

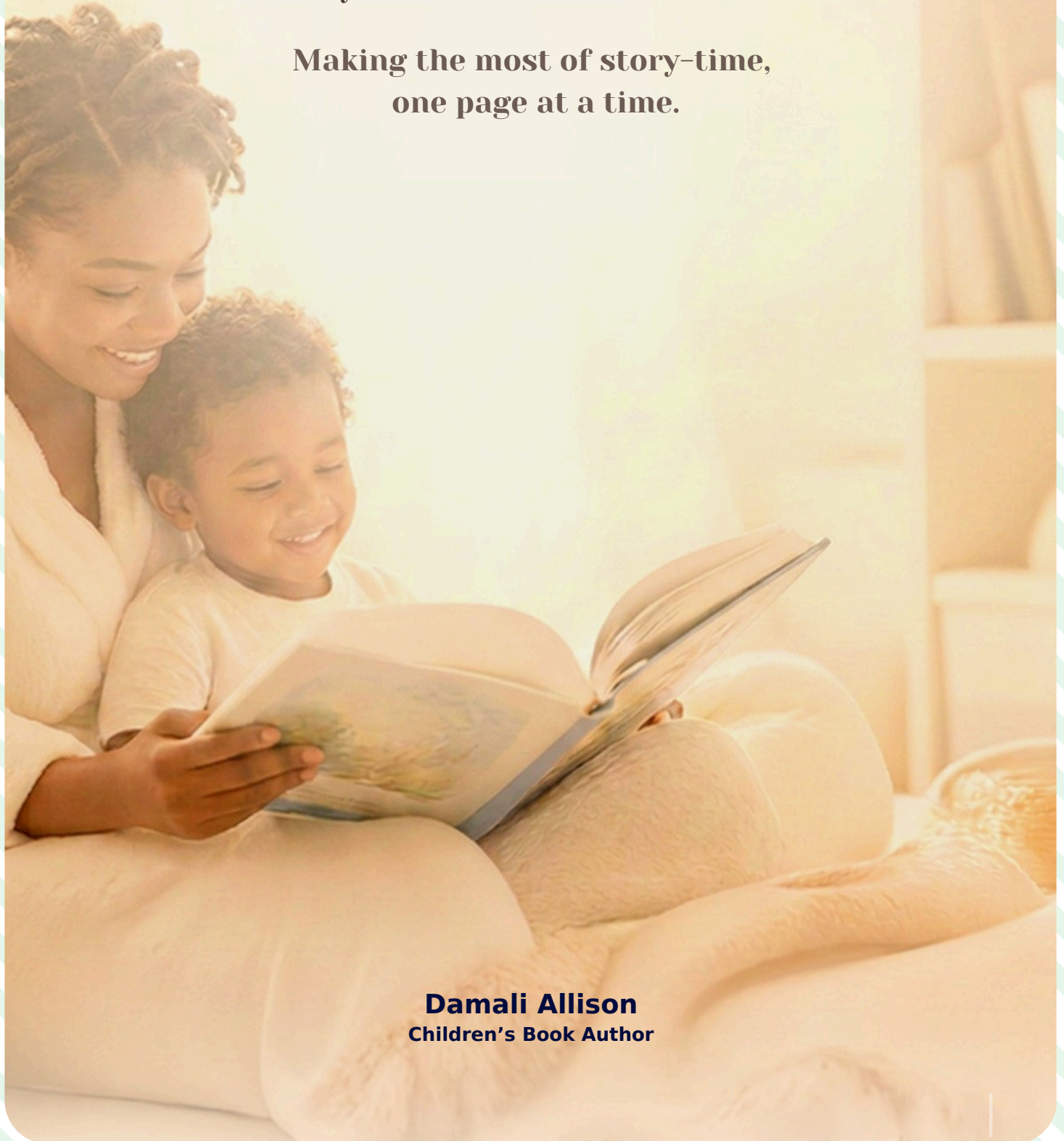


FREE PARENT GUIDE

The Parent's Guide to Reading Together

From Baby's First Book to Confident Reader

Making the most of story-time,
one page at a time.



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Welcome

A book can be so much more than a book. It can be a cuddle at bedtime, a conversation after a difficult day, a place to discover new words, a safe way to explore big feelings, and a doorway to imagination.

This guide takes you through reading development from birth to age 10, with practical, playful ideas to make reading together enjoyable, meaningful, and something your child looks forward to.

You don't need to be a teacher. You don't need to be an expert reader. You simply need to share the moment.

The Golden Rules

-  **CONNECT** Make reading a time for closeness.
-  **NOTICE** Follow what interests your child.
-  **TALK** Books are conversation starters.
-  **WONDER** Encourage questions and predictions.
-  **HAVE FUN** Funny voices are allowed
-  **ENCOURAGE** Celebrate effort and curiosity.
-  **EXPLORE** Try different types of books.
-  **LET THEM CHOOSE** Interest can open the door to reading.

Sources & further reading: BookTrust (booktrust.org.uk) · National Literacy Trust (literacytrust.org.uk) · NHS Better Health - Start for Life (nhs.uk/start-for-life) · Reach Out and Read (reachoutandread.org)



AGE 0-12 months

Baby's First Books

★ Your baby is learning from your voice, rhythm, facial expressions, pictures, and the closeness of sharing a book.

★ Choose sturdy books with faces, bold pictures, simple objects, textures, rhymes, and repetition.

★ Let your baby look, touch, point, grab, turn pages or chew the book! They don't need to finish it.

★ Try: "Where's the teddy?" or "Can you see the dog?" Even before they can answer, you are building the foundations of conversation.

Parent reminder: A few minutes of happy reading is valuable.

Sources & further reading: BookTrust (booktrust.org.uk) · National Literacy Trust (literacytrust.org.uk) · NHS Better Health – Start for Life (nhs.uk/start-for-life) · Reach Out and Read (reachoutandread.org)



AGE 1-2 years

Little Explorer, Big Discoveries

★ Connect words with objects, actions, and everyday experiences.

★ Make books interactive. If the story says “jump,” jump! If it says “roar,” roar together.

★ Follow your toddler’s lead. If they point, stop and talk. If they want the same book again, read it again.

★ Try books about animals, food, family, bedtime, colours, numbers, vehicles, and feelings.

Parent reminder: Children learn through hearing, seeing, repeating, and joining in.

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AGE 2-3 years

The “Why?” Years

★ Use books to encourage curiosity and conversation.

★ Try STOP & TALK: What? Who? Where? Why? What next?

★ Explain unfamiliar words simply, then connect them to real life.
Example: “Exhausted means very, very tired.”

★ Use stories to explore emotions: “How do you think she feels?”
“Have you ever felt like that?”

Parent reminder: You do not need to quiz your child. Conversation is the learning.

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AGE 3-4 years

Growing Imagination

★ Look at the cover before reading and ask what your child thinks the story might be about.

★ Pause occasionally: “What do you think will happen next?”

★ After reading, ask: “What was your favourite part?” or “If you could be one character, who would you be?”

★ Turn stories into play — shops, explorers, animals, adventures, and pretend worlds.

★ Choose one interesting word from the story and use it naturally during the day.

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AGE 4-5 years

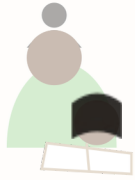
Getting Ready for School

- ★ Choose stories about friendship, sharing, trying new things, emotions, kindness, independence, and starting school.
- ★ Let your child “read” pictures and explain what they think is happening.
- ★ Ask for predictions and reasons: “What do you think happens next? Why?”
- ★ Stories can give children language for experiences they may not yet know how to describe.

Parent reminder: School readiness isn't about knowing everything before Reception. Children develop at different rates.

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AGE 5-6 years

Learning to Read

- ★ Your child may be developing formal reading skills such as phonics, blending, and decoding. Follow the approach used by their school.
- ★ Be both a reading supporter and a reading cheerleader.
- ★ Keep sharing books aloud — independent decoding and listening to rich stories are different experiences.
- ★ Balance a practice book with a sharing book for pleasure.
- ★ When your child gets stuck, give them time: “Look at the first sound.” “Let’s sound it out together.”

Parent reminder: Celebrate effort: “You kept trying even when that word was tricky.”

Sources & further reading: BookTrust (booktrust.org.uk) · National Literacy Trust (literacytrust.org.uk) · NHS Better Health – Start for Life (nhs.uk/start-for-life) · Reach Out and Read (reachoutandread.org)





AGE 6-7 years

From Learning to Read, to Reading to Learn

- ★ Explore fiction, non-fiction, humour, fantasy, fact books, comics, magazines, and books about their interests.

- ★ Ask curious questions: “What surprised you?” “What did you think of that character?”

- ★ Make reading part of everyday life: menus, signs, recipes, maps, instructions, and captions.

Parent reminder: Reading is everywhere.

Sources & further reading: BookTrust (booktrust.org.uk) · National Literacy Trust (literacytrust.org.uk) · NHS Better Health – Start for Life (nhs.uk/start-for-life) · Reach Out and Read (reachoutandread.org)





AGE 7-8 years

Building Confidence and Independence

★ Follow your child's interests. Football, animals, jokes, mysteries, or facts can all be gateways into reading.

★ Try "Tell me about your book" instead of "Have you done your reading?"

★ Read the same book sometimes and compare opinions.

★ Let your child recommend books to you — and explain why.

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AGE 8-9

Developing a Reader's Voice

- ★ Encourage opinions about characters, choices, and story themes.
- ★ Ask: "Why do you think the character behaved like that?" "What would you have done differently?"
- ★ Explore different perspectives: how might two characters experience the same event differently?
- ★ Encourage your child to explain and justify their opinions.



AGE 9-10

The Confident Reader

- ★ Keep reading aloud sometimes, even when your child reads independently.
- ★ Choose stories that are funny, exciting, challenging, or thought-provoking.
- ★ Let your child choose books, and know that not every book has to be finished.
- ★ Discuss the author's choices: "Why do you think the story started this way?" "What if it were told by another character?"

Reading for pleasure can continue to grow long after children can read the words themselves.

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The 5-Minute Reading Booster

Don't have time for a whole story? Try this simple routine.

- 1 **LOOK** Look at the cover or one picture.
- 2 **WONDER** "What do you think is happening?"
- 3 **READ** Read a few pages together.
- 4 **TALK** Discuss one interesting thing.
- 5 **CONNECT** "Does this remind you of anything?"

Five meaningful minutes is better than turning reading into a stressful battle.

10 Questions for Any Book

1. What do you think this book might be about?
2. What do you notice on the cover?
3. What do you think will happen next?
4. How do you think the character feels?
5. Why do you think they did that?
6. What does that word mean?
7. What was your favourite part?
8. Was there anything that surprised you?
9. What would you have done differently?
10. Would you recommend this book? Why?

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When Your Child Doesn't Want to Read

Resistance doesn't necessarily mean your child hates reading. They may be tired, struggling with the book, finding it too easy or too difficult, uninterested in the subject, worried about mistakes, or simply wanting more independence.

Try changing the experience:

"Let's choose something together."

"Let's work that word out together."

"What would you like to read?"

Keep finding what makes reading meaningful to your child. Interest, choice, and positive experiences help children build a lasting relationship with books.

Our Family Reading Routine

Fill this in together and pin it somewhere everyone can see.

Our reading time (tick all that apply):

- ☐ Morning ☐ After school ☐ Before dinner ☐ Before bed
☐ Weekends ☐ Whenever we have a quiet moment

Our favourite reading place:.....

Our favourite books right now:.....
.....

Something my child is interested in:.....

A book we want to try next:.....

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A Little Reminder for Parents

Your child may not remember every book you read. They may not remember every character or every bedtime story.

But they may remember **the sound of your voice, the laughter, the questions, the cuddles, the excitement of turning the page** — and the feeling that books were a place where they could discover, imagine, and belong.

**So don't worry about doing it perfectly.
Open a book. Sit close. Start somewhere.
One story at a time.**

From the Author

As a children's author, I believe books can be so much more than words on a page. They can encourage children to imagine, discover, ask questions, explore new ideas, and see themselves in the stories they read.

My hope is that this guide encourages families to make reading a joyful part of everyday life not another task to complete, but a moment to connect.

Because every child deserves the opportunity to discover the wonders of books!

Happy reading,

Damali Allison

Children's Book Author

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