

## Creating an Environment for Enjoying Stories and Books

Books must be a regular part of your program. All you need are books and comfortable places for children to look at them—on their own and with you—and to hear them read aloud. Looking at books is something children can do anywhere in your program. Encourage them to look at books on the floor, on their cots, and in a shady area outdoors.

Have soft, welcoming places for reading near the book display. An overstuffed cushion, covered mattress, carpeted risers, or a glider make book nooks cozy. Your space should be appropriate for reading with a small group of children as well as with one child at a time. Provide an inviting area where a toddler or 2-year-old can sink into a cushion or rock on a child-size rocker to look at a book by himself. Be prepared for the fact that the children's favorite books will migrate around the room, carried by mobile infants or brought to you by toddlers or twos.

### Selecting Books for Different Ages

Select high-quality books that you will enjoy sharing with the children. Keep the children's developmental abilities in mind and look for books that respect diversity and promote inclusion. Rotate and add new books to encourage children's interest, but keep old favorites available for repeated (and repeated and repeated) readings.

Include some homemade books, especially for older toddlers and twos who love to see pictures and hear stories about themselves. You can pull out a book with family pictures when a child feels sad about saying good-bye to his mother. You can help children remember the first snowy day with pictures of them when they were frolicking in snowsuits and building a snowman. Digital cameras are a wonderful tool to make bookmaking easier. You can also make “feely” books with fabrics of different textures or with other familiar objects.

A visit to the children's room of your local library can help you supplement your program's book collection, as can organizations such as Reading Is Fundamental. Yard sales and thrift stores are good sources for inexpensive books to expand your collection and replace worn books.

### Young Infants

Simple, bold illustrations interest young infants. As babies begin to reach and grasp, they become more active partners in reading. For the 4- to 6-month-old child, “reading” is sometimes book chewing, shaking, banging, sniffing, and observing. Older infants enjoy turning pages. Books for infants should focus on familiar things: bottles and food, clothes, toys, pets, and people. Stories should be simple, rhythmic, and sometimes wordless.

#### Good Books for Young Infants

- Washable, sturdy, chewable books made of cloth, plastic, or vinyl
- Board books that are easily cleaned, with pages that are easy to turn
- Books with highly contrasting pictures, or simple illustrations or photos, with one or two objects per page
- Books that have things to feel and move, such as tabs, flaps, holes, and a variety of textures

### Mobile Infants

Recognizable pictures interest mobile infants. They begin to select books on the basis of content. They also enjoy books with repetition, rhyming verses, and nonsense syllables.

#### Good Books for Mobile Infants

- Sturdy books, such as board books
- Books with simple stories about babies, families, animals, and everyday experiences
- Books of songs, rhymes, and chants
- Simple stories with repetitive language
- Books with illustrations of familiar things that infants can point to or name
- Wordless books that picture familiar objects to name and count

## Toddlers

Toddlers are beginning to follow simple plots. They especially like to hear stories about children and animals whose daily lives are similar to their own. Toddlers identify easily with mice who have grandmothers and with children who learn to use the potty.

This age group enjoys the whole process of listening to a story read aloud. They like books with pages they can turn, illustrations they can point to as you ask questions, and phrases that sound silly and are repeated predictably.

### Good Books for Toddlers

- Books that have simple plots and few words on each page
- Books about families and feelings, animals, and other everyday experiences such as saying *hello*, *good-bye*, and *goodnight*
- Books with pictures that introduce basic concepts about size, shape, and color
- Books where the words and related illustrations are placed closely together on the page
- Wordless books
- Alphabet books with simple, colorful illustrations
- Favorite stories, songs, or fingerplays that they can join in telling or acting out, such as “The Itsy Bitsy Spider”
- Books that make them laugh
- Books that encourage toddlers to hunt for and point to hidden objects

### Twos

By the time they are age 2, children who have frequently heard books read aloud bring favorite books to you again and again. They are ready to complete the rhyme or fill in the word you omit as you read a familiar story to them. They may begin “reading” to you, a friend, or a doll by telling parts of a familiar story. Many twos will listen to a whole story, following the simple plot. They participate in book-related experiences, such as seeing what they can spy after listening to *Each Peach Pear Plum*, by Janet and Allen Ahlberg.

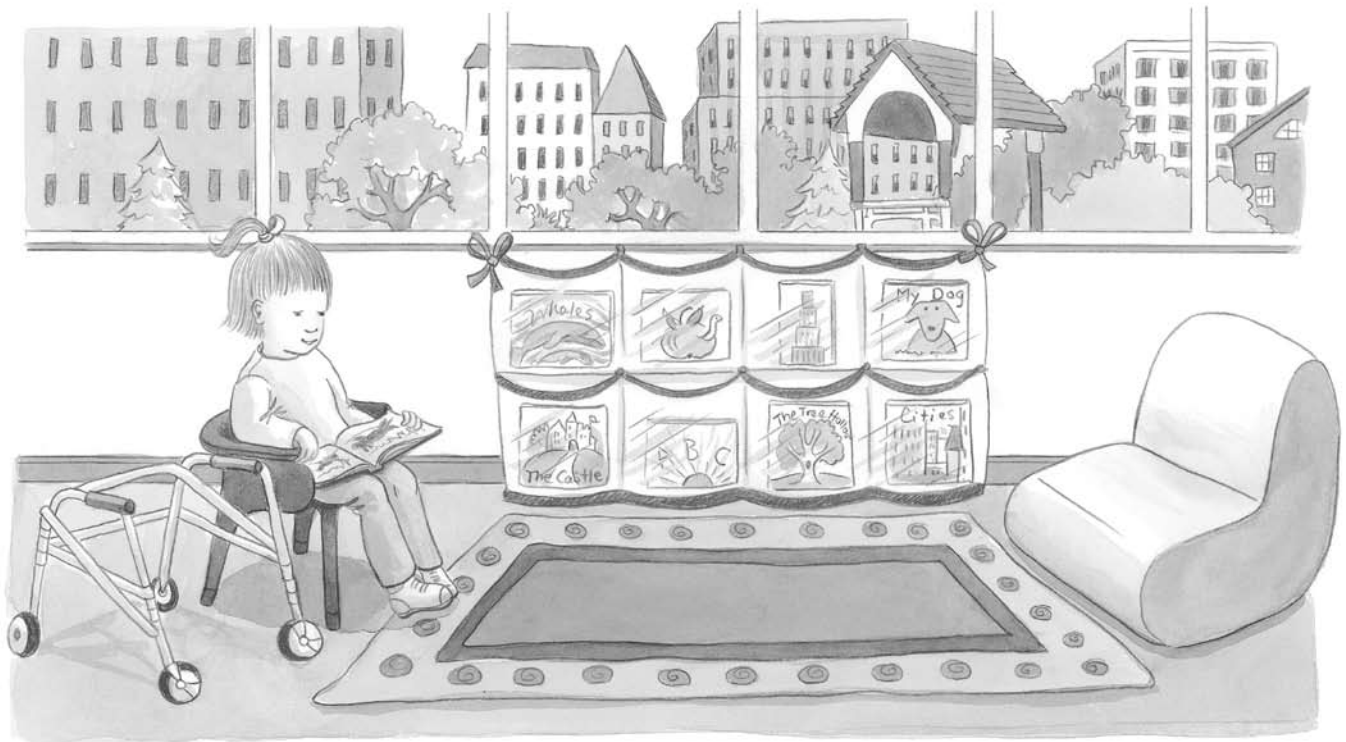
#### Good Books for Twos

- Stories about themselves or children who are like themselves
- Books about animals
- Stories they can join in telling or act out, such as Eric Carle’s *From Head to Toe*
- Books with rhymes, songs and chants, and other predictable language patterns
- Book versions of familiar songs such as “Old McDonald”; “This Old Man”; or “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”
- Books that show human diversity
- Books that help children think and talk about their own lives because they relate to the children’s experiences, such as learning personal care skills, or to the children’s fears, such as anxiety about separation, getting lost, or making a mistake
- Alphabet books with simple, familiar themes
- Books that have pictures with details that provide information about the characters and their activities
- Books that help children understand concepts about number, size, shape, and color

## Setting Up and Displaying Materials

One effective way to display books for toddlers and twos is in wall pockets made of heavy-duty fabric and clear vinyl. A book pocket looks like a shoe bag with one pocket for each book. The clear pockets protect the books while allowing children to see the covers. You can buy book pockets or make them yourself. For mobile infants to be able to get and handle the books, remove them from the pockets and stand them on a low table or on the floor. Thick cardboard books are best.

While book pockets can also be used with older infants and younger toddlers, you may prefer to display books by simply fanning them out on low, open shelves. This arrangement allows children to identify and reach for their favorites. A freestanding display encourages children to pick up a book whenever they are interested. Low shelves and baskets are also good ways to display books. The key is to display books so children can see and reach them.



## Chapter 13: Enjoying Stories and Books

Put out just a few books at the beginning of the year, but have a minimum of two books per child. Add more books as children develop book-handling skills. Rotate books regularly so that children are excited by new books, but remember to keep old favorites available to the children.

Display books in different places in your room for twos. For example, add books about families to the pretend play area and place books about buildings, farms, trucks, and animals near the blocks. Take books outdoors for reading in a shady, comfortable outdoor spot. Add other interesting props and materials that help support early literacy. Writing tools and paper encourage early scribbling. Include play props that encourage story telling and retelling, such as puppets and felt board pieces. For example, the children can arrange the three bears by size or match felt cutouts to those in Charles G. Shaw's *It Looked Like Spilt Milk*.

Wear and tear on books is inevitable with very young children. Do not let that stop you from making books available. While you expect wear and tear, always model treating books with care. Only display books that are in good repair. Torn books give the message that it is all right to tear books; books in good condition show that we take care of books. Repair torn books before returning them to the bookshelf.

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