

The Six Baby Read-Aloud Stages

Stage 1: The Listener (Birth to 2 months)

More responsive to rhymes and stories that he or she heard before birth. Recognizes mother's voice and prefers it over adult voices.

Stage 2: The Observer (2-4 months)

Responds more positively to "parentese" than regular speech tone (see "parentese" below). Begins to synchronize movements of eyes and seek out certain features of the environment, such as mobiles, checkerboard patterns, and bright contrasting colors.

Stage 3: The Cooer (4-8 months)

Recognizes own name at four months. Can distinguish between the happy, sad, or angry tones of a parent's voice. Can tell the difference between the language spoken at home and other languages. Sees colors and details clearly. Explores with mouth and hands. Begins to make sounds that resemble language.

Stage 4: The Babbler (8-12 months)

Understands (but cannot yet say) an average of 50 words at 12 months. Dialogues by gesturing, pointing, and verbalizing. Makes animal sounds. Will turn pages and point to pictures as you read.

Stage 5: The Word Maker (12-18 months)

Can say an average of 40 words at 16 months and understands 100-150 words. Understands the use of a word in different contexts. Uses different intonations when babbling or trying to speak. Wants to do what he or she sees parent doing. Crawls, climbs, and walks.

Stage 6: The Phrase Maker (18-24 months)

Imitates expressions such as "Uh, oh!" Begins to ask questions such as "What's that?" Captivated by the details in illustrations. Surge in the ability to think, reason, and speak more clearly. Increase in physical ability and coordination.

Eight Baby Read-Aloud Basics

1. Newborns Need a Quiet Reading Environment
2. Newborns Are Comforted by the Sound of Your Voice
3. Hold and Cuddle Your Baby When You Read
4. When Choosing a Book, Allow Your Baby to Be Your Guide
5. Start Reading at Any Page
6. You Don't Have to Read All the Words in the Book
7. Repeated Readings are Good for Baby's Language Development
8. Use "Parentese" When Reading and Talking to Your Baby

PARENTESE

Put their faces very close to the baby's face • Use shorter utterances • Speak in a melodious tone • Articulate clearly • Vary and raise their pitch • Frequently use repetition • Use exaggerated facial expressions (eye contact, raising of eyebrows, and big smiles) • Move their bodies rhythmically • Lengthen vowels (sooooo cuuuute!) • Use shorted sentences • Use longer pauses • Put unfamiliar words at the ends of sentences for stress • Give positive feedback and loving attention

Important! Parentese is NOT baby-talk! It does not distort and alter words, does not make up or mispronounce words, but exaggerates the sounds.

From "Baby Read-Aloud Basics" by Caroline Blakemore and Barbara Weston Ramirez