

Ditch the 'lift-the-flap' books: 3D pages do NOT help children learn new words, claims expert

- **Toddlers who looked at 3D books less likely to identify objects from pages**
- **Parents should show toddlers a range of different books, says study**
- **Books with 3D features were seen as toys by children**

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Books with features such as flaps that lift up may make reading more enticing for restless, fidgety children.

But they are distracting and make it harder for children to learn new words, researchers have found.

In tests, toddlers who looked at picture books with 3D elements were less likely to identify objects they had seen earlier compared to children who had looked at a conventional picture book.



In tests, toddlers who looked at picture books with 3D elements were significantly less likely to identify objects they had seen earlier compared to children who had looked at conventional picture books (stock image)

Study author Dr Jeanne Shinskey, from Royal Holloway college at the University of London, said books with 3D features were seen as toys by children and did not boost language learning.

Parents should show toddlers a range of different books to increase their word skills, says the psychology expert.

Dr Shinskey said: 'Many educational picture books for toddlers often feature manipulatives like flaps or texture to encourage interaction, but do these actually help toddlers to learn new words?'

'We wanted to test how a commercially-available book with or without flaps affected 2-year-olds' learning of a new word for an unfamiliar object.'

A total of 31 toddlers aged 25 months were split in to two groups.

Each group were asked to look through a book with a researcher that contained nine food objects.

One group looked at a book with lift-the-flap pages and one looked at a book with standard pages.

Otherwise, the books were exactly the same.

Of the nine food objects viewed only one was unfamiliar to all toddlers, starfruit, as confirmed by their parents.

HOW THE STUDY WORKED

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Of the nine food objects viewed only one was unfamiliar to all toddlers starfruit - as confirmed by their parents.

The toddlers looked through the book with a researcher who labelled each target six times, using Latin for the starfruit (carambola).

Following this the researchers tested the toddlers to see if they would recognise the slice of starfruit by name when shown both photos and realistic replicas.

They were also shown other fruits that were similar in colour and size and whose names were also not very likely to be known at this age, for example a slice of lime or kiwi fruit).

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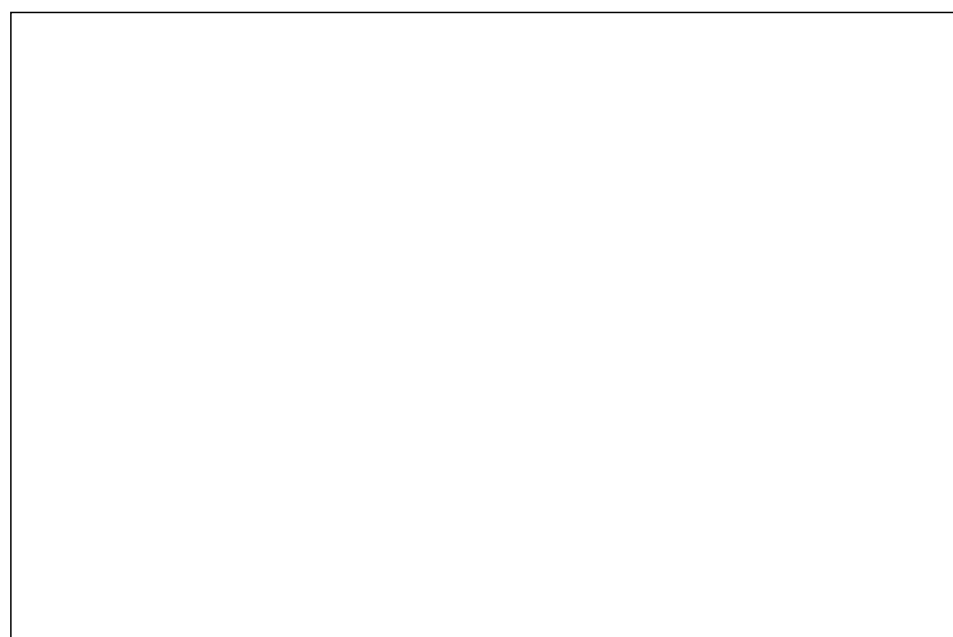
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The results showed young children who looked at the book without flaps were significantly more likely to correctly identify the starfruit slice.



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Dr Shinsky said: 'Books with these sort of features are very popular with parents who hope the interactive feature will aid learning and enjoyment of reading.

'However, if parents want their children to learn factual information about the world from books, it doesn't appear to help to make books more toy-like by adding 3D features.

'This seems to enhance their tendency to treat books as just another type of physical toy, rather than a tool for learning.

'As the findings suggest young children can find these features in a book distracting we would recommend having a range of books available so children learn to love reading as well as learning more about the world around them..'

The findings were presented at a meeting of the British Psychological Society in Belfast.