**Family Read-a-thon Information & How and Why to Read in the NICU**

**Welcome to the Babies With Books (BWB) multi-site NICU Read-A-Thon!**

This event is a friendly reading competition between multiple NICUs to celebrate and encourage shared family reading and improve the NICU experience. This Read-A-Thon is co-hosted by BWB, a student-led early literacy organization promoting NICU reading ([babieswithbooks.org](http://babieswithbooks.org)).

**How to participate in the NICU read-a-thon:**

During the NICU Read-A-Thon (September 8th - 18th, 2025), each time you read with your baby, write your baby’s first and last name on the reading ticket and put the ticket in the reading ticket box located X. For this Read-A-Thon, a “reading session” is defined as any attempt to read with your baby regardless of duration. You can have multiple reading sessions in one day.

**Why read to your baby?**

* Reading is a special time to connect and bond with your baby.
  + You are the most important person to your baby!
  + Your baby responds to your voice and emotions more than to anyone else’s!
* Your baby will learn a lot! Your baby will hear and begin to understand speech and language.
* Reading with your baby helps their brain develop and form important connections that support learning over their lifetime.

**How to read to your baby:**

* Sit or lie with your baby in a comfortable and quiet place with a few books or other reading materials.
  + If your baby cannot be held in your arms, you can read to them in their bed.
* Give your baby your full attention. Turn off your phone and avoid distractions.
* Have a conversation with your baby using the book.
* Describe and point to pictures in the book.
* Make the story come to life. Talk about the characters and their personalities.
* Read with emotion and change your voice to interest your baby.
* Stick with it! Read often, for short periods, to keep it fun and make it positive.
* Even if your baby does not seem to be paying attention, reading to your baby is very helpful!
* Stop reading if your baby is turning away, crying, or becoming overstimulated. Return to reading another time.
* Read with your baby every day! Your baby will learn this is a special time.

**This information was developed based on the following resources and references:**

www.[reachoutandread.org/](https://reachoutandread.org/)

[www.aap.org/en-us/literacy/Literacy/For-Families/Sharing-Books-With-Your-Baby/booksbuildconnections\_helpingyourchildlearntoread.pd](https://www.aap.org/en-us/literacy/Literacy/For-Families/Sharing-Books-With-Your-Baby/booksbuildconnections_helpingyourchildlearntoread.pdf)f

[www.zerotothree.org/resources/1833-read-early-and-often](https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1833-read-early-and-often)

[www.aap.org/en-us/literacy/Literacy/For-Families/The-Secret-To-A-Smarter-Baby/booksbuildconnections\_thesecrettoasmarterbaby.pdf](https://www.aap.org/en-us/literacy/Literacy/For-Families/The-Secret-To-A-Smarter-Baby/booksbuildconnections_thesecrettoasmarterbaby.pdf)

[www.aap.org/en-us/literacy/Literacy/For-Families/Why-It-Is-Never-Too-Late-To-Early-With-Your-Baby/booksbuildconnections\_whyitisnevertooearlytoreadtoyourbaby.pdf](https://www.aap.org/en-us/literacy/Literacy/For-Families/Why-It-Is-Never-Too-Late-To-Early-With-Your-Baby/booksbuildconnections_whyitisnevertooearlytoreadtoyourbaby.pdf)