



Reading with pēpi

A big part of sharing a book with babies and toddlers is the intimacy of reading together – the snuggles, the conversation, the joint attention directed to the book and each other.

Babies will be interested in exploring every aspect of a book. This includes chewing the corners and dropping the book to see what happens – it helps them learn what a book is and what it can do. Knowing how a book “works” is an important early literacy skill, so don’t be surprised if baby is as interested in how pages can move back and forth as with the story and pictures.

Reading together can be bonding, playful, and calming. It also prepares baby for life and learning. Research shows that reading books with newborns and infants can boost vocabulary and reading skills four years later, before they start school.*

* Early Reading Matters: “Long-term Impacts of Shared Bookreading with Infants and Toddlers on Language and Literacy Outcomes” – Dr Carolyn Cates, NYU School of Medicine – Pediatrics.

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Reading with pēpi

Toddlers

- Toddlers enjoy choosing and holding the pukapuka (book) and turning the pages.
- Follow their interest – read for as long as they are interested and don't worry about reading pages in order, or finishing.
- Give them time to take a turn.
- Tamariki might name pictures or fill in words of a story. They might “read to” their toys.
- You might talk about the pictures, introducing new kupu and ideas.



Newborns and infants

- Newborns and infants enjoy books with big, interesting pictures. Talk about the pictures they reach out to and touch. You can point to and name pictures too. If relevant, try using words in te reo Māori or other heart languages.
- Hold your newborn close so they can see your face. Reading together helps build a bond and can soothe pēpi when they need help to settle.
- Pēpi learns by mouthing and touching – use board books and washable books.



Older tamariki

- Older tamariki can concentrate for longer and hold pukapuka themselves. They now understand how the pictures go with the stories.
- Point to words so they see how words flow.
- They might want you to read and re-read the same book! Try pausing near the end of sentences and let your tamariki fill in the missing words.

