

Read to Me's
**Grandparent Guide
to Reading
to Babies & Toddlers**



Grandparents are Important!

The grandparent-grandchild bond is a special relationship, one that supports healthy emotional development in children, and brings both parties great joy. Grandparents play a special role in promoting reading with even with the youngest babies and toddlers. Reading, talking and singing help to create connections that last a lifetime. This booklet will guide you on how to stay connected through books and reading, even if you are separated by distance. Reading to babies has been proven to encourage bonding and attachment, reduce stress, and foster a lifelong love of books. And best of all, it's a fun activity for you both!



Tips for reading with babies & toddlers

- Select books according to baby's age and stage – we've made some suggestions to make it easy for you to get started.
- Keep your reading sessions short. Baby books are designed for baby's attention span.
- Sing songs - maybe you could have your very own 'signature' song that you always sing to baby.
- Recite rhymes – rhymes slow language down so that babies can hear the individual sounds in words. These sounds are the foundation for language.
- Read with expression! Use a funny voice for silly characters.
- Finger plays and action rhymes can bring stories to life, and encourage fine motor control.
- Follow baby's interests – by the time they are 10-12 months old, babies can show deep interest in the world around them. Reinforce their interest by selecting books and rhymes about things they like – bugs, fire trucks, dinosaurs, whatever it is, there is a baby book about that topic!



How to read if you don't have baby books

- Libraries offer many online services, including borrowing books for free online. You can find information about your local library and how to sign up for a card, at the end of this booklet.
- You can order books from local bookstores for delivery right to your door or curbside pick up. Check out our list of independent bookstores at the back of this booklet.
- There are unlimited online resources where you can learn about new books, hear books and rhymes read aloud, and learn about fun age-appropriate activities to do with babies.
- Make sure to follow Read to Me's [Facebook](#) page and [Instagram](#) for videos, book suggestions and reading tips.
- Read to Me also has hundreds of [Pinterest](#) boards featuring baby books arranged according to age, topic and interest. There's even a board listing books about [grandparents](#)!



How to connect with your grandchildren during COVID-19

Normally, families are encouraged to avoid screen use with children under two. This is because children learn best through play in the real world and through back-and-forth interactions with the people who care for them. With physical distancing for COVID-19 however, screens have become increasingly important tools for socialization. A healthy way to use screens with babies is to use them for social connection through video chatting, where you can interact and respond just like in person.

It's time to chat!

If you haven't embraced technology yet, now is the time! FaceTime, Facebook Messenger Live, Skype, Zoom... there are multiple ways to connect. Video chat will allow you to see your grandchildren, watch them grow, and share their joys as you visit together on screen. It may not be as good as being there in person, and you may miss out on the cuddles, but it is a great way to stay connected and feel closer to your family, even a newborn baby. Babies and toddlers will love the interaction and will begin to remember and build deep bonds with you over time. One great way to connect with grandchildren is through reading. Reading doesn't have to wait until you are together in person - reading over video chat is a comforting, shared experience, and you will be giving your grandchildren a gift that lasts a lifetime!



How to video chat with babies & toddlers

- Pick a quiet time to chat, and try to chat with just one or two other people – it can get confusing for a baby if too many people are talking at once.
- A little chat time goes a long way – too much socializing can be tiring for babies and parents of young children
- Work with parents to schedule a good time to video chat. Parenting can be busy, especially during COVID-19, when parents may be juggling looking after a baby while working.
- Don't be upset if baby is distracted. Babies have a narrow span of attention – if they are hungry or tired, they may not be able to pay attention to you.
- Keep it soothing for newborns. Sing a lullaby or just talk to baby in a soothing voice
- Take turns and make it a conversation. Leave time for young babies to respond to you.
- Make it fun as babies get older. Try rhymes, songs, and games like peek-a-boo.
- Use props like puppets and stuffed animals to play together through the screen.
- Toddlers have so much to do – they love your attention but may not be able to focus for very long.



Reading to Newborns



At this stage, your grandchild ...

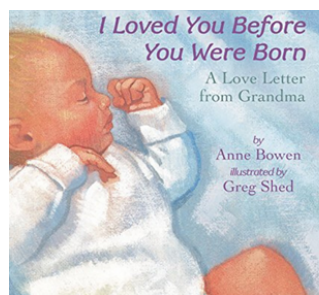
- Loves to hear your voice
- Loves to look at your smiling face
- May make cooing sounds
- May turn toward the sound of a familiar voice (2m+)
- Will begin to follow a moving object with their eyes (2m+)

LOOK FOR BOOKS ...

- with soothing text
- with photos of smiling baby faces
- with bold images and strong contrast
- featuring lullabies
- that encourage tummy time

RHYME TIME!

Twinkle, twinkle, little star
How I wonder what you are
Up above the world so high
Like a diamond in the sky
Twinkle, twinkle, little star
How I wonder what you are!



Reading at 3-6 months



At this stage, your grandchild ...

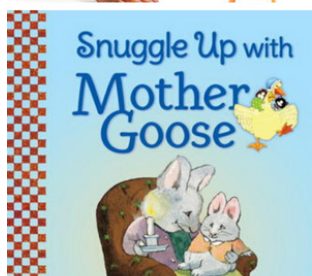
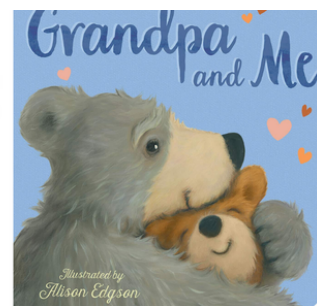
- Likes to look at books while you read aloud
- May try to copy sounds
- Will begin to smile
- 'Chats' with babbling sounds (4 m+)
- May grasp and reach for objects (5 m+)

LOOK FOR BOOKS...

- that feature repetition
- featuring nursery rhymes
- that have mirrors for gazing
- that feature crinkly textures
- that have gentle tickle games

RHYME TIME!

These are baby's fingers
These are baby's toes
This is baby's belly button
Round and round it goes



Reading at 6-9 months



At this stage, your grandchild ...

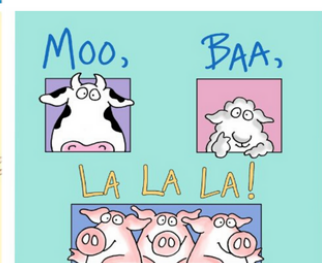
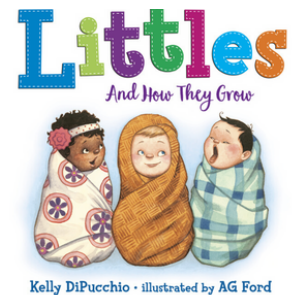
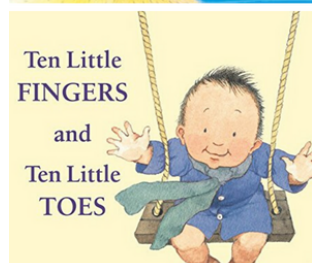
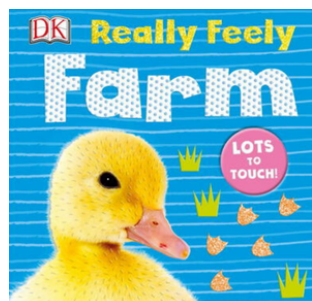
- Loves to explore objects
- May say 'ga ga' and 'da da' (6 m+)
- Is starting to recognize common words
- Likes to look at their reflection in a mirror
- Can reach for a book

LOOK FOR BOOKS ...

- with photos of animals
- with touch and feel features
- with pages that are easy to turn
- that encourage actions
- featuring strong rhythm and rhyme

RHYME TIME!

Row, row, row your boat,
Gently down the stream
Merrily, merrily,
Merrily, merrily,
Life is but a dream



Reading at 9-12 months



At this stage, your grandchild ...

- May be able to stand with support
- May start to point at objects
- May be able to clap their hands together
- Is babbling and vocalizing
- Likes to copy your sounds

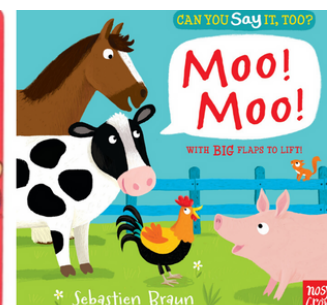
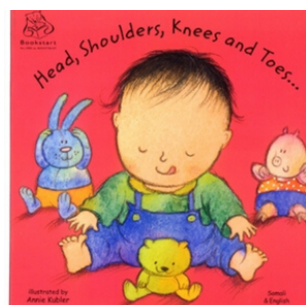
LOOK FOR BOOKS...

- with photos of babies doing every day activities
- that encourage clapping games
- with flaps for lifting
- featuring peekaboo games
- that feature photos of things for baby to name

RHyme TIME!

Touch your ears,
pat your nose,
tickle baby's little toes!

Hide your eyes...
Where are you?
Baby's playing peek-a-boo!



Reading at 12-18 months



At this stage, your grandchild ...

- May turn the pages of board books
- May begin to use sounds or words to identify objects
- Is starting to show independence
- May start using the word 'No' and 'Mine'
- May not sit still while you read

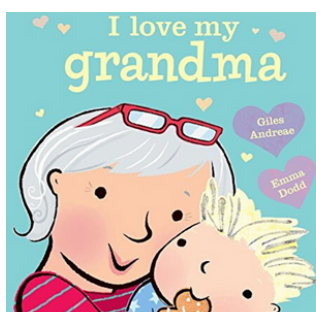
LOOK FOR BOOKS...

- about birthdays
- about baby's interests
- with lots of photos for baby to name
- that help to identify simple emotions
- that feature the bedtime routine

RHYME TIME!

Pat a cake, pat a cake,
baker's man, bake me a cake
as fast as you can

Pat it and prick it, and mark it
with B, and put it in the oven
for baby and me!



Reading at 18 months



At this stage, your grandchild ...

- May be able to name three body parts
- Will continue to use new words
- May finish sentences from books
- Will love to hear books about topics they love
- Is more interested in the world around them

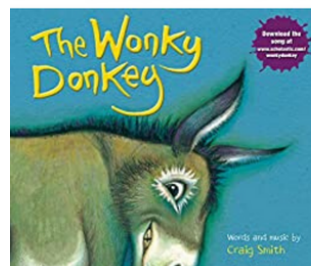
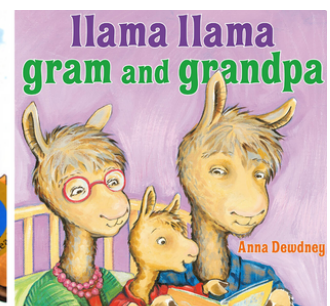
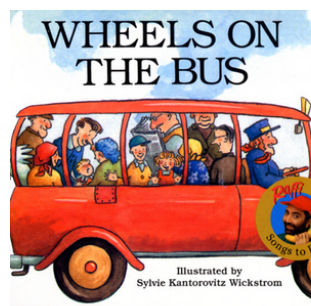
LOOK FOR BOOKS...

- about being a toddler
- that feature simple concepts like counting and colours
- that are funny
- that help to name body parts
- that are slightly longer with a simple storyline

RHYME TIME!

Head and shoulders, knees
and toes, knees and toes,
knees and toes

Head and shoulders, knees
and toes, eyes, ears,
mouth and nose!



Resources

Using The Library While Physically Distancing

Nova Scotia Public Libraries

In addition to in-person services, all library regions offer digital collections and online content, including e-books, audiobooks, magazines and more. You'll be able to find baby and toddler books to read or listen to with your grandchild.

Don't worry if you do not have a library card! You can register for a virtual card online. Click the links below to register for a card in your region. You can find your library region by visiting the [Nova Scotia Public Libraries Map](#) or by visiting links to your region below:

Annapolis Valley Regional Library Click [here](#) to register for a card

Cape Breton Regional Library Click [here](#) to register for a card

Colchester-East Hants Public Library To register for a card in this region, please email anste@cehpubliclibrary.ca with your name, address & phone number. A library card and personal identification number will be emailed to you.

Cumberland Public Libraries Click [here](#) to register for a card

Eastern Counties Regional Library Click [here](#) to register for a card

Halifax Public Library Click [here](#) to register for a card

Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library Click [here](#) to register for a card

South Shore Public Libraries Click [here](#) to register for a card

Western Counties Regional Library Click [here](#) to register for a card

Buying Baby Books Locally

Bookstores in Nova Scotia

Many local independent bookstores are offering online shopping, curbside pickup or delivery options, along with in-person shopping. The following bookstores and publishers have good selections of baby and children's books for sale. The details in this section may change as circumstances around COVID-19 evolve.

Bainton's Tannery Outlet & Mad Hatter Bookstore in Annapolis Royal currently can ship, deliver locally, or arrange curbside pickup. They take e-transfers and credit card payment over the phone. Call 902.532.2070

Bookmark Halifax is offering online ordering and has a great selection of Atlantic Canadian books. Currently offering curbside pickup and free delivery in Halifax on the peninsula. Call 902.423.0419

LaHave River Books is posting photos of their new releases and books on Facebook, and you can reach them there, by email at lahaveriverbooks@gmail.com or by phone on the weekends (902.688.1855). Currently delivering curbside or to your door within a reasonable distance.

Nimbus Publishing publishes a large number of Atlantic Canadian baby and children's books and offers free shipping on orders over \$50. Use coupon code NIMSHIP50 at checkout.

Nurtured Products for Parenting has books and other children's items. They offer online shopping and curbside pickup from Monday to Saturday, 10 am to 2 pm, as well as HRM drop off within a 30 minute radius of the store. Call 902.405.4367.

Tattletales Books has online shopping available and a great selection of Atlantic Canadian picture books, as well as games, activities and toys. You can pay with a credit card over the phone for curbside pickup at their Dartmouth location.

Woozles Bookstore in Halifax does free deliveries within a 30 minute radius of the store. Call 902.423.7626 to arrange a delivery or curbside pickup, or for book recommendations. You can also order online.

Online Reading Resources

Websites

All-a-Board! is a free quarterly online magazine all about baby books. Each issue has feature articles on interesting aspects of board books. To receive a copy, subscribe to **[The Baby Book Nook](#)** and an issue will land in your inbox each season.

[Audible](#) is the world's largest producer of digital audiobooks. While schools are closed for COVID-19, they are offering all stories free to stream on your desktop, laptop, phone or tablet. You can link to their stories for **[Littlest Listeners here](#)**. You can explore the collection, select a title and start listening.

[BookTrust](#) is the UK's largest reading charity. You can visit BookTrust's website to find resources for children of all ages. Search their book suggestions and rhyme videos.

- **[To listen and learn great rhymes to do with your baby, click here.](#)**
- **[To find books for babies according to theme, click here.](#)**

[Jbrary](#) is an online library of story time resources. Two Canadian librarians share enjoyable and instructive videos of songs, rhymes, finger plays and more. It's like having a baby program at your fingertips! You'll learn so many fun activities to carry you through your day.

Baby resources:

- **[Babytime Storytime Videos click here](#)**
- **[Bath Time Storytime Videos click here](#)**
- **[Lapbounce Videos click here](#)**
- **[Lullabies and Soothing Songs click here](#)**
- **[Hello and Goodbye Songs click here](#)**

Toddler resources:

- **[Body Parts Songs, Fingerplays and Tickles click here](#)**
- **[Emotions and Feelings Storytime click here](#)**
- **[Toddler Storytime Resources click here](#)**

[Caring for Each Other from Sesame Street](#) is a special COVID-19-focused online kit filled with a broad variety of free resources that you can use all day long to spark playful learning, offer children comfort, and focus a bit on yourself.

Online Reading Resources continued

Sing Along Songs is a YouTube channel from Edmonton Public Library that leads you through fun and educational baby programming. You'll also enjoy their Storytime Station for children ages 2-5

SingwithOurKids.com is a website providing free songs and activities for birth to five.

StoryBlocks.org is an online collection of songs and rhymes for babies, toddlers and preschoolers, in a variety of languages

Storytime Seedlings is an educational podcast to grow young readers. Episode are all on early literacy development for children from newborn to five years old. Programs feature books, fingerplays, rhymes, stories and songs for a screen-free storytime experience, anytime.

Podcasts

Mabel Murple's Popping Purple Wordspinning World Canadian storyteller, poet and author, Sheree Fitch, invites you into her world of words. Join Sheree on her energetic journey of imagination and creativity—and fun. A great place to start is with **this episode of the podcast** featuring two of Sheree's beloved baby books, *If I Were the Moon* and Read to Me favorite, *Kisses Kisses Baby-O!*

Online Classes and TED Talks about Early Learning

Building Babies' Brains through Play is a mini parenting master class from UNICEF and Harvard's Center on the Developing Child. In it, director Jack P. Shonkoff, M.D. explains the importance of serve and return interactions like play—and how easy they are to do. You can check out the series of videos by clicking the link above.

TED Talks:

- Patricia Kuhl studies how we learn language as babies, looking at the ways our brains form around language acquisition in **The Linguistic Genius of Babies**
- Rebecca Bellingham talks about **Why We Should All Be Reading Aloud to Children**

Local Community and Online Supports for Your Family

211 Nova Scotia provides support to Nova Scotians navigate Social Services. TTY: dial 711 from your TTY device and advise the operator you wish to call 2-1-1. Dial 211 or www.ns.211.ca

Caregivers Nova Scotia offers general resources and supports for friends and family who are caregivers

Family Resource Centres in Nova Scotia While Family Resource Centres remain closed to the public due to COVID-19, many continue to support families in a reduced capacity. Some centres are offering virtual programming, connection and responsiveness to families via email, phone and social media. **Visit this map** to connect with a Family Resource Centre in your area

Kids Help Phone provides text, phone and live chat supports for children, youth and adults. They provide 24/7 support in both French and English. The website also has information on different youth topics. The service is confidential. 1-800-668-6868

Mindwell U is a free online program that challenges you to take five minutes out of your day to learn the basics in mindfulness, a practice that allows a person to focus their attention and be fully present in a moment. Mindwell U can be accessed anywhere on any device

Strongest Families offers programs for adults, as well as children and youth, offered by telephone coaches. During Covid-19 if you, or a family member are looking for mental health resources, please call 1-866-470-7111 for support



We would love to hear from you as you introduce books and reading to your grandchild. You can connect with us at readtome.ca or on our Facebook page.

Read to Me Is a non-profit, province-wide early reading promotion program that gives a free bag of books and reading resources at the hospital bedside to every baby born in Nova Scotia.

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