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Picture Perfect Gift Books—Children's Picture Books

Lesson 05-01: About Picture Books

If you've never made a children's picture book before—or even if you have—this is going to be a fun section of the Picture Perfect Gift Book class! Before we jump into specific books, let's go over some picture book basics.

Decide on the size of your book.

For babies and toddlers keep it small. 6x6 is perfect, 5x7 works great, and depending on the publisher, there are other small sizes available. I don't recommend anything larger than 8x8 for the really little ones. If you keep it small and simple, another advantage is that the book will be fast and easy to create and cheaper to print.

Decide on the number of pages.

Some online printing companies start with a minimum of 10 pages, and others start with a minimum of 20 pages—so the company you use will help decide the number of pages. You can always add more pages than the minimum, but I suggest you don't get carried away with lots of pages. One of the hardest and best things you can do is to contain your book and keep it precise and focused and, therefore, short.

Pictures and Words

Many children's picture books have copy on the left and art on the right. Copy is publishing lingo for the type or words in a book. This design works well for a short book for toddlers with short attention spans.

Another possibility, of course, is to put a picture and copy on each page, which doubles the amount of book content you can include.

My personal preference, though, is to keep it simple and put the copy on the left and the picture on the right.

I sometimes add some spot art on the left.

If you have a lot to say and are tempted to add a lot of pages, check to see if you're trying to include too many topics in one book. Could you divide the topics up and make more than one book?

A good exercise is to go to the library and read picture books for babies and toddlers.

- Look at how they're designed.
- Look at how long they are.
- Where is the art and where is the copy?
- What kind of type do they use?

You'll find children's books are wonderfully short, focused, and simple, meaning you could make a similar book in an afternoon. So don't over think it!

In the next few sections I'll give you many stories you can copy and paste for your own children or grandchildren. All you'll need to do is take the photos and assemble the books!

You'll notice that many of my book ideas end with the child going to bed. This is because going to bed is a very satisfying and familiar ending for a child, and you want to end with the child feeling satisfied or with a fun twist to the story.

What if you have multiple children in one family? No problem! Depending on the topic, you can still make a book about one child or you can choose to include more than one child in the book—siblings, cousins, and friends. Sometimes a story can be more fun when you include more people!

Remember the double page spread that I showed you earlier in the lesson? It's very simple, isn't it? Is it worth making such a simple book when the child will outgrow it fairly soon? Here's my perspective on books for babies and young children. Don't worry that these books are too simple or that a child will outgrow it. Children need different kinds of books at different stages, and each stage is important—especially getting started with books, so these simple little books are going to be very important for helping a child learn to love reading and books!

These early books have another advantage. Later on the child can use it as a reader when he or she is learning to read.

And last, but not least, these books will be snapshots of their childhood that you and they will look back on fondly.

So we're ready to get started now. I hope you have as much fun creating children's picture books as I do!

Lesson 05-02: Family and Love

How old should a child be before they get their first personalized picture book?

If anyone in your family is expecting, you can start now creating a book that will welcome a little one into this world. Within a day or two after the child is born, you can press the order button and have a precious book in your hands in just a few days.

To get in the mood for creating a children's picture book, let's get comfortable and listen to a story, shall we?

Waiting for Baby Rose

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Title Page: Who waits for Baby Rose?

Mommy waits. (Show her pregnant.)

Daddy waits.

Grandma waits.

Grandpa waits.

Aunt Julia waits.

Uncle Denny waits.

Jocko waits. (Pet)

Booties wait.

The room waits. Where is Baby Rose?

At last! Baby Rose is here.

Welcome Baby Rose!

Did you hear the repetition and cadence of this picture book? The words are simple and rhythmic, which is comforting to young children. This is just one of many ideas for a children's picture book. Let's take a look at some more that celebrate family life and a sense of belonging and love.

Who Loves Tommy?

This could be for a newborn or for a little older child.

Mommy loves Tommy.

Daddy loves Tommy, too.

Sister Jenna loves him.

Brother Billy loves him. etc. with all the other people who love Tommy, including grandparents, and aunts and uncles.

You can either have one photo per spread or one photo on each page, on the left and on the right.

The last page could be a photo of the child and the words:

And God loves Tommy, too.

So that's an idea for a "Who Loves Me?" kind of book!

Are You My Mother?

Another idea comes from a favorite children's book called *Are You My Mother?* by P.D. Eastman. (It's available in the library.) You can do the same thing for your child with people in your child's circle of relatives and friends.

"Are you my mother?"

No, that's Daddy!

"Are you my mother?"

No, that's Grandpa Eddie!

"Are you my mother?"

No, that's Aunt Julia.

And so on, until you get to the end of the book and finally, you see the child's mother.

"Are you my mother?"

"Of course I am!" said Mommy.

"And you're my little chickadee!" (Show them hugging.)

Peek-a-Boo

Take a photo of a family member with her hands over her face, so the child has to guess who it is. Turn the page and show the same person with the face visible. The copy would go like this:

Who is this? (grandpa with hands over his face)

Next spread: It's Grandpa Daniels!, etc. throughout the book.

Something similar is to have most of a person hidden behind an object like a tree or with one's back turned and then the next spread would show the same person peeking around the tree so you could see who they were or turned around so you can see their face.

Children love guessing games, so that's what you're doing with this kind of book. Both the child and the adults will enjoy seeing photos of themselves years from now!

Baby Faces

Show different faces of the child. You could name the expression or simply show the face.

The last photo should be of the child doing something happy—it's always good to end the book on a happy note!

Baby in the House

Take a photo of each room in the house with the child somewhere in the room.

Baby Lilly in the living room.

Baby Lilly in the kitchen.

Baby Lilly on the porch.

Baby Lilly in the garden.

Baby Lilly in the bedroom.

Baby Lilly in the bathroom.

Splish Splash. It's time for Lilly's bath!

Daddy and Me

Show activities that Dad and the child do together

Daddy and I read the newspaper.

Daddy and I play tickle.

Daddy and I go for a walk.

Daddy and I swing and swing.

Daddy and I play horsey.

Daddy tosses me in the air. Wheeeee!

I love my Daddy!

Mommy and Me

Show activities that Mom and the child do together.

Mommy and I check email.

Mommy and I have lunch.

Mommy and I go to the park.

Mommy and I take care of Fido.

Mommy and I go to the grocery store.

Mommy and I cuddle on the couch.

I love my Mommy!

All of these stories have one thing in common. They celebrate the love of family and a feeling of belonging.