



reading with tamariki

Written by Keryn O'Neill MA, PGCertEdPsych, Knowledge Manager



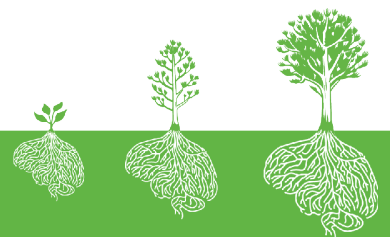
The quantity and quality of early language that tamariki experience affects their development. Chatting, singing and telling stories, for example, are all positive for their learning. Shared reading, where parents and whānau read with tamaiti, is also an important tool.

Shared reading differs from everyday talking

- Books use lots of different words that tamariki won't hear much in everyday talking
- Books cover a wider variety of topics than everyday chats, which often focus on what's happening here-and-now
- Reading supports emerging literacy skills e.g. alphabet knowledge, vocabulary, paying attention, listening ability, awareness of different sounds, recognising print, the structure of a story, page turning, book and text orientation.

Reading with tamariki benefits many aspects of their development

- Language skills
- Development of literacy
- Cognitive development
- Social-emotional skills
- School readiness
- For bilingual tamariki, sharing books in their heritage language/s, supports their literacy in that language.



The earlier reading begins, the better

- The sooner shared reading starts, the better
- Early experiences lay the foundations for later development
- The benefits add up for tamariki, with early reading patterns often continuing as tamariki grow
- Tamariki who miss this early exposure can have gaps compared to those who are read to, and these gaps tend to widen as tamariki progress through their school years

NZ reading patterns

The Growing Up in NZ study* found the following:

- At 9 months of age, slightly more than half the babies were being read to, at least once daily, by their mothers. At this age, almost a quarter of mothers' partners read with pēpi daily.
- At 2 years of age, approximately two thirds of mothers read books to their tamaiti at least once a day. By this age, half the mothers' partners were also reading daily.

*See articles below for full references

E-books provide a different reading experience to print books

- Benefits of e-books appear to be more likely with tamariki who are reading independently
- E-books can be a useful addition, but should not replace shared reading of print books
- Many studies used e-books developed for research purposes, so the same benefits cannot be assumed from commercially available e-books
- Regardless of the format of the book, one of the most important aspects of shared reading with tamariki is the quality of the interaction that occurs between adult and child. Reading on devices can sometimes detract from this.

To sum up

- Pēpi and tamariki of any age gain from being read with
- The interaction between tamaiti and adult is one of the most important aspects of reading together
- All kinds of positive interaction with pēpi help them grow in healthy ways; sharing books together has some unique benefits



Glossary of te reo Māori words:

Pēpi – baby, infant

Tamaiti – child

Tamariki – children

Whānau – extended family, family group

Want to know more? See these articles for more detail, and references:

Why reading really matters

<https://brainwave.org.nz/article/why-reading-really-matters/>

Print book or e-book: Does it matter?

<https://brainwave.org.nz/article/print-book-or-e-book-does-it-matter/>

Being bilingual: learning two languages

<https://brainwave.org.nz/article/being-bilingual-learning-two-languages/>

Nourishing our babies: Why listening and talking matter

<https://brainwave.org.nz/article/nourishing-our-babies-why-listening-and-talking-matter/>