

What to Read at Every Age

A Developmental Guide for Families • Birth Through Age 10

Every stage of childhood comes with new reading opportunities. This guide helps you choose the right books and reading activities for where your child is right now — building their skills, their confidence, and their love of stories one page at a time.

Birth – 6 Months

What they need: Repetition, rhythm, and your voice.

Best books: Board books, nursery rhymes, simple picture books with one or two words per page.

Reading tip: Read the same book over and over — repetition is how babies build lasting brain connections.

6 – 12 Months

What they need: Visual stimulation and cause-and-effect.

Best books: High-contrast books, lift-the-flap books, touch-and-feel texture books.

Reading tip: Let them grab and touch the book. That IS reading at this age — engagement is everything.

12 – 24 Months

What they need: Simple words and naming everyday objects.

Best books: Books with one word per page, books about animals, colors, and daily routines.

Reading tip: Point to pictures and name them. Ask 'Where is the dog?' and wait for them to respond.

2 – 3 Years

What they need: Story structure and emotional vocabulary.

Best books: Simple stories with a beginning, middle, and end. Books about feelings and everyday experiences.

Reading tip: Ask 'What do you think happens next?' to build comprehension and prediction skills.

4 – 5 Years

What they need: Letter recognition and phonics awareness.

Best books: Alphabet books, rhyming stories, and books with repetitive or predictable text patterns.

Reading tip: Track words with your finger as you read so they see words moving left to right.

6 – 8 Years

What they need: Reading confidence and independent practice.

Best books: Early chapter books, non-fiction on topics they love, graphic novels, and poetry.

Reading tip: Let them pick the book — choice builds ownership, pride, and motivation to keep reading.

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9 – 10 Years

What they need: Critical thinking, deeper comprehension, and reading stamina.

Best books: Middle-grade novels, series books, biographies, non-fiction deep dives, and books that challenge and stretch them.

Reading tip: Talk about what they are reading — ask their opinion, what surprised them, and what they would change. Make reading a real conversation.

Why Reading Aloud Still Matters at Ages 9 & 10

Even when children can read independently, reading aloud together remains one of the most powerful things a caregiver can do. It builds vocabulary, deepens comprehension, and — most importantly — it keeps the relationship between your child and books warm, joyful, and connected. **You are never too old to be read to.** Set aside 10 minutes before bed, on the weekend, or on a lazy afternoon — and just read together. Those moments add up.

3 Ways to Keep Older Kids Excited About Reading

- **Let them lead.** Ask them to recommend a book to you. When a child gets to teach an adult, they own the experience — and their love of reading grows with it.
- **Read the same book together.** Pick a book you both read independently and then talk about it like a mini book club. Ask what surprised them, what they loved, and what they would change.
- **Visit the library and let them choose freely.** No judgment on what they pick — graphic novel, non-fiction about sharks, sports almanac, poetry. The goal is the habit, not the genre.

“The best book is always the one your child wants to read again.”

— Kindred Kids Literacy Project

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