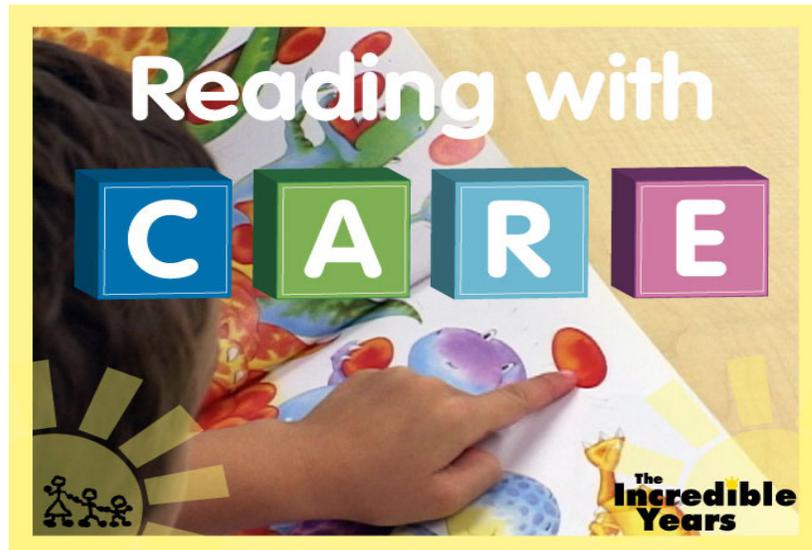


# Reading with CARE with *Babies*



Written by: Carolyn Webster-Stratton, Ph.D.

**Did you know that there is a connection between how much you talk to your baby and his or her later reading abilities and school success?**

Studies (e.g., Hart & Risley) have shown that by 18 months, children from low-income families hear significantly fewer words in their homes than children from higher income families. One recent study from Stanford University showed that by their 3rd year, low-income children have heard 30 million fewer words than higher income children. If this

language exposure gap continues, by the time these children get to kindergarten they will need remediation because they are already far behind in the language and school readiness skills needed for school success.

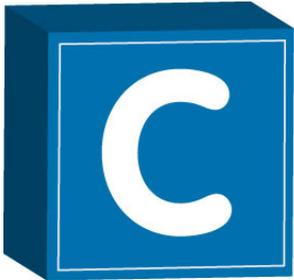
**Since early vocabulary is connected to later success in reading comprehension, this language gap presents a barrier to these children's future academic learning achievement.** It was also found that TV talk not only didn't help, but it was a barrier.

Often these parents just don't know that it is important to talk more to their babies. The good news is that randomized control group studies show that programs such as the Incredible Years® Baby, Toddler, and Preschool Parent Series result in improvements in children's social and emotional language skills and school readiness. It has been shown that low income parents can successfully learn to focus their attention and learn to talk more to their babies and children using descriptive commenting, persistence, and social and emotion coaching language during child-directed play and reading interactions.

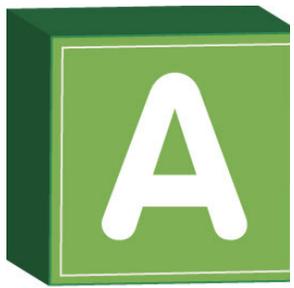


Here are some tips to building your baby's language vocabulary through reading interactions. This is not about flash cards, use of Ipads or computers, or memorization of words. Rather it is about loving, child-directed conversations while reading books, playing with your child, or engaging in everyday routines. And yes, you must turn off your mobile phone :-)

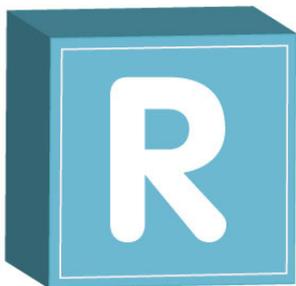
## Building Blocks for Reading with CARE with Babies



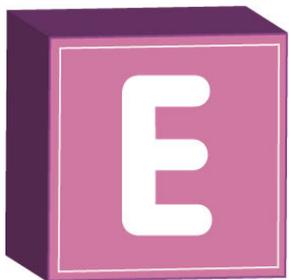
**Comment**, point to and describe objects, colors, emotions, sounds and actions of pictures in touch-and-feel books. You don't need to read the actual words in the book, just point to and talk about the pictures using your native language. For example, "Teddy's nose is yellow. Baby is hungry. The train is slowing down." Allow your baby to touch the book and even to put it in his/her mouth.



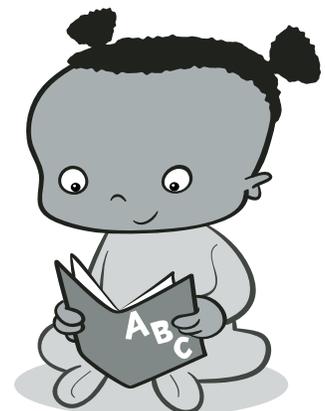
**Act** enthusiastic using physical dramatizations and sound effect. For example, "that is a bird, he goes chirp chirp." (Use your hands to make a chirp sign). Use a melodious voice varying the pace, phrasing, voice rhythm and pitch of your words. Pause between sounds or vocalizations to allow your baby to respond.



**Respond** with smiles, encouragement, eye contact, cuddling and delight to your baby's smiles, body signals and pointing movements; follow what your baby is looking at and be child-directed in what you respond to.

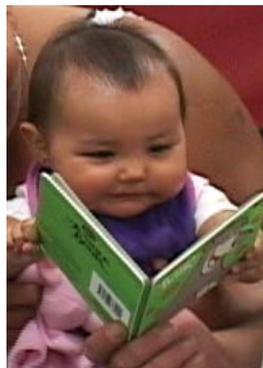


**Expand** on your baby's sounds. If your baby says a syllable such as "la la" or "da da," mirror or repeat the sound. Or, if your baby says "ball," repeat the word and add a descriptor such as the color or shape of the ball. "Yes, that's a big, red ball!" If you have other children, read what they like while you are holding your baby. Let them read to your baby and imitate your baby's sounds. Start reading at any page and make up your own stories or sing while you are looking at the book.



## Remember:

- Be sure your baby's head is supported and you are both sitting in a comfortable chair. You might use a pillow or a sling to support your baby so that your hands are free.
- Read in a quiet place. Turn off any competing noises such as TV, stereo, or radio; this will also prevent overstimulation or stress.
- There will be variability in individual baby's interest in books, so don't worry if your baby does not seem intently interested or starts crying. Respond to your baby's cues. If (s)he seems fussy or uninterested in the book, try changing your tone or reading a different book. If these new strategies do not engage him/her, then stop trying to read, and do another soothing activity with your baby. Try again later.



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