

Why was this study done?

- It is widely assumed that reading on a regular basis helps us in many ways, but is this assumption supported by scientific evidence?
- Does reading on a regular basis make us more knowledgeable, better readers and even better speakers?
- How does the relationship between print exposure and reading skill work over the course of a child's development into adulthood?

What was done?

- This study was a meta-analysis, meaning that the researchers examined the data from a number of studies, in order to determine overall trends.
- Ninety-nine studies were included (a total of 7669 participants) that investigated the relationship between print exposure and reading and language skills.
- The participants were divided into three age categories based on the US schooling system:
 - pre-school and kindergarten (2-6 years old)
 - school age (6-18 years old)
 - university students and graduates.



Photo: Reader's Digest

What did this study find?

Pre-school (2-6 years)

- A moderate correlation between print exposure and oral language skills.
- A moderate correlation between print exposure and vocabulary skills (receptive and expressive).

School age (6 – 18 years)

- A moderate correlation between print exposure and oral language skills
- A moderate correlation between print exposure and reading comprehension
- Moderate effect sizes of print exposure on spelling and word recognition

University students and graduates

- A strong correlation between print exposure and oral language skills
- A moderate effect size for the relationship between print exposure and reading comprehension
- A moderate correlation between print exposure and academic achievement

The two-way relation between print exposure and reading ability

- It was found that the gap between differences in children's print exposure got wider as children got older.
- This gap is thought to be influenced by children's reading ability: children who are more skilled at reading are more likely to read in their own time compared to less skilled readers, as reading is less enjoyable for those who struggle with it.
- This then means that the children who struggle and opt to read less in their own time are not benefitting from the positive reading and language effects associated with print exposure, widening the gap further.

What does this mean for children and parents?

- Print exposure does not only influence reading ability, but it is also influenced by reading ability.
- The results from this study have shown that book sharing with parents and other literacy activities and opportunities (e.g., having many books in the home) are associated with oral language and vocabulary skills in young children, which are important foundations for learning to read.
- Establishing a book-reading or book-sharing routine by around the age of 2 years is something parents can do to help start the 'cycle' of a positive reciprocal relationship between print exposure and reading and language outcomes.