

'I like reading with my mummy because I want to learn my letters and sounds' Louis, age 4

An Introduction to

First Books

The first steps in a lifetime of reading

When should you start reading?

It's never too early to start reading to children, although you might want to wait until they are back home from the labour ward before launching into *Winnie-the-Pooh*. But even very small babies can benefit from being read to.

What will young babies get out of it?

Very young babies will not have a clue what you're talking about when you first start to read to them! But they will enjoy hearing the sound of your voice and will be stimulated by the different colours and contrasts that appear in picture books for the very young.

Reading also promotes lots of body contact, which is important to young babies – and their parents and grandparents.

The first few years

In the first two or three years, it's not about learning to read at all. It's more about using books to develop vocabulary and pronunciation, and having fun learning about everyday people, places and objects.

A lot of children's first words will be recognisable from the books they've been read. The nephew of one Egmont staff member could name every single Mr. Men before the age of two!

Many books for ages 0-3 will tell simple stories about things that children can relate to, such as going to the playground or having a bath. Others will help develop awareness of numbers, letters, shapes and colours in an easy and fun way.

More sophisticated books for ages 3+

Picture books for children aged 3+ still contain stories that children can identify with but they are told using more advanced language and can often feature more abstract characters, like underpants-loving aliens or wild beasts with knobbly knees! These books allow children to use their imaginations and can also help them to learn how to express themselves and understand common feelings and emotions.