it, too.

Share Books: Always keep reading fun, not a chore or punishment. Flashcards can take away from the fun and make kids less likely to enjoy learning to read or reading independently later. Avoid asking questions on every page—it breaks the flow of the story and makes it less enjoyable. Try 1 or 2 per book, or ask questions after you finish. And don't force it—better to read one or two pages without a struggle than a full book that is miserable for everyone.

Share Songs: Sharing songs is more than fun—music's rhythms and rhymes help children develop the vital knack of hearing differences between different sounds. When we sing "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," kids love doing the finger actions, but they're also hearing the subtle distinctions between "star" and "are," and "high" and "sky." So find a book to sing out loud, or sing your directions to a task. Each syllable has a note, making it easier to hear how words break down to sound them out, an essential skill.

Share Rhymes: Rhymes don't need to make sense! They still help kids hear patterns of words and speech. So make up silly rhymes and act them out, dance with your child while reciting them, and play rhyming games: "I spy something that rhymes with the word hook!"

Share Sounds: Share books and tunes that encourage sound effects, silly noises, or animal sounds—they are fun and help you and your child interact with the books together. Encourage your children to help with any noises that may occur. Is a lion roaring? Is the wind howling? Is someone snoring?

Share Words: Kids love big, fancy words. Use them all the time and kids will too! Talk about the indigo sky, the gigantic stack of books, and so on. New experiences mean new words: at the zoo, read words on animal exhibit signs. At the store, read words on packages. The more words kids hear, the more they understand and will be able to figure out when they learn to read. Narrate your days!

Share Stories: Practice telling stories and connecting them to your lives at the same time. Tell your kids stories about how you used to celebrate special days as a child, and let them tell you memories of their own past celebrations. Family pictures are a great way to share stories about when you or their grandparents were younger. Make your own books! Use photos to tell the story of a favorite day or vacation, or make a touch-and-feel book with fabrics and other items.

Share Play: Play with your kids as often you can. It's the basis of all learning for kids! It fosters creativity and imagination, bonds you, and gives your child confidence when they are in charge of the game. Pretend play is the best for reinforcing new words and vocabulary and allowing kids to practice telling stories. Act out stories, have a tea party, visit a pretend zoo—anything is possible!

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