Studies have shown that two important factors in a child’s school success are sharing books with adults and being read to from a very young age. Choosing books that are appropriate in format and sharing them in age-appropriate ways create a positive experience and foster a love of reading.

Infants

- Let reading to an infant be a warm, sharing time. A baby likes being close to you and hearing the sound of your voice. By holding a baby in your lap, you establish a bond of trust.

- Be sure that baby can see the book. Even the youngest infants like to look at colors and patterns. Point to the images in the book, touch, and name them as you read. Encourage baby to point also when he is able.

- Though infants may not understand specific words, they do enjoy the sounds and rhythms of language. Read in exaggerated voices, emphasizing rhythms and rhymes.

- By the middle of the first year, a child may want to reach out and grab the book. That’s fine. Baby is learning how to handle a book. A babbling baby may hold the book and “babble read.” He’s imitating you!

Toddlers

- A toddler is growing and asserting her independence as she discovers her place in the world. She often knows what she wants and is insistent upon getting it. This is natural. If you follow the lead of a toddler when reading, it will be a pleasant experience. She may not want to sit in your lap. This is a good age to sprawl on the floor or find a cozy place to share books. If she insists on holding the book and turning the pages, that’s OK. She is learning that pages are read from left to right and books from front to back.

- What happens when a toddler wants to change books, skip around, or just look at special pages? That’s alright, too. As long as he is happy and engaged, the reading experience will be a positive one.

- Whether you choose the book for reading time or the toddler chooses makes no difference. Many times a toddler will choose the same book over and over. Even though you may get bored, a toddler won’t. This is the way a toddler learns!
• Encourage a toddler to “pretend read” a story to you if he wants to. He can retell the story to you or make up a different one. When reading a story about a child, it’s fun to substitute the child’s name for the name of one of the characters.

Find a cozy place, relax, and have fun reading together!