

Reading Checkup for Babies and Toddlers

(Newborn to age 2)

Source: Reading Checkup Guide: Helping Your Children Become Better Readers, Developed for "READ ME A STORY," a RIF/VISA brochure.

How are your children developing as readers, and what can you do to help? Use RIF's series of Reading Checkups to evaluate your children's progress through six stages of reading development, from picture-pointing to independent reading.

Each checkup describes the knowledge and skills that most children demonstrate at a given stage, and suggests how they can be nurtured.

How to Use the Checkups

Use the reading checkups the way a doctor uses a growth chart. Look for a steady pattern of growth with a few lulls and spurts. That's a healthy sign that your child is doing well in reading.

Age or grade ranges are listed for each checkup, but just as a guide. We recommend that even if your child is already in school, you begin the Reading Checkup for Babies & Toddlers and work your way forward. That way you will better appreciate the steady growth your child has already made toward becoming an independent reader.

How Parents Can Help

Parents play a key role in their children's reading development at every stage. As you mark your child's progress, don't forget to check up on what you can be doing to actively promote your child's interest and skills.

What Do the Checkups Mean?

Notice where most of your checkmarks fall. If your answers are mostly As, your child may still be making the transition from an earlier stage. If the answers are mostly Bs, your child is in the middle of this stage. If you checked mostly Cs, your child is probably stepping up to the next level. If you have any concerns about your child's reading progress, talk to your child's teacher or pediatrician.

Checkup for Babies and Toddlers:

It's never too soon to begin reading to your child. Babies enjoy hearing a parent's voice, even if they can't understand the words. They soak up the language and attention. Toddlers can listen longer and follow a simple story. They focus on the pictures, but they are learning some of the basics about reading, such as how to hold a book and turn the pages. They are also learning to love it.

Does your child...

1. Respond happily to reading by waving hands or batting the pages?
a. not yet b. sometimes c. often
2. Treat books differently than other playthings?
a. not yet b. sometimes c. often
3. Join in when you read rhymes, sounds, or lines that repeat?
a. not yet b. sometimes c. often
4. Want to read the same book again and again?
a. not yet b. sometimes c. often

Can your child...

1. Hold a book right-side up and turn the pages one at a time?
a. not yet b. sometimes c. often
2. Point to something in picture and say its name?
a. not yet b. sometimes c. often
3. Retell something that happened during the day?
a. not yet b. some words c. often
4. Hold a crayon in a fist and scribble?
a. not yet b. without control c. with control

Not to worry! It's okay if your child...

1. Teethes on books or handles them roughly at first. Babies treat books like toys.
2. Quickly loses interest or is easily distracted when you read. Skip to a favorite page.
3. Wants to read the same story over and over again. Children learn through repetition.
4. Shows little interest in reading. Put the book down and try again later.

Literacy Milestones from Birth to Age Six

Authors: Andrea DeBruin-Parecki with Kathryn Perkinson & Lance Ferderer
Source: Helping Your Child Become a Reader, U.S. Department of Education.

Most children learn to read by age 7. Learning to read is built on a foundation of communication skills that children start learning at birth—a process that is both complicated and amazing.

Most children develop certain communication skills as they move through the early stages of learning language. The following list of such accomplishments is based on current research in the field, where studies continue and there is still much to learn. As you look over the list, keep in mind that children vary a great deal in how they develop and learn.

If you have questions or concerns about your child's progress, talk with your child's doctor, teacher, or a speech and language therapist. For children with any kind of disability or learning problem, the sooner they can get the special help they need, the easier it will be for them to learn.

From birth to age 3, most babies and toddlers become able to:

- * Make sounds that imitate the tones and rhythms that adults use when talking.
- * Respond to gestures and facial expressions.
- * Begin to associate words they hear frequently with what the words mean.
- * Make cooing, babbling sounds in the crib, which gives way to enjoying rhyming and nonsense word games with a parent or caregiver.
- * Play along in games such as "peek-a-boo" and "pat-a-cake."
- * Handle objects such as board books and alphabet blocks in their play.
- * Recognize certain books by their covers.
- * Pretend to read books.
- * Understand how books should be handled.
- * Share books with an adult as a routine part of life.
- * Name some objects in a book.
- * Talk about characters in books.
- * Look at pictures in books and realize they are symbols of real things.
- * Listen to stories.
- * Ask or demand that adults read or write with them.
- * Begin to pay attention to specific print such as the first letters of their names.
- * Scribble with a purpose (trying to write or draw something).
- * Produce some letter-like forms and scribbles that resemble, in some way, writing.

From ages 3-4, most preschoolers become able to:

- * Enjoy listening to and talking about storybooks.
- * Understand that print carries a message.
- * Make attempts to read and write.
- * Identify familiar signs and labels.
- * Participate in rhyming games.
- * Identify some letters and make some letter-sound matches.
- * Use known letters (or their best attempt to write the letters) to represent written language especially for meaningful words like their names or phrases such as "I love you."

At age 5, most kindergartners become able to:

- * Sound as if they are reading when they pretend to read.
- * Enjoy being read to.
- * Retell simple stories.
- * Use descriptive language to explain or to ask questions.
- * Recognize letters and letter-sound matches.
- * Show familiarity with rhyming and beginning sounds.
- * Understand that print is read left-to-right and top-to-bottom.
- * Begin to match spoken words with written ones.
- * Begin to write letters of the alphabet and some words they use and hear often.
- * Begin to write stories with some readable parts.

At age 6, most first-graders can:

- * Read and retell familiar stories.
- * Use a variety of ways to help with reading a story such as rereading, predicting what will happen, asking questions, or using visual cues or pictures.
- * Decide on their own to use reading and writing for different purposes.
- * Read some things aloud with ease.
- * Identify new words by using letter-sound matches, parts of words, and their understanding of the rest of a story or printed item.
- * Identify an increasing number of words by sight.
- * Sound out and represent major sounds in a word when trying to spell.
- * Write about topics that mean a lot to them.
- * Try to use some punctuation marks and capitalization.

Source: *Helping Your Child Become a Reader*, U.S. Department of Education.

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10 Tips for Parents of Young Children

Source: RIF Exchange Show #504

Ages: 0-4

1. Read aloud to your child every day

- * Read to babies even before they can talk
- * Let your child see and touch the book
- * Play with voices and the sounds of words

2. Create a print rich home environment

- * Have a wide variety of books available to children
- * Encourage children to look at books on their own
- * Set aside a family reading area and a family reading time

3. Model reading and writing

- * Make use of the family reading area on your own
- * Let children see you reading for work or to learn something
- * Let children see you reading for pleasure

4. Use grocery shopping to encourage reading

- * Have children help you search for specific brands
- * Use the aisle markers with your child to find items
- * Match coupons to products

5. Cook with your child to develop literacy

- * Show your child how to read a recipe
- * Read the labels on ingredients together
- * Make a family cookbook of favorite recipes

6. Explore books together

- * As you read, point out important features about the book
- * Ask your child questions
- * Point out new vocabulary

7. Tell stories together

- * Talk together about your family history
- * Look at old vacation photos and discuss your memories of the trip
- * Tape your storytelling

8. Sing and rhyme with your child

- * Choose songs with rhymes and word play
- * Play rhyming games with your child what other words sound like monkey?
- * Challenge your child to sing or say rhymes as fast as he can and don't forget to laugh if the results come out silly

9. Write with your child

- * Provide lots of writing materials chalk, markers, crayons, and pencils
- * Encourage your child to draw and write on her own
- * Encourage your child to write thank you notes to grandparents; make to do lists and the like

10. Visit the library often

- * Make weekly trips
- * Encourage your child to get her own library card.
- * Take advantage of library programs such as read alouds and family book clubs