

## Zoo Books

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Children love to read, and they especially love reading books about animals. My toddler currently has about thirty zoo books in his collection and we read them every day. I use the word "we" loosely since I am the one reading his zoo books to him, but often he will point to animals and say their names so it is sort of like we are reading together.

If your toddler is in love with exotic animals like mine is, I have many tips about selecting interesting zoo books that you can read together. There are many types to choose from and your child's first book of animals is likely to be a board book. Board books are wonderful for babies and toddlers because they are sturdy and can handle a lot of drool and aggression without losing pages or getting ruined. One of the best zoo books we have is a book about animals with tails. The book has traditional zoo animals like monkeys and alligators and zebras, but it also has the odd ones like sloths as well. While flipping through the zoo books, texture can be a good attention grabber and the tail book captures my toddler's attention by offering animals with tails that have soft fur or rough scales for my child to touch as we read along.

Even more exciting for children are the zoo books that contain pictures of real animals. My toddler loves to gaze at the colorful parrots and playful monkeys while I read various trivia about their habitats to him. Sometimes there are surprises in the books, like the one book we came across that contained pictures of kittens and puppies in with the exotics like peacocks and lions. I suppose cats and dogs could be zoo animals, but they're more traditionally considered domestic house pets around here. In one of the zoo books we came across a picture of a cow and while a cow may also be a zoo animal in some country where they are not plentiful, we usually classify cows as farm animals.

One of our favorite zoo books is the Doctor Seuss inspired book about an unidentified animal who is trying very hard to get into the zoo. He has spots that change color, and he feels that he is an excellent candidate for the zoo. Unfortunately, the zoo does not think so and rejects the animal, probably because he is too strange for the zoo. The animal then discovers that there is another place where exotic animals are welcomed, and he happily goes to live at the circus. Though technically not a book about the zoo, my son loves this fictional book just as much as his other zoo books featuring strange and bizarre animals he will probably never see in their natural habitats.