



## Reading?

It's never too early to read to you baby. In fact, you can start reading to them from birth! Although babies do not necessarily understand the words you are reading to them, they are still listening to the expression in your voice, looking at the contrasts in the pictures, and enjoying the closeness it brings. Sometimes when you don't know what to say to your baby, a book is great place to start some dialogue.

The benefits to reading include:

- Increased vocabulary – books can introduce words that your child would not hear in their everyday life e.g. books about the zoo, pirates, space, weather
- Increased auditory attention e.g. babies and toddlers may initially have a short attention span for books , but with time as they develop, your child will be able to listen to a book for 5 minutes, 10, 15 or even 30 minutes for one of their favourite stories (depending on cognitive milestone)
- Increased input of language – Reading to your child means that they are being exposed to more language and a variety of language
- Creating an interest in books – It's a good sign when your child seeks out a book for you to read to them. It is setting foundation for independent readers
- Learning book vocabulary – This includes a cover, pages, words, letters
- Introducing and Consolidating new – This includes reading a book about animals before you visited a zoo and visa versa
- Creating a bonding experience with you and your child – reading to your child is a special time where all your attention is focused on them

Reading helps create strong language skills for your child, which is a prerequisite for establishing strong reading and writing skills when entering school.

We recommend reading 5 to 10 books a day or for 15 minutes in total a day. This can seem like a long time to be reading to an infant, but it doesn't need to be all at once. You can do 5 minutes intervals 3 different times a day, or do shorter intervals but more frequently. If your child has a shorter attention span for books, choose topics they are really interested in.

Make the book interesting so you can keep their attention for longer periods of time. With babies and toddler, you don't need to read the pages word for word or front to back. Follow your child's lead, talk about what they are interested in and looking at. Don't be afraid to be silly and use different voices, expressions or actions to make the book appealing. It's important that books are easily accessible in the home. Have books lying around their play area, next to their bed, in the lounge room, near the bath etc. This will give your child the opportunity to explore books and gives you more opportunities to read to them.