

When is the right time to read to your baby?

Sleep and rest are very important for babies in the neonatal unit as it helps them to grow and develop. When you are reading or going to read to your baby we recommend thinking about the following things:

Is this the right time to read for you?

- Can you sit and read to your baby for ten minutes?
- Do you have somewhere else you need to be or something else you need to do?

If you do that is ok, plan for another time today to read to your baby when you can both sit and enjoy the book

What is your baby telling you? Are they ready to listen?

- Babies can sometimes give you clues that they are overwhelmed or stressed look for these before you start reading and when you are reading to work out if this is the right time to read to them.
- Examples or signs your baby might be stressed or overwhelmed include: Crying, yawning, frowning, looking away, sneezing, sighing, Gagging, turning red or pale, hiccoughing, jerky movements, stiff or floppy arms and legs
- Examples or signs your baby is listening comfortable, happy or alert include: Your baby is looking at or around you, smiling, bright eyed, smooth movements of their arms or legs

For more information on what your baby may be trying to tell you head to our website:

http://www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/files/attachments/infant_behaviour_parent_info-sheet.pdf

What can we do to make reading comfortable for you?

- Do you have a book?
- Do you need a chair?
- Is your baby in an incubator with a cover on?

What should I read and for how long?

- I only have one book to read! Don't worry Babies like repetition. They will love hearing the same story over again!
- How long should I read for? That is up to you and your baby - watch their cues and work out if you or they are tired. It doesn't matter what you read - it's your voice your baby is interested in.
- My other child wants to read to them too. What a great idea! This gives them an important job to do and it helps them to bond with their brother or sister

Don't forget to keep reading each day when you get home. It will be a special time each day for you to sit and enjoy being together. Reading has been found to make a difference in the long-term too. With the words they hear now helping your baby's brain and language development in the future. The more words they hear, the better!

When is the right time to read to your baby?

Why is it important to read to my baby?

- There's a wealth of evidence to support the fact that children who are read aloud to on a regular basis when they are young are more readily able to learn to read once they start school.
- When hearing someone read, children learn to recognise the structure of language, learn grammar and recognise the sound of words.
- Children also learn to love books and have their imagination stimulated.
- Reading aloud to your baby is a great opportunity to be close with your baby and strengthen your relationship.

Remember; just 10 minutes a day – it's the best investment you can make in your child's future.

How do I read to my baby?

There's no magic formula, no right way of reading and no special rules.

A book, a quiet place, you and your child – is all you need.

- Try to make your reading as expressive as possible. Let the emotion of the story show through your facial expression and your voice
- Try to read familiar stories as well as new ones– repetition is very important to help you baby get the most out of being read to.
- Choose books with simple, large and brightly contrasting colourful pictures.
- Follow your baby's interest – if they are looking at a picture continue to talk about this picture until they look away.
- Remember to look at your baby so that they can see your face and you can make eye contact.
- Imitate your baby's facial expressions and vocalisations to let them know you are listening to them and interested in what they think.
- Talk about the words and about what's happening in the story as you read.
- Most important of all make the experience fun for you and your child.

Adapted from: Ten Minutes a Day, Newcastle Region Library

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Training Centre and Life's Little Treasures