

## **Stimulating A Love Of Reading**

*The University of Pittsburgh  
Office of Child Development*

To instill in their daughter a love of reading, Carl and Gay decided to hold regular story times, beginning when she is around two years old.

It is a good plan. A love of reading will benefit their daughter throughout her life. But why wait until she is two?

From birth to the age of 4, children have a great capacity for learning language. Toddlers – ages 18-36 months – are able to follow simple stories, look at their own books, and repeat words and rhymes.

But there is nothing wrong in getting even younger children accustomed to books, sounds, letters, and words.

So start reading to your child early. Even if your child is too young to understand what is being read or even to sit still for very long, you will be stimulating a love of reading.

One of the best ways to prepare for reading is to expose your child to activities that appeal to the senses of sight, hearing, speech, touch, and smell.

Very young children are often attracted to books with sounds and books that let them feel or smell the pictures. Soft cloth books with colorful shapes are also appealing.

Other books with sensory appeal include books with repeated rhymes and words, and picture-pointing books, which you can begin reading to your child at 4 to 6 months and continue into the toddler ages.

You can also stimulate an interest in stories at an early age. Try using stuffed animals and other toys as props. Children not old enough to talk can learn to point to a toy bunny, bear, or car when you say the word. Then, you and your child can make up a story using the animals, cars, and other toys. In time, your child can make on a story on his or her own.

If you have a toddler, set a time to read every day. But also allow for more reading time if your child asks for it.

Children may be more receptive to reading if they are allowed some control over story time. For example, if your child is old enough, let him or her chose the book you read. And allow your child to read his or her favorite book over and over again, even if you find it boring.

You don't want to make story time too demanding or pressured. Just have fun together so the message you send is that reading is enjoyable.

*This column is written by Robert B. McCall, Ph.D., Co-Director of the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development and Professor of Psychology, and is provided as a public service by the Frank and Theresa Caplan Fund for Early Childhood Development and Parenting Education.*