

Tactile picture books

Reading with your fingers



What is a tactile picture book?

A tactile picture book is a book that is read with the fingers. The pictures in a tactile picture book consist of raised shapes in different materials. The term tactile is used to describe how information is transferred through touch.

A tactile picture book is usually a new version of an already existing picture book. The pictures are simplified to make them easier to understand. This means that the more detailed parts of a picture are removed leaving only the key elements of the original picture.

Tactile pictures are made using different materials, varying textures and highly contrasting colours. The text in a tactile picture book consists of both large print and Braille fonts.





Who reads tactile picture books?

Tactile picture books are primarily intended for visually impaired children. However, the tactile picture books have also been found to benefit and bring joy to children with other disabilities.

Picture books are of great importance for the development of the child. Normally sighted children are constantly discovering pictures and words around them and learn very quickly to recognise different letters and symbols and what these represent.

Recognition is the first step in the process of learning to read.

Severely visually impaired children are less familiar with letters and words when they start school. This is because there is not much Braille in their everyday life, other than perhaps a few buttons in the elevator. Hence, Braille and tactile picture books play a very important role in the development of severely visually impaired children, even before they are able to read.

We do not yet know how children with other disabilities may benefit from tactile picture books but according to parents of children with development disabilities, tactile picture books appear to help their child to better understand what the book is about.





How do you read a tactile picture book?

When reading a tactile picture book together with your child, it is important to have plenty of time and to sit somewhere peaceful and quiet. Your child is likely to want to ask you questions and it may help to start by talking a little bit about the story of the book. For example, you could ask your child about his or her own experience of what the book describes. Another good idea is to take out and show your child some of the objects pictured in the book so that your child can make real-life comparisons.

There are tactile picture books for all ages and levels of ability. It is impossible to say at what age children ought to start reading tactile picture books as it very much depends on the individual child. Perhaps start with a picture book and then go on to books with rhymes and a simple story followed eventually by books with longer texts and more difficult tactile pictures.

How are tactile picture books made?

Every year, MTM selects three to four books that are suitable for making into tactile picture books. The pictures are then arranged and simplified by a designer to allow for easy reading with fingers.

The designer also chooses the colours and materials in which the pictures are created. The pictures are made in contrasting colours and usually, in fabric and paper.

The book pages are then screen printed in Braille fonts. The different materials are cut with a laser and assembled by hand onto the book pages.



Borrow or buy tactile picture books

Parents of visually impaired children and with access to a library can borrow or buy tactile picture books from MTM. It is also possible to borrow tactile picture books from MTM through other institutions than libraries.

Children with other disabilities can borrow tactile picture books from their local library. Tactile picture books can often be found on the Apple Shelf at your library.

All tactile picture books are available to download from the media website Legimus.



All tactile picture and Braille books are available from Legimus. Go to: www.legimus.se. The books are available either for loan or purchase.

E-mail for book loans: lib@mtm.se

Tactile picture books

Visually impaired children must have the same opportunities as normally sighted children to learn to understand and interpret abstract objects and phenomena. Accordingly, it is important for these children to get access to tactile pictures at an early stage of their development.

Swedish Agency for Accessible Media, MTM, is a government body whose mission it is to provide people with a reading disability access to the media they need in the best possible way. The vision of MTM is a society where all citizens have access to every type of media.

