



# Storyplay

**Suggestions for using Little Hands  
board books for babies and toddlers**

As with all books, there is no right or wrong way to use these books with your baby or toddler. It is more about enjoying the time with your child and following his or her lead in deciding what to try next.

Babies and toddlers have moods and prefer some things to others – just like us! Their level of interest in a book will depend on a number of things: mood, what things they like, time of day, whether they are hungry, tired or have a wet nappy. If your child seems uninterested, don't give up! Try again later, or in another way – or try another book.

Each book can be used in different ways, depending on where the mood or child takes you. You can simply read it, look at the pictures, or do various additional little activities (i.e making the sounds the animals make).

## DID YOU KNOW?

- From birth to the age of five, children learn an enormous amount of language. Babies and young children thrive on playfulness, rhyme, rhythm and repetition. You should have lots of light-hearted, language-filled interactions with the books and read books that are your child's favourites again and again!
- Although you can read anywhere, it's best to relax and sit comfortably with your child on your lap or next to you when you share books.
- It doesn't matter for how long you read – and you don't have to finish a book with your child. Explore a book and communicate together about it for as short or as long as you both want.
- Make sure that there are times when babies and toddlers can look at and explore books on their own for as long as they want. Board books have rounded corners so that they cannot hurt your child and they are specially made to be chewed, patted and dropped!
- Discussing the pictures, concepts and what is happening in the story is as important as reading the

words on the page. Say what you think and ask your child what he or she thinks too. Saying what you think guides your child in how to approach and explore books.

- Listen to, acknowledge and respond to what your child says – this makes the experience interesting for both of you. It also helps grow your child's language, confidence and self-esteem.
- Offer your child a choice of books and then be guided by what they want to read. Start by asking, "Shall we look at/read this book?"

## CONCEPTS AND THEMES IN THE LITTLE HANDS BOOKS FOR BABIES

Book title	Concepts and themes
<b>Set 1</b>	
That's better!	Feelings, emotions, daily life
Look at me!	Activities, affirmation, abilities
Knock, knock!	Counting, associations, curiosity
Hippo and his friends	Likes and dislikes, choice, animals
<b>Set 2</b>	
Let's get ready!	Clothes, getting dressed, preparing, counting
I love bananas	Foods, variety, choice
Go!	Vehicles, counting, sounds
Play with me!	Colours, choice, play
<b>Set 3</b>	
Animals	Animal sounds, movement
Bugs	Action, movement
Playtime!	Clothes, getting dressed
Opposites	Opposites, action, movement
<b>Set 4</b>	
Lulu	Dressing up, creativity, play
Mondi	Music, play
Nomsa	Dancing, movement
Joe	Art, painting, drawing



## IDEAS FOR USING THE BOOKS

Adapt the following suggestions to suit you and your child, and use them in any order that suits you both. Many of the suggestions made for one book can be applied for all of them – eg it's always a good idea to look at the cover, point to and read the title, saying something like “this book is called *Animals!*... Let's see what's inside!” It's also always good to connect as much as possible to children's own life experiences.

- **Read the books yourself.** See which books you particularly like. Notice how some of them are “talk about” books, for example: *Let's get ready!*, *Go!* *Opposites!*, *Bugs!* Others are best for reading straight through first and then discussing, for example: *Play with me!*, *That's better!*, *Nomsa!*, *Mondi!*
- **Allow the babies to handle the books on their own.** Babies love to handle the books, put them in their mouth and explore with their senses. Allow them to do this, they are learning what books offer.
- **Draw attention to the pictures.** Point to something or someone and say what or who it is. For example, in *Animals!*, say, “Look, there's cat.” In *Playtime!*, say, “Look, here's a red ball with white dots ... and here's a pink hat.” In *Go!*, say, “Look, there's Baby Rabbit.” In *Play with me!*, say, “Look, here's a blue ball ... and here's a red ball.” This helps babies learn where to focus and stimulates language and vocabulary. Toddlers begin pointing to what they are interested in – follow their lead; they may want to do the pointing and ask you to say what things are.
- **Talk about what is happening in the pictures, what the characters are doing and share your thoughts with your child.** For example, in *Go!*, say, “Look, Baby Rabbit is sitting in her pushchair. I wonder where they're going today.” or “I wonder if Baby Rabbit had delicious porridge like you did this morning.” or “I wonder if Baby Rabbit is feeling happy today – he looks happy to me.” In *Knock, knock!*, say, “Mama's getting a lovely bunch of flowers. I'd like it if someone gave me flowers too!” In *Opposites*, say, “Look, there is a big box and here is a little box. I wonder what could be inside it.” Or “I wonder if it could be a mouse? Or maybe a toy. Should we carry on reading to find out?.” In *Nomsa*, say, “Nomsa loves to dance” and ask, “Do you like to dance? Should we dance together?”
- **Ask questions about what is happening.** Answer them yourself or allow your child to answer, if they can and want to. For example, in *Mondi!*, read, “Mondi looks very busy.” and then say, “What is Mondy busy doing here? I think he might singing. What song do you think he is singing? Should we sing that song together?” In *That's better!*, read, “Sipho feels worried” and then say, “Do you think Sipho looks worried? I think he might be. What do you think he is worried about? Can you make a worried face?” In *Opposites* ask, “Why do you think the elephant is in the big box and the mouse in the small box?” Allow time for your child to respond.
- **Demonstrate how we use and talk about books.** Say, “Would you like me to read this book to you? I wonder what this book is about, shall we turn the pages and find out?” and “Do you like the picture on the cover? Look here, this book is written by Zukiswa Wanner. Look, this story is called *I love bananas* and this word says ‘bananas’. Let's see what happens to this little boy in the push-chair.” In *Opposites*, you can ask little children where they think Elephant and Mouse are going and where they'd like to go... and whether they'd rather be a little mouse or an enormous elephant. In *Bugs*, talk about whether you can count the animals and flowers in the book. Little children love counting many things so the field of flowers can be counted too – until they get tired of the activity. In this way, you are offering explicit information and vocabulary for your child to use when talking about books.
- **Point to the words as you read them.** This helps your child learn what words are and where the words you are saying come from. Occasionally draw your toddlers' attention to words, letters and sounds in a casual and informal way. For example, say, “Look, that word says ‘bugs’. *Bugs* starts with the letter b. It makes a ‘buh’ sound. So does ‘baby’. Let's write the word ‘baby’. Look, that says ‘baby’. How many b's can you see in that word?” Point to the letter b and count them with or for your child.



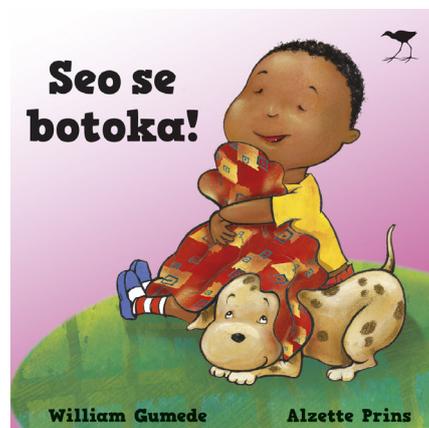
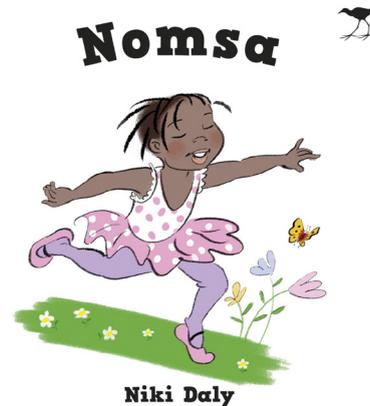
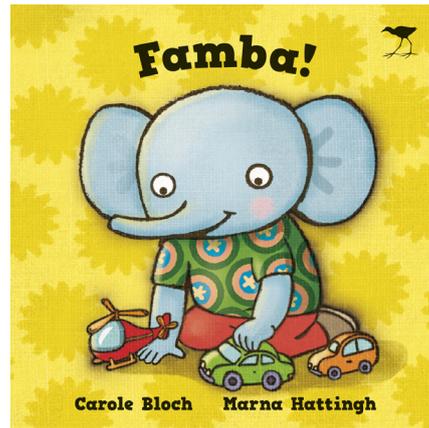
- **Embroider on the text.** For example, in *Playtime!*, read, “Top!” Then point to the baby’s top, “Look you have a top on”, “Who else has a top on? ‘Do you have shoes on, or are you barefoot?’” Maybe do a little nursery rhyme using and playing with the toes. Ten little fingers, Ten little toes or head, shoulders, knees and toes... In *Playtime*, after you have read the last page, ask “What shall we play”... and either do what they suggest, or instigate your own little game with them, e.g. a baby might like peepo, or a finger play, or a tickling game.

In *Opposites*, say “Let’s make ourselves BIG.” Now, “let’s make ourselves small.” “Shall we become tiny? As tiny as an ant!” Now find a box... if it is a small box, ask the child to find something little to put something inside the box, and then... outside the box. If it is a big box, suggest the child hides inside the box, and jumps outside the box. If you have a few children in a group, when the one is inside the box, say, “who is INSIDE the box now?”; “Who is standing outside the box?” Find a chair or a table, and play, “jump in-front of the chair, hide behind the chair”. Play, “Lie down, stand up” And off we go...

You can use *Bugs* to help with your children’s gross motor development. Say, “let’s crawl slowly like a snail.” And “let’s creep like a crawly caterpillar.” Move your fingers like a Incy, Wincy Spider. Ask, “can you move like a spider with many legs” – now you could say and “do” the Incy, Wincy rhyme. Say, “let’s Buzz like a bee” and “shall we flutter like a butterfly?” You can also do small little movements, moving like a butterfly only with your hands and fingers.

Use *Joe* to explore colours, patterns and shapes. Ask, “Can we make a triangle shape with our hands and fingers? Show the pictures of the square, circle and triangle and say, “Let’s draw shapes on your palm, can you guess which shape I am drawing?” Offer paint and brushes or use fingers, “Let’s dip our fingers in paint and make our own dots on paper.” Draw shapes with your fingers across your child’s back, saying the shape as you draw, or asking them to guess what it is.

Use *Mondi* to make and play with musical instruments. Collect empty bottles or plastic containers with lids and put small stones or sand inside (make sure they are tightly sealed so that children cannot reach them). Collect empty coffee tins and stretch



material or rubber over them, using a thick elastic band to secure it to make little drums.

Use *Lulu* to act out and play: Find a box and string like Lulu did and help your child make an animal face and ears. Then say, "Let's tie a string around the dog box and take it for a walk". Ask, "What is Lulu wearing on her head? What can we find to put on our heads?" Help the children to put on any dress-up clothes and act like Lulu.

- **Connect the text with your child and yourself.** For example, in *Go!*, say "Baby Rabbit's looking with her eyes. Can you show me your eyes? Yes, there are your eyes – one, two eyes! And here are my eyes – one, two eyes!" In *Let's get ready!* point to the child's t-shirt and then point to your child's t-shirt. Toddlers might like to fetch their shoes and socks and show you. Or say, "Look, this little girl is putting on her hat. Shall we put on your hat?" In *Playtime* you can connect to a real object of the child. Say, "Ooh what's this?... A nice round, spotted ...ball!. Have you got a ball? Do you want to show me your ball?" Or you can choose something that is not the same as in the book. "Look, here are 2 socks, show me your socks" (point to child's feet), then say with lots of expression and excitement, "Oh no, you don't have socks on today! Where are your socks?"
- **Encourage your child to point too.** Ask your child to show you what they see in the pictures. You could ask them to find something in the pictures. Also sometimes repeat your question in a different way. For example, in *Playtime!*, say, "Where's the red ball? Can you see the red ball?"
- **Make the sounds and noises.** For example, in *Mondi!*, say, "When you beat a drum it goes... dumdumdum. When you shake a rattle it goes shoo shoo shoo." In *Go!*, say, "The bus goes beep-beep. The oar goes splash." In *Animals*, encourage children to make all of the different sounds of the animals, e.g. "What does the pig say? What does the dog say?"
- **Make it funny or absurd.** For example, in *Animals!*, say, "the cat goes woof woof? And the sheep goes moo moo? Yes! Whoops! No, they don't! What about the donkey? What sound does he make? Let's hear what sound you make!" In *Go!*, say, "Has the pushchair got wheels? Yes!

Has the boat got wheels? Yes! Whoops! No, it hasn't! Has the bus got wheels? Has Baby Rabbit got wheels? Have we got wheels? Let me see your wheels!"

- **Stretch your child to think of possibilities.** For example, in *Lulu!*, ask, "Where do you think the Lulu is going? Do you think she's going to go and play or visit a friend? I wonder... Maybe she's going to the park, or perhaps she is going to see Gogo? What do you think?" In *Let's get ready!*, ask, "Where do you think the little girl is going? Do you think she's going to the shops? I wonder... Maybe she's going to the park, or perhaps she is going to see Gogo? What do you think?" In *Bugs*, ask, "If you were a bug, who would you be?"
- **Respond to questions.** Toddlers and young children often ask "Why?" For example, in *That's better!*, if you read, "Sipho feels sad" and your child asks, "Why?", you could say, "I think it is because his daddy is going to work." You could also ask, "Why do you think he's feeling sad?" In *Opposites!*, if you read, "Inside/Outside" and your child asks, "Why?", you could say, "Because they are playing hide and seek."
- **Be flexible.** If your child wants to hold onto a book, bang it on the table, or play a game with it (like dropping it on the floor for you to pick up) rather than letting you read it with them, then play along. Use any available opportunities to refer to the book again – for example, as you pick up the book from the floor, say, "Oh, look, there's a monkey! Shall we see what else is in the book?"

## SET 3

### Playtime!

- As you turn the pages, Say, "Can you show me your top/t-shirt?"
- Say, "Can you show me trousers/skirt/dress/shorts?"
- Say, "Can you show me socks?", then possibly say (with lots of expression and excitement, "oh no, you don't have socks on today – can you see



someone who does? Let's look for someone who has socks on today!"

- Say, "Can you show me shoes/sandals?"
- Say, "Do you have a hat?"
- Say, "Do you have a bag?"
- Show me the dog in the book, "can you move like a dog?"; "can you make the sound like a dog can?"
- Say, "what colour is the ball?", "Can you catch and play with a ball? Do you want to show me?"
- YAY PLAYTIME!!!

## Opposites!

With this book you can play a game where you act out the opposites. This book is an *action/movement book/game*.

- Say, "Let's make ourselves BIG."
- Now, "let's make ourselves small."
- Find a box... if it is a small box, use an object. Ask the child to put something inside the box, now outside the box. If you can find a big box, suggest the child hides inside the box, and jumps outside the box. If you have a few children in the group doing the book, when the one is inside the box, say, "who is INSIDE the box now?"; "Who is standing outside the box?"
- Find a chair or a table, and play, "jump in-front of the chair, hide behind the chair".
- Play, "Lie down, stand up" And off we go...

## Bugs

You can act out the book. This book is an *action/movement book/game* and you can use it to help with your children's gross motor development.

- Say, "let's crawl slowly like a snail."
- Say, "let's creep like a crawly caterpillar."
- Move your fingers like a Incy, Wincy Spider. Ask, "can you move like a spider with many legs"

(now you could say and "do" the rhyme). "I know an old lady"; Snail rhyme.

- Say, "let's Buzz like a bee."
- Say, "shall we flutter like a butterfly?"

## Animals

Copy all the sounds of the animals in the book.

## SET 4

### Mondi

This book is an *action/movement book/game* and you can use it to help with your children's gross motor development. It is a great book to sing and play with musical instruments

- You can make your own musical instruments – collect empty bottles and put small stones inside (make sure they are tightly sealed so that children cannot reach them).
- You can collect empty coffee tins and stretch material or rubber over them to make little drums.
- You can sing nursery rhymes and songs with the children while they play with their instruments.
- You can make instruments with them.
- You can read the story individually with one child and allow them to explore the instruments while you read.

### Nomsa

You can act out this book.

- Read the book to a baby and allow them to look at the pictures themselves.
- Jump like a cat.
- Fly like a butterfly.
- Float like a cloud.
- Dance and dance and dance.



- Hug everybody.
- You can also do small little movements, moving like a butterfly with your hands and fingers.
- Floating like a cloud using only your hands. Dancing with your toes!

## Lulu

You can act out and play this book.

- Read the book while your child looks at the pictures.
- What might be hiding in the box? Make animal noises and see if your child can guess, encourage your child to join in.
- Let's tie a string around a box and take it for a walk.
- What is Lulu wearing on her head?
- What can we find to put on our heads?
- Find a box and play peek-a-boo with a small toy or object.

- Help the children to put on any dress-up clothes and act like Lulu.

## Joe

You can use this book to explore colours, patterns and shapes.

- Read the book to a baby and allow them to look at the pictures themselves.
- Can we make a triangle shape with our hands and fingers?
- Let's draw shapes on your palm, can you guess which shape I am drawing?
- Let's dip our fingers in paint/sauce and make our own dots on paper.
- Let's look for shapes and colours around us.
- Draw stripes and zigzags with your fingers across your child's back.
- Can we find stripes and dots in the pictures?

