

Some books are better left unread

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Some books are funny, some books teach important social skills, some books are perfect for helping with early literacy skills, some books are more like songs when you read them... there are many reasons to read a book to a child. However, there are some books that don't need to be read at all!

Hidden picture books or "Look and Find" or "I spy" books are some of my favorite non-reading books for little ones. Yes, there are often a few sentences written on the top of the page, but who cares!? Picture books are great for learning language and INTERACTING – so, if you have a little one who doesn't sit long for books then skip the passive listening expectation and go straight to the fun!

Sure, you can ask your little ones to find all of the pictures listed, but that only requires them to point. How do we get them to talk?

To help your little one learn to talk,
sometimes it's best to NOT read the book.

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INSTEAD... try these:

- Sing or chant the book
- Only make animal, vehicle, excited, or meaningful noises
- Knock on each page before you turn it and say "knock knock"
- Name pictures incorrectly on purpose
- Look for pictures you can't find that are right in front of you
- Make up your own simple story using the child's name
- Wave and blow kisses to all of the people in the book
- Say "bye bye" to each picture as you turn the page

- **Pretend to not be able to find the picture.** Yes, the large red apple may be front and center on the page but if you pretend you can't see it, then your child has the opportunity to help you! "Apple? apple? hmmm...I can't find it."
- **Wave to all of the people or characters in the pictures.** Find Elmo on every page and just enthusiastically wave "Hiiiiii". Maybe even blow him a kiss if you haven't seen him in a long time. Blowing kisses is great for imitation and silly mouth play "mmmwah".
- **Use playdough.** What? In a book? Yes. Many times books for toddlers and preschoolers have wipeable pages. Use playdough to cover "hidden" pictures and then just peel a section away to reveal the next picture to find. OR, allow the child to cover a hidden picture with playdough once it's found.
- **Knock on each page before turning it.** Pretend each page is a door and "knock knock" each time you turn it. Encourage your little one to also "knock knock" with their hand.
- **Wave good bye to pictures before turning the page.** Say "bye bye" or "bye apple" before going on to the next page. Maybe even add "ready, set....GO" before checking out the next page.
- **Sound play.** If you have a little one, use the sound that a car or animal or person might make instead of asking questions or using long sentences. Want to find the dog? Just point to it and bark! Then think loudly while looking "hmmmm". When you find it, just bark again! Your little one might do the same.

One of the most important things to remember when interacting with books is to **follow your child's interests**. This may mean sitting across from her so that you can watch her eyes and only comment on the pictures that SHE is interested in. When you make a noise for the dog that she is looking at, there is a better chance she will pay attention. She may even think it's funny and try it herself. Even if you are making the most amazing train noises, but she is looking at the person in the car, your efforts may not fully be appreciated or replicated.

*For the FULL article and additional strategies for book play, go to www.letsplaythespeechandlanguage.com.

