Orthophonie VoxLingue Speech and Language

Printable sheet

Reading with a toddler on the move: where they are, without finishing the book, and the signs worth a call

Between 1 and 3, a toddler who runs off, flips the pages too fast or chews the book is often doing what toddlers do. No Québec source asks a toddler to sit still to be read to.

What's normal

- **Running off or lying on the floor:** the Montreal Children's Hospital expects it at 12 to 24 months.
- **Flipping fast:** turning pages is a game in itself. Before 2, pictures and text are one thing to them.
- **Chewing or throwing the book:** at first, a book is a toy (INSPQ). Let them explore.

"Where's the dog?"

You ask, **they point**, you name it: **"Yes, the dog!"** If they don't point, point yourself. No waiting for an answer, **never "say dog"**.

The path from 12 months to 3 (approximate ages; the steps overlap)

1. **At first, before 1**
   in the mouth, thrown, banged
2. **Around 12 to 18 months**
   carried, handed over, flipped; points
3. **Around 18 to 24 months**
   one page at a time, the same book
4. **Between 2 and 3**
   short stories

Times to try

- Bath time, with a plastic book
- Before a nap
- Before supper
- Lying on the floor or the bed, next to them

What doesn't help

- Insisting on finishing the book
- Quiz questions and "say it"
- Counting minutes: no study behind the minutes-per-year-of-age rule

The book isn't the test. Look instead, all through the day:

If they never look you in the eyes, show no interest in others, don't point to ask or to show, don't seem to hear or see well, or no longer do something they used to do: **in Québec, contact the CLSC or ask the doctor** (Agir tôt, free, under 7). At the same time, a private consultation if you can. In Ontario: the Preschool Speech and Language Program, no doctor's referral needed.

Sources: Montreal Children's Hospital (2022); INSPQ (2026, in French); Naître et grandir (2025, in French); OOAQ (2022, in French); Québec Ministry of Health and Social Services, Agir tôt (2022); American Academy of Pediatrics with Reach Out and Read (2023); Strouse and Ganea (2017). **General information: this sheet does not replace an assessment.**