



Early Childhood Recommended Reading List 2025-2026 | oppl.org/kids-lists

Babies & 1-year-olds

Arrhenius, Ingela. *Where's the Fox?* Five beautifully illustrated spreads show a series of woodland animals hiding behind bright felt flaps. With a mirror on the final page, this is the perfect book to share with very little ones.

Cherry, Matthew A. *Hair Love ABCs*. Explore the ABCs of hair with gorgeous art in this companion to *Hair Love*.

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 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.

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 also learning.

Martin, Emily Winfield. *Wonderful Seasons*. From springtime fun to cozy winter, explore the adorableness of a diverse cast of babies in the beauty of all four seasons.

Mother Moon. *The Belly Song*. Sing along in this joyful celebration of your baby's perfect belly!

Nicholls, Sally. *The Nose, Toes, and Tummy Book*. From fingers that tickle to bellies that need to be gobbled up, toddlers will love playing and laughing, as they learn the names of their body parts.

Penfold, Alexandra. *Let's Make Music*. Explore rhythm and sound with this wonderfully interactive book!

Portis, Antoinette. *I'm Up and I'm Still Up*. This delightful pair of books have wonderful repeated language and adorable art. First celebrate the excitement of a new day, and then, well... Mommy, Daddy, and the dog may all be tired, but Baby is happily "still up!"

Yuly, Toni. *Ollie Feels Fine*. Ollie the octopus has a lot of feelings and he struggles to understand them. A great intro to emotions for babies and to help toddlers name 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, sparking a lot of cool conversations.

Antony, Steve. *Rainbowsaurus*. A family meets a variety of unusually colored animals on their hunt for the Rainbowsaurus!

Best, Cari. *This Baby, That Baby*. In this bouncy, playful picture book for very young listeners, follow two baby friends who live in facing buildings through their day—playing, singing, and napping—till they meet in the park!

Bolling, Valerie. *Together We Swim*. Told in rhyming text, a young boy learns to swim in a pool with the example and encouragement of his family.

Cheng, Charlotte. *Roar-Choo!* When a dragon gets sick, his phoenix friend rushes to help and ends up needing his help in return.

Cole, Lo. *We Want a Dog*. After going through 27 different kinds of dogs with different kinds of behaviors, do you still really want a dog?

Dominguez, Angela. *I Want More! ¡Quiero Más!* Lolo wants more flowers! More seeds! More soil! More water! ¡Más y más y más! Charming and lovely.

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 rhyme 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!

Smith, Lane. *Stickler Loves the World*. Stickler is a woodland creature who reminds us to appreciate the everyday wonders we often ignore.

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

Azaad, Dezh. *The Carpet: An Afghan Family Story*. A day in the life of an Afghan refugee child and their family, revolving around love, family, and the carpet that connects them to home.

Conklin, Melanie. *When You Have to Wait*. Sometimes, you have to wait. The seconds drag on... each one feels like forever. But while you wait, you might notice beautiful new things.

Drago, Flavia Z. *Vlad, the Fabulous Vampire*. Vlad the vampire has unfortunately rosy cheeks that make him look abysmally alive. But being the fabulous vampire that he is (and hoping to avoid rejection), he hides them behind elaborate vampire outfits in traditional black. Until he finds out that his best friend has a pink secret of her own...

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 kids are having fun 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.

Fenske, Jonathan. *A Unicorn, A Dinosaur and A Shark Walk into a Book*. This book's narrator attempts to tell a tale about a unicorn, a dinosaur, and a shark, but the three characters are less than impressed and uncooperative.

Fox, Janet S. *Wintergarden*. Growing and harvesting an herb garden can be fun and oh so satisfying—even in the dead of winter.

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3 & 4-year-olds cont.

Gee Eun, Lee. *The Red Fruit*. Baby Bear is off exploring on his own. What just hit his head? Mmmm... it's a delicious red fruit. He must get more. Up, up, up, to the top of the forest and then he leeeaaaps...

Gomez, Blanca. *Bookie & Cookie*. When their usual routine is disrupted, Bookie and Cookie, best friends who live on opposite pages, learn to bridge their differences and try new things together.

Hamza, Ranger. *Let's Go for a Walk*. Get ready for nature exploration! Read the whole book, or break it down color by color, because there is an incredible amount of detail 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.

Karsten, Guilherme. *Run!* Deep in the jungle, animals are on the run, searching for a place to disappear. Will they be safely hidden before time runs out? And just who are they running from?

Kurland, Jack. *The Cat Who Couldn't Be Bothered*. This cat can't be bothered. His friends always ask him if he wants to play, but he doesn't feel like it. One day, a friend asks how he is doing, and the reason he'd rather do nothing is revealed.

Maier, Brenda. *The Little Green Swing* (series). Ruby invites her brothers to help her plan and build something, but the boys do not want to plan. The wind soon blows their creations to pieces, but Ruby is working on something that will work with the wind.

Más Davidson, Rachel. *I Love You Mucho Mucho*. Rosie and her grandmother find a way to communicate despite speaking different languages.

Parker, Lindsey Rowe. *Wiggles, Stomps and Squeezes Calm My Jitters Down* (series). The vibration when she runs, the tap-tap of her fork on the table: these are the things that calm her jitters down. And when she needs help, mom is there.

Rammell, Kathryn. *Rory the Remarkable Dragon*. Rory isn't like the other dragons: she's remarkable, with unique abilities that other dragons don't seem to possess. But the principal is certain something is off about Rory and is determined to uncover the truth.

Wen, Lenny. *Spicy Spicy Hot*. Lintang is determined to embrace the spice of sambal in order to connect with her Indonesian grandmother and heritage.

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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