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# There's a reason your child wants to read the same book over and over again

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# There's a reason your child wants to read the same book over and over again

## **Abstract**

We often hear about the benefits of reading storybooks at bedtime for promoting vocabulary, early literacy skills, and a good relationship with your child. But the experts haven't been in your home, and your child requests the same book every single night, sometimes multiple times a night. You both know all the words off by heart. Given activities occurring just before sleep are particularly well-remembered by young children, you might wonder if all this repetition is beneficial. The answer is yes. Your child is showing they enjoy this story, but also that they are still learning from the pictures, words, and the interactions you have as you read this book together.

## **Keywords**

reason, again, over, book, same, read, wants, child, your, there's

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Given activities occurring just before sleep are particularly well-remembered by young children, you might wonder if all this repetition is beneficial. The answer is yes. Your child is showing they enjoy this story, but also that they are still learning from the pictures, words, and the interactions you have as you read this book together.

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### Languages

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- Español
- Français
- English

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### **Kids want repetition**

A preference for familiarity, rather than novelty, is commonly reported at young ages, and reflects an early stage in the learning process. For example, young infants prefer faces that are the same gender and ethnicity as their caregiver.

With age and experience, the child's interests shift to novelty seeking. By four to five months, novel faces are more interesting than the now highly familiar caregiver face.

But even three-day olds prefer looking at a novel face if they're repeatedly shown a picture of their mother's face. So once infants have encoded enough information about an image, they're ready to move on to new experiences.

Your child's age affects the rate at which they will learn and remember information from your shared book-reading. Two key principles of memory development are that younger children require longer to encode information than older children, and they forget faster.

For example, one-year olds learn a sequence of new actions twice as fast as six-month olds. And while a 1.5-year old typically remembers a sequence of new actions for two weeks, two-year olds remember for three months.

Two dimensional information sources, like books and videos, are however harder to learn from than direct experiences. Repeated exposure helps children encode and remember from these sources.





Blues Clues was created to harness learning from repetition. Screenshot/Youtube

## **How do kids learn from repetition?**

Being read the same story four times rather than two times improved 1.5- and two-year olds' accuracy in reproducing the actions needed to make a toy rattle. Similarly, doubling exposure to a video demonstration for 12- to 21-month olds improved their memory of the target actions.

Repeated readings of the same storybook also help children learn novel words, particularly for children aged three to five years.

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Repetition aids learning complex information by increasing opportunities for the information to be encoded, allowing your child to focus on different elements of the experience, and providing opportunities to ask questions and connect concepts together through discussion.

You might not think storybooks are complicated, but they contain 50% more rare words than prime-time television and even college students' conversations. When was the last time you used the word giraffe in a conversation with a colleague? Learning all this information takes time.

The established learning benefits of repetition mean this technique has become an integral feature in the design of some educational television programs. To reinforce its curriculum, the same episode of Blue's Clues is repeated every day for a week, and a consistent structure is provided across episodes.

Five consecutive days of viewing the same Blue's Clues episode increased three to five year olds' comprehension of the content and increased interaction with the program, compared to viewing the program only once. Across repetitions, children were learning how to view television programs and to transfer knowledge to new episodes and series. The same process will likely occur with storybook repetition.

## **How parents can support repetitive learning**

The next time that familiar book is requested again, remember this is an important step in your child's learning journey. You can support further learning opportunities within this familiar context by focusing on something new with each retelling.

One day look more closely at the pictures, the next day focus on the text or have your child fill in words. Relate the story to real events in your child's world. This type of broader context talk is more

challenging and further promotes children's cognitive skills.

You can also build on their interests by offering books from the same author or around a similar topic.

If your child currently loves *Where is the Green Sheep?* look at other books by Mem Fox, maybe *Bonnie and Ben* rhyme again (there are sheep in there too). Offer a wide variety of books, including information books which give more insight into a particular topic but use quite different story structures and more complex words.

Remember, this phase will pass. One day there will be a new favourite and the current one, love it or loathe it, will be back on the bookshelf.

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 Learning Reading 

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