



Growing readers!

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How to Read an E-Book with Your Child

Electronic books, called e-books, are becoming more and more commonplace these days. Some readers, like the first-generation Kindle and Nook devices, offer a basic digital version of a print book. Children scroll through the pages to read, and the experience is somewhat similar to reading a traditional book.

Newer, full-color, touchscreen devices such as iPads and the Nook Color have expanded what is possible to include e-books with many more features. These “enhanced” e-books offer a different reading experience. Often bought as apps through iTunes, these e-books provide lots of choice. A user can choose have the whole book read to them, or can choose to read the book themselves. E-book enhancements consist of a range of things, but often include listening to music that complements the story, playing story-related games, completing coloring pages, and more. Most children find interactive e-books fun and engaging. But do they help develop important early literacy skills such as letter names and letter sounds or more complex skills such as comprehension?

The e-book market is too young to have enough solid research on the topic to know for sure yet, but researchers have spent lots of time watching families with young children engage with e-books. These observations suggest that it’s easy for kids to get carried away with the digital nature of the e-book. Parents can help keep the focus on reading and the story by following three simple suggestions:

1. Recognize the novelty factor. The first few times your child is interacting with a new e-book, allow time for exploration of the features. Once your child has spent some time exploring, set out to read or listen to the story without too many non-story related interruptions.
2. Enjoy the features, but don’t forget to focus on the story. See if you can help your child find a balance between having fun with the games and sticker books and really enjoying and understanding the story. As with all books, engage your reader in conversations about the story. “What do you think will happen next? What is your favorite part of the story?”
3. Stay present with your child and the book experience. It’s tempting to let the device do the work – read the story, play a game and interact with your child. But there’s no substitute for quality parent-child conversation. Keep talking, commenting on interesting words and ideas, and sharing your love of literacy with your child.

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