



# Early Childhood Recommended Reading List 2023-2024 | [oppl.org/kids-lists](http://oppl.org/kids-lists)

## Babies & 1-year-olds

de la Fuente-Lau, Shuli. *How We Eat* (series). This book celebrates all the different ways we can eat: bottles, spoons, chopsticks, GI tubes, forks, cups, and hands. Filled with gorgeous photos of diverse families from around the world, it's perfect for keeping baby's attention.

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 in English and Spanish with your baby and toddler.

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.

Hello, Baby! *Say Hello in 15 Languages*. Ni Hao! Marhaba! Bonjour! Babies and toddlers will love these beautiful photos of kids around the world going about their days. Plus, there's a pronunciation guide for caregivers learning the words along with their little one.

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.

Portis, Antoinette. *I'm Up and I'm Still Up*. This is a delightful pair of books, each with wonderful repeated language and adorable art. The first celebrates the excitement of a new day, and the second, well... Mommy, Daddy, and the dog may all be tired, but Baby is happily Still Up!

Stevenson, Robin. *Pride Colors*. Littles 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!

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

Akesson, Karin. *The Rainbow Snail*. This is a sweet book to practice identifying colors, as the snail moves through the rain, sunshine and more to collect a rainbow on his shell. Older kids can share how different colors can make us feel, and sparking a lot of cool conversations.

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!

Kenko, 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.

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. How do you and your toddler act like different animals throughout the day?

Martin Jr., Bill. *Ten Little Squirrels: An Old Counting Rhyme*. No need to get squirrely--practicing classic rhythm and rhyme while teaching children to count has never been more fun!

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.

Murphy, Mary. *Chirp!* Kids learn early that birds go tweet tweet and chirp, so let's get specific! This gorgeous book introduces us to birds sharing their sounds: chee chee, tink tink, ta ta tee, and more. Get silly when all the birds start making their cacophony as a group!

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?

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.

Zimmerman, Andrea. *Firefighter Flo!* Kids and caregivers will love enthusiastically making the sound effects of firefighters at work: clang, whoosh, jangly jang! The big, bold art pairs perfectly with fun rhymes.

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

Eliopoulos, Christopher. *Giggles are Coming* (series). Uh oh. Something... something is coming. I can't control it—I can't stop it—when the giggles show up, you just have to laugh! These two kids are having a great time on the first day of school, but what happens when the giggles come and keep coming? This one is sure to bring laughs to everyone.

Hamza, Ranger. *Let's Go for a Walk*. Get ready for nature exploration! You can read the whole book, or break it down color by color, because there is an incredible amount of details to pore over and discover. Read a page before heading out on your own walk to see what surprising things you find in your own town.

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!

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### 3 & 4-year-olds cont.

López, Rafael. *We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands / Tenemo el Mundo entero en las Manos*. This familiar song is paired with art showing kids all around the world. Research shows it's best to name differences in skin tone, disability, dress, etc, and normalize different ways of experiencing the world.

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!

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 Gran's visit, but the cat will do anything to not get bathed. Kids will love 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?

Nielsen-Fernlund, Susin. *Princess Puffybottom...and Darryl*. Princess Puffybottom has the perfect life 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 when she runs, the tap-tap of her fork on the table: these are the things that calm her jitters down. Many kids will see 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. Does your family have old things?

Woodgate, Harry. *Grandad's Camper*. Grandad doesn't feel like adventuring like he did before Gramps died, but his granddaughter has plans. 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 similar 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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