

# Bring On the Books

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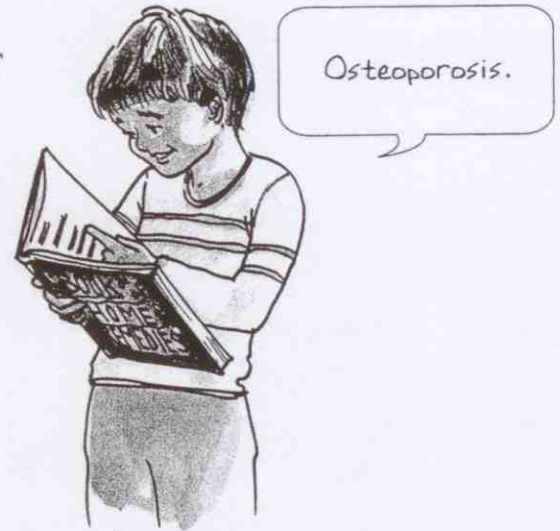
Some children can pour over a book for hours while others may only glance at the cover. However, all children who like to look at pictures or printed words tend to enjoy books. Unlike the spoken word, the pictures and print do not disappear after they're read. They remain on the page so that your child can make sense of what he is seeing *and* hearing. A good book can also be read many times over. Each time your child hears a story, he understands more and more as the book's language becomes familiar.

Some children with ASD have a precocious ability to read and are often more interested in looking at words than at pictures. Yet even though they can recognize long and difficult words, they don't always understand what these words mean.

In this chapter we will look at how books help your child understand his world and encourage him to communicate. We will also see how you can use the printed word to give your child information and a new way to express himself.

### When you read a book with your child, a lot of learning happens:

- Your child discovers the pleasure of sharing a book with you. Book reading offers you and your child the opportunity to make a connection and find enjoyment in two-way communication.
- Your child learns new words and sees words that he already knows used in a new context.
- Books encourage your child to think beyond the words written on the page, as you help him imagine how characters feel or what might happen next.
- Your child may discover another way to communicate through the printed word.



*Alexander loves to read words, but he doesn't always understand what they mean.*

## Reading Together

### Choose the Right Books

*(See the reference section for a short list of recommended books.)*

Take into consideration what your child does with a book, his understanding, his interests and the kinds of pictures that are meaningful for him. You may find that the best books have colourful pictures and text that relates directly to the picture under which it appears. Books for preschoolers usually have a couple of large pictures of familiar objects on each page, but your child may like more detailed pictures as well. Some children enjoy books with pictures of their special interests, such as animals or characters from favourite TV shows.

Remember that even books written for older children have wonderful illustrations. With a little reworking on your part, these books can be transformed into the right book for your child. (See "Read the Right Way" for guidelines on how to modify books for your child's stage.)

### Cardboard, cloth and soft vinyl books

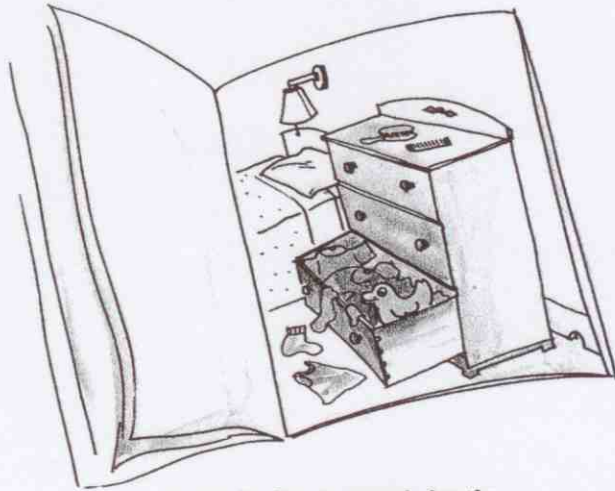
If your child prefers to chew on books or tear pages, choose books made from durable materials that will last while he learns how to use books the way he's supposed to.

### Books that are good for pointing to and naming things

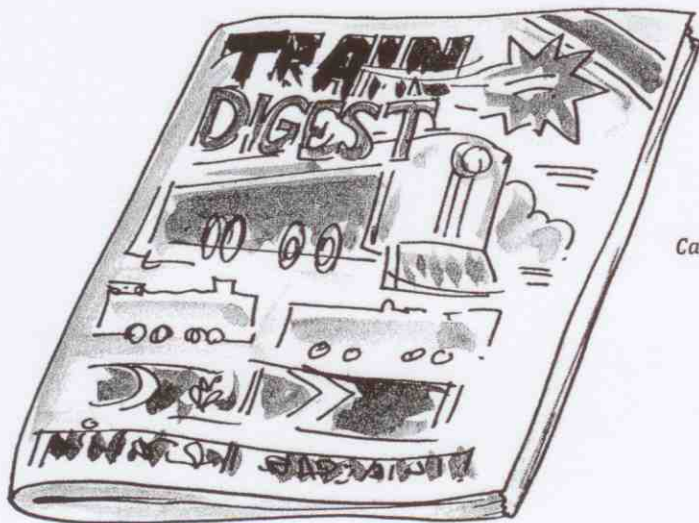
Books that encourage pointing and labelling usually have one or two brightly coloured pictures or photographs of things that your child is familiar with on each page. These books can be about the alphabet, numbers, animals, everyday items, like food and toys, and daily routines. Your child may like books with hidden objects in the pictures. It can be fun to search for the tiny mouse or little ducky hiding on the page! And don't forget about store catalogues. If your child is fascinated by trains, he may appreciate a train catalogue (available at hobby stores) more than any other book.



*Your child may like books with one or two realistic pictures on each page.*



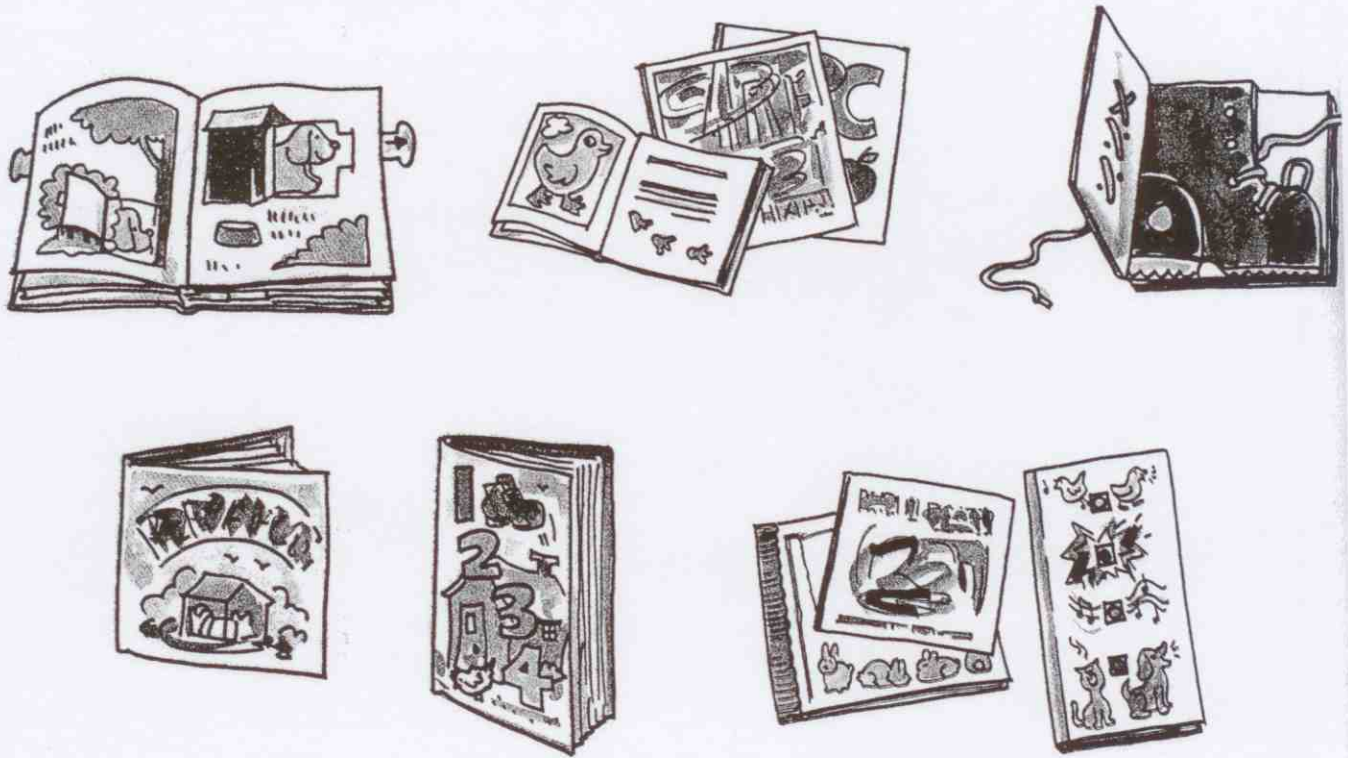
*It can be fun to search for the hidden ducky together.*



*Catalogues can be favourites.*

### Interactive books

These books provide things for your child to do even if he isn't yet talking or pointing to pictures. Children like books with flaps to lift, buttons to push and fuzzy fabrics to touch. Long before they recognize the meaning of the pictures under the flaps or the sounds that the buttons create, they learn that books can be fun.



### Predictable books

Predictable books have repetitive words and phrases. It's much easier to recall something said ten times than something said once. Books that repeat key phrases, such as "I see," "I like" or "Who is that?" are especially useful for your child. Predictable books are also ideal for a child who enjoys music because they have their own rhythms and rhymes. A good example of a repetitive and predictable rhyming book is *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin Jr.

### Simple story books

As your child's understanding increases, choose books that have a simple plot with a beginning, middle and end. At first, the stories should be about things your child is familiar with, such as a visit to a friend's house, a familiar daily routine or a problem he is likely to encounter. Later, introduce story books that encourage your child to use his imagination and think about unfamiliar things, like scary monsters or life on a farm.

## Choose books to help your child generalize words he knows

Once your child learns a new word in one situation, it is often difficult for him to transfer it to another place. To help your child generalize, choose books that emphasize words he's already learned in People Games, songs and daily routines.



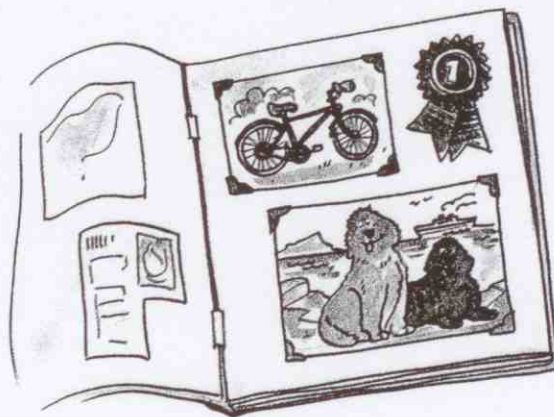
*First, Kelsi learns the word "up" in a People Game with her father.*



*Then she sees that not only little girls but also balloons can go "up."*

## Create a book just for your child

Homemade books appeal to children at all stages. You can make scrapbooks with photos of family, friends and pets or with pictures cut out from magazines or toy catalogues. If your child understands much of what you say to him, you can write a special "Personal Story" just for him. A Personal Story gives your child information that will help him understand confusing or new situations, such as a visit to the Doctor's. (For more about Personal Stories see Chapter 7, page 239.)



*Most children like to look at realistic pictures of themselves, their family and other familiar things.*

## Read the Right Way

### Get your child hooked on books by creating interest and excitement

Think of yourself as an entertainer, and your reading as an award-winning performance. You have to be more interesting to your child than the things that might distract him.

### Follow your child's lead

Sometimes the part of the book that interests your child most is not the part that you're reading to him. When this happens, it's best to abandon your plan and follow his lead. Once you notice what your child's looking at, include his interest by labelling the picture that captures his attention and making this picture a part of the story you're reading.

