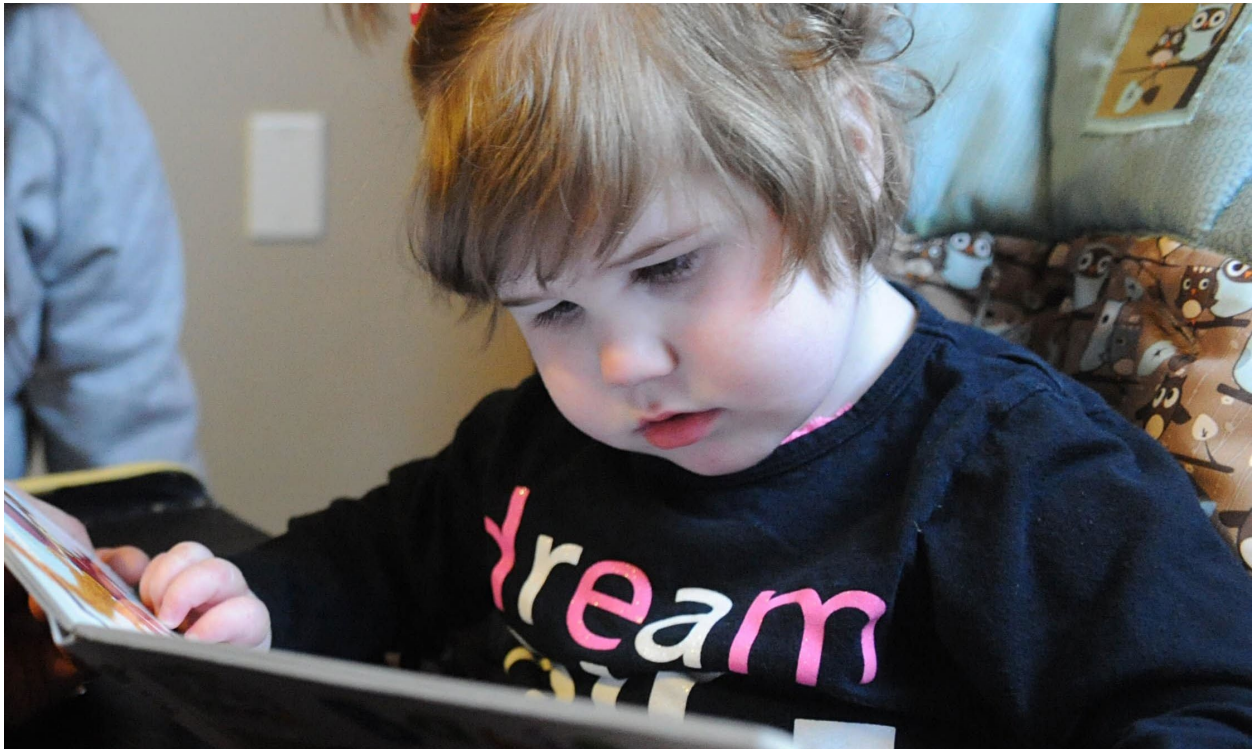


# Eight Tips to Introduce Reading to Your Young Child Who Is Blind <sup>1</sup>

Introducing books and reading to a child who is blind may seem daunting, but it really isn't



You've just been told your new baby has a visual impairment, or that your toddler is losing her vision. Reading may not be the first thing that comes to mind, but at some point you'll most likely think, "How will my child learn to read?"

For all children, sighted or not, literacy begins long before they understand that letters form words, words form sentences and sentences group together to tell stories. Here are eight tips for introducing books and reading to your young child, even if they can't see the word or pictures.

1. **Share your love of reading by reading aloud with your child every day.** Choose times and places that are quiet, comfortable and free of distractions. For a child with visual impairment, the sounds of other children playing, the washing machine going, or

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.perkins.org/resource/eight-tips-to-introduce-reading-to-your-young-child-who-is-blind/>



background music can make it difficult for them to focus on the story. Find a place that works for both of you.

2. **Choose books that relate to the child's own experience.** Regular activities such as bath time, visiting grandma or going to the grocery store are activities your child may be familiar with, and can make the story much more interesting to them. Which leads to the next point...
3. **Use interactive language to make the story more engaging and meaningful.** You can say things like, "Jose went to the grocery store in this book. Do you remember when we went to the grocery store yesterday?" Or "You played with a boat in your bathtub last night, remember?"
4. **Use objects to support the story.** You may feel sad that your child is missing out on the beautiful illustrations in a story book – but you can go one better and use actual objects to illustrate the story that your child can touch and hold. Prepare ahead of time by putting these objects in a box. For a description of story boxes, including links to how to make one yourself, go to our [Paths to Literacy website](#). For example, before reading a story about bath time, you can put a small towel, bottle of shampoo, soap and tub toy in the story box.
5. **Add textures or bright colors to call attention to important parts of the page.** A texture can be something as simple as a piece of felt to denote a spider, so you can encourage your child to "find the spider" on the page. If your child can see some colors more easily than others, add those colors to the page with colored fabric or paper. This gives another element to the story on top of the words your child is listening to.
6. **Get books in braille and/or large print.** There are many sources of braille books, [some of which are free](#). Braille books allow your child to connect raised dots with reading, and set the stage for braille literacy.
7. **Encourage your child to be actively engaged in reading.** Have them find "the top of the page," or help to turn to the next page. Part of learning to read is understanding what a book is: the fact that it has a cover and pages that you turn.
8. **Create tactile books with your child, based on his or her experiences.** Make a book about the grocery store, using cardboard for pages and fabric or small objects glued on for the story. One enterprising mom enlisted her relatives to each [make a page about shapes](#) for her son's birthday. Now he has a shape book he can revisit to learn about shapes and to remember the people who made each page.

View a [list of resources on literacy and visual impairment](#) on Paths to Literacy. Reading is a skill for life, but early reading is an opportunity to spend one-on-one time with your child while wrapped up in the magic of a good story. A visual impairment shouldn't get in the way of that.

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