

THE 2-4-2 BOOK PROGRAM



ZERO TO THREE
Early connections last a lifetime

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

The 2-4-2 Book Program was created as a way to maintain a close relationship between very young children in out-of-home care and their parents between visits, and support the very young child's literacy development.

This guide is a user-friendly tool to learn and implement 2-4-2 and promote/strengthen your relationship with your child, even from a distance.



DIRECTORY:

1. History of the Program
2. Benefits of the Program
3. How the Program Works
4. Developmental Considerations
5. Additional Resources

MORE INFORMATION

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National Infant-Toddler Court Program 

HISTORY

It all started with the question: What if the parent could read the same book to the child every day over the phone while the child snuggles a blanket or stuffed animal that smells like their parent?

The Honorable Constance Cohen (Ret.) asked this question and found a simple and effective way to strengthen the connection between an infant/toddler and their parent through reading together over the phone or other platform. Maintaining a strong connection is critical for promoting reunification.

This program offers parents a way to feel connected with their infant/toddler, even if they cannot be physically together. It is a simple but powerful strategy for building the safe, stable, and nurturing early relationships that infants/toddlers need to thrive.

With 2-4-2, the parent and foster parent/caretaker are each provided a copy of a book. They work together to determine a good time each day to call, and the parent reads the book to the child while the foster parent/caretaker turns the pages if needed. If it is an older child, they can alternate with the parent reading pages or paragraphs.

Ultimately, this routine gives the child a connection with their parent, and lends predictability to their day.



THE IMPORTANCE OF READING TO INFANTS AND TODDLERS



Social and Emotional Development

Shared reading creates a nurturing, soothing environment that helps babies/toddlers feel a sense of safety and trust. Books are also powerful tools to help young children make sense of difficult feelings. The experience of being held and read to creates positive sensory and emotional associations with reading. Books are also an important way to strengthen the young child's identity with their own culture and learn about other cultures.

Cognitive & Motor Development

Shared reading engages the child and builds attention, listening, and memory. Books help babies/toddlers make meaning of the world around them, especially when adults make connections between pictures/stories in books and people, places, objects, ideas, and feelings. Further, turning pages, tracing words and shapes, feeling textures, and focusing on pages and pictures supports development of fine and gross motor skills.



Language & Speech Development

Reading books helps babies and toddlers string meaningful ideas together and grows their imagination. Shared reading helps babies and toddlers learn new words and understand the language they hear. Reading books over and over helps build children's vocabulary. Very young children are also learning about speech patterns when books are read aloud to them.

Readiness for School

Research shows that reading to babies/toddlers makes an important difference in them being prepared for school. Children who have experienced shared reading are often better prepared to follow routines, interact with teachers and peers, and actively engage with learning. Early reading promotes independence, curiosity, and a positive attitude towards learning, which in turn boosts their confidence and adaptability in a classroom setting.



HOW IT WORKS

Find a convenient time where you can routinely call your child's caregiver in order to **read the book to your child over the phone**. The caregiver will turn the pages while the you read the book over speaker phone (or FaceTime, Zoom, etc.).

It may not send the best message if you choose to surprise the caregiver by calling whenever you want. Instead, **try your best** to stick to a schedule you've both agreed on, so you can prioritize these important moments for your child.

It is best to call **at the same time everyday** so your child can expect the call as part of the routine. This predictability is essential for a healthy attachment relationship between you and your child.

Go beyond the words in the book. Talk about colors, shapes, sizes, expressions on people's faces, and ask questions such as, "Where are Big Bird's feet?" **For babies**, the caregiver can point to the picture as the you describe or ask them to find it; **toddlers** can be asked to point to the picture themselves; **older children** and parents can alternate reading pages or paragraphs to each other.

Enhance the relationship-building opportunity by giving the caregiver a shirt or blanket with your scent on it to hold or wrap around the child while reading. For older children, a special toy or other item that connects you and your child may be used.

Babies are very sensitive to smell as they grow and develop into their other senses; scent is largely how they recognize their parents. Research has shown that when combined with a positive experience, such as reading, scent can enhance the bonding experience between parent and child!

What do I do if the caregiver and I can not find a consistent time to call each day?

Even if you don't have time for a call, a short video message will mean a lot to your child.

Record yourself reading chapters/pages of the book and send them to the caregiver to play at bed/naptime with an item/blanket that smells like you.

Also consider how long it takes to read books for young children! Even if it is only 5-10 minutes, those few minutes will help you bond with your child!

DEVELOPMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Birth - 6 Months

Chunky board books, soft fabric books, or vinyl bath books.

Though a baby may seem too little to understand, they enjoy your company and the sounds of your voice and words. Babies may recognize the book-sharing routine by calming, widening their eyes, or smiling/kicking to show excitement. Babies will also want to explore books by grabbing and chewing on the book. They may not pay attention, so take a break if they get bored.



6 - 9 Months

Short, simple stories with colorful illustrations.

Babies may begin to explore books by looking, touching (opening/closing), and mouthing them. By 9 months, they may prefer or seem to recognize certain stories or pictures. A baby may also continue to occasionally mouth books. In the early years, that is a normal book behavior and tells us that babies want to explore books!



9 - 18 Months

Stories with rhymes/repeats catch a toddler's attention. Children this age also love stories with pictures of other babies and objects.

A toddler may have a favorite story that they request all of the time. Starting at about 12 months old, you can start to ask simple questions about the pictures such as "Where is the moon?" and watch to see if the baby points or gestures.



18 - 24 Months

Introduce longer stories with more complex plots. Humor is a big selling point at this age, as well as silly rhymes.

Don't worry if a toddler runs away when you read - kids this age just really need to move. If you keep reading, they'll still listen. Find ways to connect that energy to the story, such as asking the child to hop like the rabbit in the book. The toddler might also be able to label objects with simple sounds or words. Get in the habit of pausing before you say a line/phrase in the story to see if a toddler will fill in the final word. Harness your toddler's growing independence and give the "job" of turning pages. While reading, take some time to ask questions about the book such as "Who is hiding behind the tree?" This interaction helps to build a toddler's thinking and language skills.



24 - 36 Months

They may be ready for books with regular pages. Nonfiction stories are also interesting as they are figuring out how the world works.

At this age, you can ask questions about the story that are a little tougher such as "How do you think they're feeling?" or "What do you think will happen next?" Make connections between the book and the child's life by asking questions such as "The boy is at pre-school. What did you do at pre-school today?" By 3, a child may be able to tell you the story based on the pictures. Don't be surprised if the little one wants to hear the same book over and over. Toddlers still love repetition and won't tire of a story, even the 7th time.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Five Fast Facts: Reading with Under-Threes

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3081-five-fast-facts-reading-with-under-threes>

Great Books to Read to Infants and Toddlers

<https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/great-books-read-infants-and-toddlers>

How to Introduce Toddlers and Babies to Books

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/304-how-to-introduce-toddlers-and-babies-to-books>

Seven Books About Feelings for Babies and Toddlers

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/7-books-about-feelings-for-babies-and-toddlers>

The “Missing” First Year: Parents Underestimate the Benefits of Reading and Talking with Babies

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1506-the-missing-first-year-parents-underestimate-the-benefits-of-reading-and-talking-with-babies>

Tips for Reading to Infants and Toddlers

<https://www.readacrossamerica.org/tips-for-reading-to-infants-and-toddlers>

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

<https://imaginationlibrary.com/>

BookBot - Free Books for Kids

<https://www.bookbotkids.com/free-books-for-kids>

Supporting Language and Literacy Skills from 12–24 Months

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resource/supporting-language-and-literacy-skills-from-12-24-months/>

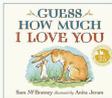
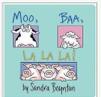
Language and Literacy Skills From 24-36 Months

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resource/language-and-literacy-skills-from-24-36-months/>

Staying Connected While Separated from Your Young Child

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resource/staying-connected-while-separated-from-your-young-child/>

Suggested Developmentally Appropriate Books

 <p>More More More Said the Baby by Vera B. Williams</p>	 <p>Peek-a-WHO? by Nina Laden</p>	 <p>Peekaboo Bedtime by Rachel Isadore</p>	 <p>Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes by Mem Fox and Helen Oxenbury</p>	 <p>~GUESS~ HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU by Sam McBratney and Anita Jaram</p>
 <p>Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown</p>	 <p>Little Blue and Little Yellow by Leo Lionni</p>	 <p>Moo Baa La La La by Sandra Boynton</p>	 <p>One Love by Cedella Marley</p>	 <p>I Love You Through and Through by Benedetta Rossetti-Shustak</p>
 <p>Chicka Chicka Boom Boom by Bill Martin, Jr.</p>	 <p>Dear Zoo by Rod Campbell</p>	 <p>Please Baby Please by Spide Lee and Tonya Lewis Lee</p>	 <p>Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See? by Eric Carle</p>	 <p>THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR by Eric Carle</p>

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IN SUMMARY

With 2-4-2, you and your child's caretaker are each provided a copy of a book. You work together to determine a good time each day to call, and then you read the book to your child while the caretaker turns the pages if needed.



THE IMPORTANCE OF READING

- Social and Emotional Development
- Language and Speech Development
- Cognitive and Motor Development
- Improves School Readiness

HOW TO USE THE 2-4-2 PROGRAM WITH YOUR CHILD

Find a convenient time where you can routinely call your child's caregiver in order to **read the book to your child over the phone**. The caregiver will turn the pages while the you read the book over speaker phone (or FaceTime, Zoom, etc.).

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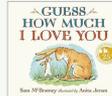
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Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See?
by Eric Carle



The Very Hungry Caterpillar
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