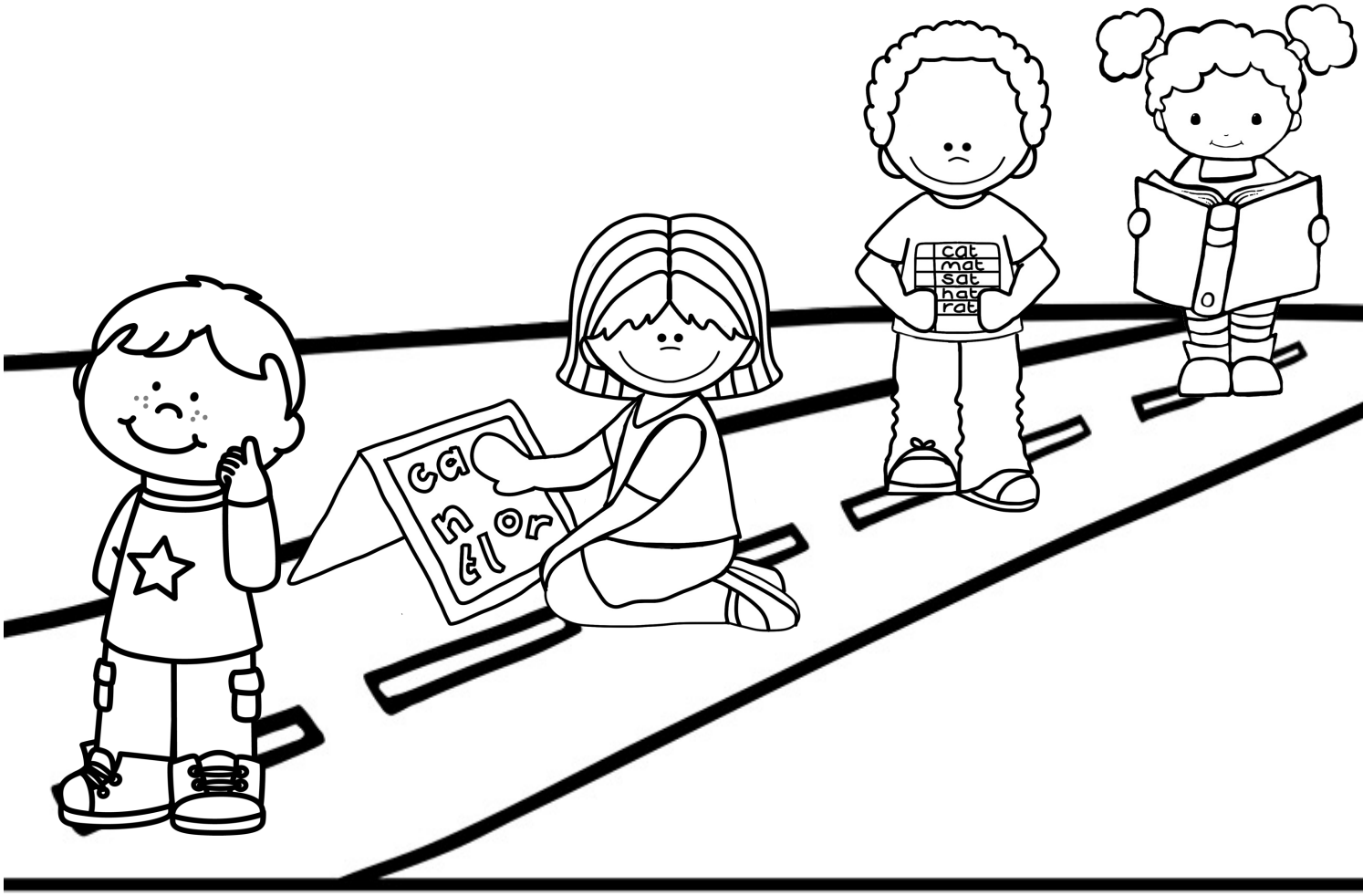
On the Road to READING



A Parent's Guide

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Purpose

This guide is meant to be a resource for parents who want to understand more about the process of learning to read so they can support their child at home. It is not meant to be a set of expectations that parents must follow at home. Your child's teacher will provide an excellent education at school. Your child will be involved in daily literacy activities that are developmentally appropriate and geared to meet his/her specific needs. However, anything that you can do at home will also greatly benefit your child.

Who is this for?

This particular guide is for pre-readers and beginning readers.

- If your child has not yet begun their reading journey, this is for you.
- If your child knows letters but hasn't started reading, this is for you.
- If your child is at the beginning stages of reading, but not quite fluently reading, this is for you.
- If your child has strong skills in some areas but lacking in other other areas, this may be for you.
- This resource is not intended for parents whose children are reading fluently and comprehending well.

What is Most Important?

Although the ideas presented here are very important to *learning* to read, the most important thing you can do as parents is read *with* your child **for enjoyment**. The end goal is for every reader is to have the skills necessary to read **for meaning**. If a child is reading for meaning, that means he/she is set up to read for **pleasure** and for **information**. Establishing reading as an enjoyable **routine** in your house is the best thing you can do for your future reader. Reading with your child can improve comprehension and increase vocabulary.

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Learning the Alphabet

Learning the alphabet is more than just memorizing the ABC song. First, children discover that words are made of letters that represent sounds. Then, they can go on to learn the letter name, shape, and sound(s). All children need varying levels of instruction and practice to learn and remember their letters and sounds. No matter what, simply knowing the letters and sounds is not enough. The end goal is to be able to recognize letters and supply their sounds with *automaticity*. This will help them in the future with more automatic decoding.

Why it is Important?

A child's knowledge of letter names and shapes is a strong predictor of reading success. Our language is made up of speech sounds that, when put together, make words. These speech sounds have one or more symbols (letters) that represent that sound in writing. In order to decode, we need to remember the sound that goes with each letter or letters. This requires a) recognition of the letter shape, b) automatic recall of the sound associated with the letter, and c) the ability to blend the sounds together. To do the opposite, encode, we need to remember the letter(s) that represents each sound. This requires a child to a) remember the letter that goes with that sound, b) picture the letter in their mind, and c) form the letter correctly which requires memory *and* fine motor skills.

Tips to Teaching the Alphabet

- Be systematic about introducing letters:

  Being systematic about the way you introduce each letter will help your child master their ABC's. It is best to not introduce all letters at once. Find out which letters your child already knows. Begin each day with reviewing those letters to gain automaticity. Then slowly introduce one to three letters at a time (depending on how quickly your child can learn the letters.) Do several activities with each letter and do not introduce new letters until your child knows the letters you have already introduced. The key is to not introduce new letters until the ones you are working on have been mastered. Mastery means they can 1) see the letter and say the most common sound and name of it and 2) they can hear the sound and write the letter.

- Use a multi-sensory approach:

  Multisensory instruction is a way of teaching that engages two or more senses at a time. Using sight, hearing, touch, and movement can be helpful for kids learning the alphabet. This can be as simple as seeing the letter shape, hearing then saying the sound, tracing the letter shape on different surfaces, writing the letter, and making the letter shape in the air. Several ideas are on the following page.

- Talk about what your mouth is doing when you make a particular sound. Point out what your lips and tongue are doing. Check to see if you use your voice or not for each sound. You can check by gently placing your hand on your throat. If you feel a vibration, that means you are using your voice. Many sounds use similar mouth position and the only distinction is if the voice is used or not. Examples include /v/ and /f/, /t/ and /d/, /k/ and /g/, and /b/ and /p/.

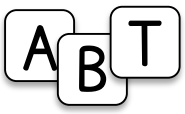
- Repeat, repeat, and repeat again!

- Recognize, retrieve, and write!

  When your child can *recognize* the letter shape, *retrieve* the name and sound, and *write* it without hesitation, then they truly *know* that letter. This is the goal. ☺

Alphabet Activities

Flashcards



Make flashcards using note cards. Start only with the letters that your child knows. Add one new letter at a time. As you add more new letters, continue to review the old letters so your child will recognize the letters quickly and produce the sound easily. Lay out the cards face up. Say the sound of one of the letters. Have your child point to the correct card, trace it, repeat the sound and say the letter name.

Tracing Letters

Pour sand or shaving cream on a paper plate or tray. Say a letter or letter sound. Have your child trace the letter in the tray while saying the letter name and sound three times. Model correct formation for your child if necessary. If you don't want the mess, they can trace on any surface.

Magnetic Letters or Letter Tiles

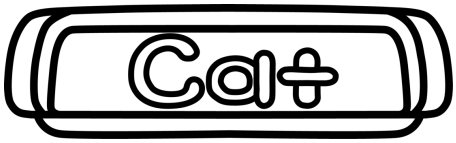
Call out a letter name or sound and have your child pull down that magnet. "Show me the letter A. A says /a/."

- If your child isn't able to identify the letter A, point it out. Trace the letter with a finger. Mix up the letters and try again.
- If your child knows the letter shape, then just focus on the sound. Say, "Show me the letter that says /b./ After they correctly identify, follow up with , "yes, B says /b/. What does B say?"

Word Hunt

Write a letter on a sticky note. Stick them all around the house. Have your child search for the letters. When one is found, say the letter and its sound. If your child gets it right, keep it. If not, you tell the name and sound then "hide" it again. In the beginning, choose three letters, but write those same three letters on several sticky notes.

Play-Doh



Write the letter on paper ahead of time. Build the letter using the Play-Doh over the written letter. After your child has made the letter with Play-Doh , have him/her make the sound and trace over the letter with a finger.

Word Search

Search for letters in magazines. Focus on one letter. Hunt for that letter and count how many you can find. You could also use scissors to cut out letters in a newspaper or magazine. You could also go on a letter hunt in a favorite book.

Get Crafty!

Write a letter on a piece of paper. Have your child use a Q-tip to trace over the letter with glue. Then use pom-poms, cotton balls or glitter to cover the glue. After it has dried, have your child trace over the letter with a finger, saying the sound of the letter.

Wikki Stix & Pipe Cleaners

Help your child make letters using the pipe cleaners or Wikki Stix. Cut some short and keep some long. After your child makes the letter, trace the letter and make the sound at least three times. Pipe cleaners and Wikki Stix can be found at the dollar store, craft stores (JoAnn's or Michaels,) or Target.

What is Phonemic Awareness?

Phonemic awareness is the understanding that words are made up of individual sounds (phonemes). When a child has phonemic awareness, he/she can hear and manipulate the individual sounds in words.

- **Phonemes** are the individual sounds that make up words. For example, the word *key* has two phonemes (/k/ /ē/). The word "shell" has three phonemes (/sh/ /ĕ/ /l/). The word *stop* has four phonemes (/s/ /t/ /ŏ/ /p/).
- Phonemic awareness is auditory and does not involve print.
- **Phonics** is the study of the sound-symbol relationships (letters and their sounds.) Phonics *does* involve print.

Examples of Phonemic Awareness:

- Identifying words that rhyme.
- Grouping words by similar sounds: *Ball*, *bear*, and *bike* all start with b.
- Isolating Sounds: Identifying the first, middle, and last sounds in words.
- Blending sounds into words: /w/ /i/ /sh/ = wish
    - This is the precursor to decoding (reading words).
- Segmenting words: *wish* has 3 sounds and is broken up this like: /w/ /i/ /sh/
    - This is the precursor to encoding (spelling words).
- Manipulate sounds within words: Change the /w/ to /d/. What word? *Dish*

Why is it important?

- Children need to become aware of how the sounds in words work. They must be able to hear and manipulate the sounds in words before they can begin to read or write them.
    - When a child is sounding out a word, they need to be able to blend those sounds together. They may know the letter-sound relationship and be able to begin sounding out, "/s/ /a/ /t/". However, they must have phonemic awareness in order to *blend* those sounds together to read "sat".
    - When spelling words, a child needs to be able to do the opposite- segment (pull apart) the sounds of a word to hear each individual sound.
- For some kids, these skills come more naturally. However, for many children, the ability to blend and segment needs to be practiced and taught.
- Several studies (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkerson, 1985; Adams, 1990; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) show that phonemic awareness is a key indicator of reading success.

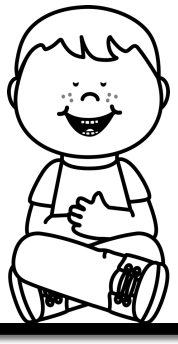
Tips:

- Integrate phonemic awareness activities (found on the next page) into your everyday life. Play with sounds. For example, say, "I'm thinking of a pet that rhymes with log".
- Read books and sing songs that use rhyme, repetition, and rhythm.
- Although phonemic awareness itself does not involve print, we want to connect sounds to print as soon as possible. Once your child knows a few letters and their most common sound, you can start making connections between a word, its sounds, and its letters.
- Point out what your mouth looks like when you make a sound.

Phonemic Awareness Activities

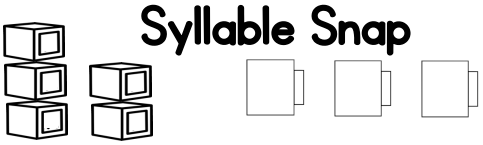
Silly Rhymes

(*Simon Says* with a twist!)



1. Replace a word with a rhyming word when giving a direction. Enunciate the rhyming word. "Simon says sit on the bouch." (instead of *couch*)
2. After several games, start saying Fimon fays or Timon tays.

Syllable Snap



Use LEGOS, snap cubes, or blocks to break apart and connect words with more than one syllable. Compare the sizes of each word. For example, say the word elephant, then "clap out" the syllables: el-e-phant. Have your child put together three blocks or cubes to show how many syllables. Reverse it by having blocks together already. Have your child take apart the blocks as they say each syllable.

What's the Sound?

1. Say a word to your child.
2. Ask your child to tell you the first, middle, or last sound (not letter) in that word. Ex: What is the last sound in *jam*?
3. Variation: Say the sounds in the word while touching head, hips, and toes. /j/ (head), /a/ (hips), /m/ (toes). Ask, "Where is the /a/ sound?" (touch hips)

You can do this while you are on a walk, in the car, cooking, or while looking at a book. Choose words that you see around you (leaf, spoon, cat, school, etc).

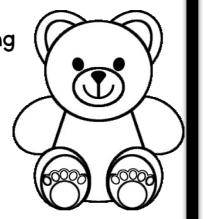
I Spy

1. Choose words that only have two or three sounds (not necessarily 2 or 3 *letters*, just 2 or 3 *sounds*.)
2. Say, "I spy a /k/ /u/ /p/." (You are saying each individual *sound* in the word, not the whole word.)
3. Your child will try to figure out the word.

Words to use: cat, dog, knife, fork, bowl, rug, bed, light, couch, chair, leaf, gate, pen, cup, mug, bird, toy, car, road, path, jar, tub, tooth, mouth, ring, soap, bug, book, tree, bee, box, pan, pot, vase, phone, sheet, shade, sock, shoe, coat, purse, hat

Stuffy Sounds

1. Get silly with your child's favorite "stuffy" (stuffed animal).
2. Tell your child that you need help understanding his language. Ask him or her to help you "translate". Have the animal whisper a word to you. Then tell your child the word, the way the animal said it.



- "Mr. Bear said /r/ /a/ /t/. What is that word?"

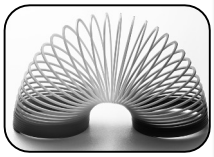
Tongue Twisters

Make up silly sentences with several words that start with the same sound. Have your child identify the common sound. For example, "Freddy the frog found a fly on a fountain."

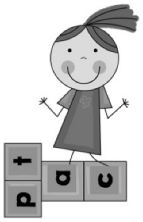
Slinky Sounds

1. Say a word with only 2-4 sounds.
2. Use a slinky to "stretch out" the words.
3. Model first for your child, then have him/her try it.

- sat= /ssss/ /aaaaaa/ /t/ Pull the slinky as you stretch out each sound.



Hop to It



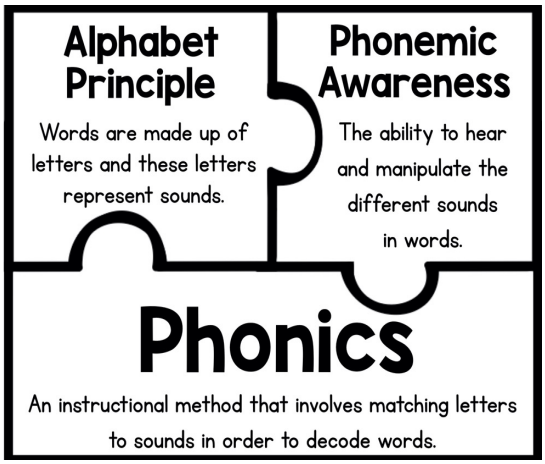
1. Draw three circles or squares using chalk.
2. Say a word and have your child jump to each circle as they break apart the word.
   - Ex: You say, "pot" and your child jumps into the first circle and says, /p/. Then jumps into the 2nd circle and says, /o/, and then the final circle says, /t/.
3. You could also do the opposite: Jump together into the circles, saying sounds. Then try to guess the word.

Words to use:

duck, bear, soap, soup, bat, leaf, shed, bell, moon, pin, rope, chip, ball, boot, pan, log, leg, cone, fan, seed, pan, bone, man, book, cat, rake, road, lip, mat, meat, lake, phone, pig, rag, sip, seat, chair, cup, rock, boat, feet, rain, cub, sock, coat, mouse, tape, goal, pail, tag, pen, pot, pit, watch, math, fish, chair, goat, shell, thumb

What is Phonics?

- **Phonics** is a method for teaching reading.
- Phonics helps kids learn the relationships between the letters of written language and the sounds of spoken language.
- When students know their letters and sounds and have developed phonemic awareness, they are ready for phonics instruction.
- Phonics instruction leads to accurate decoding, which leads to automatic word recognition.



Why is it important?

Phonics helps your child learn to read and spell. Our written language is much like a code and phonics is how we break that code. Research shows that phonics is essential to beginning reading instruction. In 2000, the National Reading Panel reviewed thousands of studies and concluded that early instruction in phonics is the best way to teach children how to read.

Tips:

Find out what phonics skills your child is learning. Reinforce these skills at home with spelling and reading practice. How?

1. Use a white board or pencil and paper to give your child opportunities to write words with that spelling pattern or rule.
    - Say a word using the new phonics pattern. For example, if your child is learning short a, say three letter words with short a: *can, pat, jam, rag*, etc.
    - Have your child repeat the word, then stretch it out to hear each of the sounds in the word: "rrrraaaaaag"
    - Break apart the sounds: "/r/ /a/ /g/." To make this multisensory, tap a finger for each sound.
    - Segment again, this time pausing to write the letter(s) that goes with each sound.

2. Say a word and have your child build the words using letter tiles.
3. Read words with the focus phonics element. Guide your child to touch under the letters as they say the sounds.
    - See ideas on the next page.
4. Point out any common word endings. For example, when your child is learning short a words, point out common endings like -at (rat, sat, cat, mat, hat, bat, fat), -am (jam, ham, ram), -ag (rag, tag, bag, sag, wag), etc. Make a list of the words that use a certain word ending. Have your child underline that word ending in each word.
5. If your child is struggling to sound out a word, try "chunking it". For example, when reading "sat", you could chunk it like this: s-at (read "at" first then go back and read /s/ /at/). You could also chunk it like this: sa-t where you read /s/ and /a/ first and then add in the /t/ after you blending those first two sounds (/sa/ /t/).

Spelling words phonetically helps beginning readers solidify the mental representation of a word. This means that *sounding out* words *to spell*, along with sounding out words *to read* both contribute to eventually being able to read words *by sight*. Kids should get practice with breaking apart the sounds in a word, then connecting those sounds to letters. This will help them begin to distinguish between similar words, such as *big, dog, dig, bag*. Simply looking at the word, trying to memorize and then copy it does not have the same long-term benefits. Once your child is proficient with single words, begin spelling simple sentences using the phonics pattern your child has learned so far, such as *Pam can jog*. **On the bottom of the following page, there is a link to word lists.**

Phonics Activities

Building Words

Letter Tiles

Magnetic Letters

- Call out words with the phonetic element you are working on.
- Have your child build the word using magnetic letters or letter tiles.
- Variation: After your child builds a word, change the word by just one letter. For example, if you've already made *ham*, say, "Change one letter to make the word *ram*. Now change one letter to make the word *rag*." Continue this to give your child practice with phoneme manipulation. Then go back to building new words.

Memory

Choose 6-8 words with the phonics element you are focusing on. For example, if you were working on short a, you may choose ran, pan, rat, rag, fan, bat, jam, etc. Write each word on two different note cards. Place all cards face down. On turn, choose two cards. Read both cards. If they are a match, keep them. If not, turn them back over. Winner is the player with the most matches at the end. Note: It is important that your child reads every card that is turned over so they are getting that practice.

Sorting Words

pan	pat	ham	bag
man	rat	jam	tag
can	bat	ram	sag

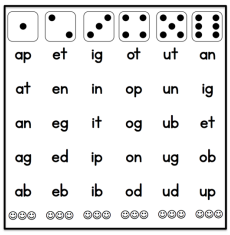
Using index cards, write words you are currently working on. (Write one word per card.) Have your student read and sort the words into common groups. For example, your student may sort by word ending, as shown above. You may also sort by vowel sound or by beginning letters. Make sure your student reads the words before sorting them.

Mix and Match

p	ot
c	op

Cut index cards in half. Write beginning sounds on one side and word endings on the other side. Mix and match the beginning sound cards with the word endings to make a word. Students will read the word and decide if it is a real word or not.

Word Race



ap	et	ig	ot	ut	an
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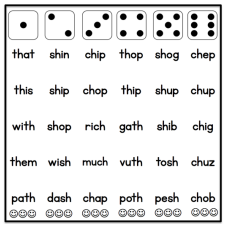
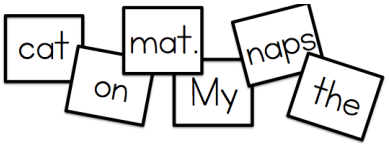


that	shin	chip	thop	shog	chep
this	ship	chop	thip	shup	chup
with	shop	rich	gath	shib	chig
them	wish	much	vuth	tosh	chuz
path	dash	chap	poth	pesh	chob

Use the template on the following page. Under each die, write word endings or words that you are working on. (You can also include nonsense words.) Roll a die. Read the words or word parts under that number. Color a smile for each time a column is read. Once all smiles are colored, "retire" that column. Continue until all smiles are colored.

Sentence Scramble



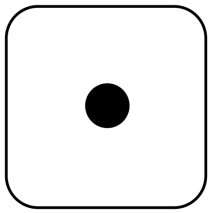
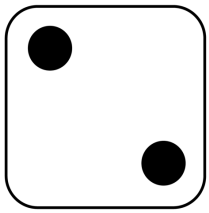
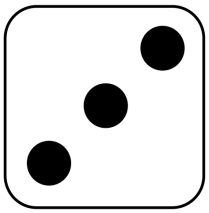
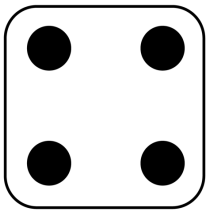
Make simple sentences for your child to "unscramble". Write a phonetic sentence with familiar sight words. Cut the sentence into individual words (or write one word on a note card). Mix up the words. Have your child read each word, then put the words in order to build the sentence correctly."

For a list of phonetic words, use the link OR the QR code

http://bit.ly/phoneticwordlists

For letter tiles, use this link:

http://bit.ly/buildwordtiles

What are Sight Words

"Sight words" are words that can be read instantly and effortlessly. The goal is to make every word a sight word, but first we focus on high frequency words. These are words that are most frequently occurring in reading materials. These words require extra attention, so your student is able to recognize them "on sight". Knowing these words will help your student with fluent reading. Many of these words are decodable, meaning they can be sounded out. Other "sight words" are mostly decodable, meaning most of the sounds in the word use the expected letter, but one or more do not. (For example, in the word "the", the letters <t> and <h> make the expected sound /th/, but the letter <e> is used for the /ŭ/ sound.) These words are referred to as "irregular". Other words are considered "irregular" because they may have a letter-sound combination or rule that has not been learned yet. It is important to point out these irregularities to our student so they can understand the structure of the word. This understanding will lead to accurate word recognition. After your student has an understanding of how the word is spelled, they need repetition with that word. They need to see and recognize the word alone and in context multiple times. For words that are phonetically-regular, it is helpful for your student to sound out these words when they are first learning them.

When Should They be Taught?

When to start working with sight words is different for every child. Your child may be ready if he/she:

- Can identify all letters of the alphabet (both upper case and lower case)
- Knows the most common sound associated with each letter
- Shows interest in reading or writing / begins asking questions about words or spelling
- Has developed decoding skills (can "sound out" words)

Tips for Teaching Sight Words

Learning these high-frequency words is an important step for beginning readers, but often children may be pushed to start too soon, resulting in negative attitudes about reading, viewing reading as "word calling," and/or developing some bad reading habits such as guessing. Here are some tips that may help.

- Make sure your child knows their letters and sounds first.
- Begin teaching the skill of decoding first.
- Do not teach too many at once. If your child confuses words already, do not keep introducing more.
- If sight words can be decoded (*that, in, went, etc)* it is still okay to sound these words out. The more they sound them out, the more likely your child will start to recognize the word on sight *correctly*.
- Encourage your child to notice all parts of the word. Point out parts that are decodable and parts that are not. We want your child to see the structure of the word, to avoid confusion with similar looking sight words.
- Practice them in **context**. Put a new sight word in a simple sentence. Encourage your child to use visual cues (letters in the word) as well as context (what would make sense) to figure out the word. Make several sentences for the new sight words to give your child multiple opportunities to practice them in context.
- Find more ideas on the following page.

Introducing "Sight" Words

Follow these steps when introducing sight words:

1. Teacher says the word. • Student repeats the word.	and
2. Break apart the word into its individual **sounds**. (One finger represents one sound.) • Ask, *How many sounds?* (You are not asking about letters at this point. Just sounds)	/a/ /n/ /d/
3. Draw boxes, one for each *sound* (not letter).	☐ ☐ ☐
• Say the first sound. • Ask, *What letter says,* ____? • Write that letter(s) in 1st box. Continue with all sounds in words. • If the word is "**irregular**", fill in the letters that match the sounds first. Leave the "irregular" (or unfamiliar) box empty. • Point out the irregular part to your student(s). ("The letter <e> is used for the sound /ŭ/. That is not what we would expect.")	a n d th e *In the word "the", we hear the sound /th/ and the letters <th> are used for that sound. We also hear the sound /u/, but the letter <e> is used.*
4. Repeat the sounds. 5. Rewrite the word without sound boxes. Say the letter names as you write the word.	a-n-d and
6. Multi-sensory follow-up: Use your arm or whole body to say letter *names.* • Tap your shoulder and say the first letter *name*. Tap down your arm and say the next letter names (inside elbow, then forearm, then wrist). • Instead of your arm, you could use your whole body (head, shoulders, knees and toes).	a-n-d
• Student rewrites the word on an index card to use daily as a flashcard. For "irregular" words, write the unexpected letter(s) in a different color. • When reviewing the flashcards, the instructor shows the card and student(s) will say the word. If the student does not remember the word correctly, repeat steps 4-6.	the and

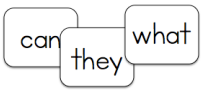
Extension ideas:

- After all of these steps, you can point out certain parts of the word. Say, "*Write the letters on your hand that say /ou/ in down*". Your student(s) will then take their finger and write down the letters <o> and <w> on the palm of their other hand. Then point back at the written word. Say, *The letters <ow> says the sound /ou/ in down.*
- Do the opposite by asking, *What sound does <ow> make in the word down?* (/ou/)
- Point out the sequence of letters by asking what sound is in the middle, end, and beginning (out of order).

Play Memory

1. Write 6-8 sight words on note cards
2. Make a 2nd set with the same words.
3. Lay out cards, face down.
4. On turn, flip over 2 cards. Read the word. If they match, keep them. If not, flip them back over. Give your child a moment to try to read the words. If they do not know it, tell them the word. Make sure they repeat the word and look at the card.)

Flashcards



Make flashcards using note cards. Spend about 2-3 minutes on the flashcards. Start with the words that your child knows. Add one new word at a time. As you add more new words , it is important to review the old words so your child will be able recognize the words quickly. If your child does not remember a word, tell him/her the word. Point out visual clues. Have your child repeat after you.

Multisensory

1. Read the word on a note card.

2. Tap under each letter while saying the letter.

3. Trace the letters on the table while saying the letters.
4. Use your whole body to spell the word: Start at shoulder and tap down your arm while saying each letter OR using both hands, start at your head, say the first letter, then shoulders, stomach, knees, and toes.
5. Write the word.

Hands-On

Have your child make/write words using:

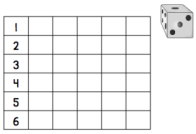
- Play dough
- Shaving cream
- Sand
- Magnetic letters on a cookie sheet
- Letter tiles (letters written on small note cards)

Show a word using the flashcards. Say the word. Take away the flashcard and have your child make the word. Read again and repeat. See it, say it, make/write it.

Go Fish

1. Make a duplicate set of sight words.
2. Play Go Fish:
   - "Do you have the word *play*?"
   - Go Fish" or "Yes" (player hands over card
   - The person with the most matches wins.
   - If your child does not know the words, you could play with the cards face up. At that point it's more of a matching game, but it's still fun for them. ☺

Word Games



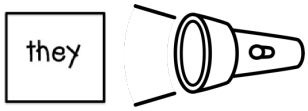
Make a chart like this one.

- To practice *reading* sight words: Write words in each box (You may write the same words several times or choose all different words.) Roll a die. Read the words in the row next to the number that you rolled. Make a check for each time you read that row.
- To practice spelling: Write one word next to each number and leave the other boxes in that row blank. When you roll that number, rewrite that word in the box to the right. Fill all the boxes.

Word Search

Choose one word to focus on. Write this word several times mixed in with other words that your child knows. Search for the focus word. Each time the word is found, your child will circle the word, read the word, and say the letters in the word.

Flashlight Game

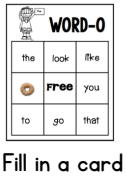


1. Turn off lights.
2. Tape words on the wall or ceiling.
3. Use the flashlight to shine on the word then read.

Word Hunt

Write sight words on sticky notes. Stick the words all around a room. Have your child search for the words. When one is found, say the word and spell it aloud. If the word is read correctly, they get to keep it. If not, you tell them the name and sound then "hide" it again. Have a mixture of new and known sight words.

Word-O & 3 in a Row



1. Fill in a card with words.
2. Call out the words.
3. Mark the spaces.
4. Calls out the word "WORDO" when card is full.

1. Draw a 3x3 grid.
2. Write the words in the boxes.
3. Take turns selecting a space to read.
4. If the word is read correctly, an X or O is placed on the space.

- Variation: Each person picks one sight word. When you choose where you want to go, write your word in the box (instead of an X or O).

Fluency

Fluency is the ability to read with appropriate speed, expression, and accuracy. Fluent readers recognize words automatically. They group words into meaningful phrases. Their reading sounds smooth and natural, as if they are speaking. Readers who have not yet developed fluency read slowly, word by word. The goal is to have reading speed and accuracy that is sufficient enough to support comprehension. Fluency develops over time and with plenty of practice.

Why is it Important?

Fluency is important because it enables readers to focus on comprehension. Fluent readers do not have to concentrate on decoding, so they can focus on meaning. Fluency reading also enables kids to complete tasks more efficiently. Less fluent readers must focus so much of their attention on decoding the words, leaving them less attention for understanding the text. They also struggle to chunk words into meaningful phrases, which hinders overall comprehension.

Fluency is a combination of:

- **Accuracy:**

  Accuracy is reading words correctly. Fluent readers have automatic word recognition and can decode quickly and accurately. Good decoding skills come first.

- **Phrasing:**

  Fluent readers divide text into meaningful chunks, as opposed to word-to-word reading or "speed reading". Helping students learn to read in phrases is an effective way to improve reading fluency as well as comprehension and overall reading proficiency. For example, in the following sentence*: One morning, Sam rode his bike to the park by his house,* there are several groups of words that go together. As we read, we have tiny pauses or lifts in our voice to show these phrases go together.

- **Rate:**

  The speed in which you read. Appropriate rate should not be too fast or too slow.

- **Expression:**

  Expression refers to the ability to match our voice with what is going on in the text. Punctuation, dialogue, and bolded words give us clues as to how our voice should sound.

Key Factors:

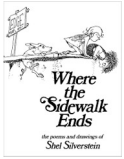
- Make sure your child is reading a text that is "just right". If the text is too difficult, energy will be spent on decoding every word.
- Give your child opportunities to reread the same text. The more they practice a text, the easier it is to focus on the parts of fluency like phrasing, expression, and rate.

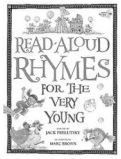
Fluency Activities

Poetry Reading

Poetry engages children and encourages them to have fun while reading. Poetry also has a natural rhythm. Give your child the opportunity to practice a poem several times until they find that natural rhythm.

You can find poetry books for kids at your local library or book store.





Sight Word Phrases

High-frequency word phrases contain common words seen most while reading. When your child is able to read these phrases with ease, you will see his or her reading rate increase.

Click on the following link for high-frequency word phrases. These are for students who already have strong phonics skills.

http://www.timrasinski.com/presentations/fry_600_instant_phrases.pdf

Click on this link for phrases with high-frequency words that are grouped phonetically. These are for students who are still mastering "the code". https://bit.ly/decodablephrases

Shared Reading/ Echo Reading

Model fluent reading by reading aloud.

- Experiment with funny voices for dialogue. Point out when a character is talking and when the narrator is telling the story.
- Echo Reading: Read a sentence or paragraph aloud to model fluent reading. Your child then reads the same sentence or paragraph afterward, like an echo.
- Read a **comic strip** aloud with appropriate inflection and expression in your voice. Then ask your child to read it back to you.
- Read a familiar **picture book**: Picture books allow for practice with going back and forth between character dialogue and the narrator. Picture books also are great for practicing expression.

Reading with Phrases

Choose a sentence from a familiar book. First, read the sentence word for word, then reread it in meaningful phrases, with a slight pause between each phrase. Rewrite the sentence on a piece of paper. Show your child how you chunked certain words together. You can "scoop" the phrases or simply divide them with a line. Both are shown below.

My sister Jill dragged her sled
up the big hill. When she got to
the top, she set her sled down
and climbed on it.

My sister Jill | dragged her sled |
up the big hill. | When she got to
the top, | she set her sled down |
and climbed on it. |

Repeated Reading

Repeated reading is when a student reads a short passage several times allowing them to develop greater automaticity, smoothness, and expression with their reading. This can be a poem, nursery rhyme, short passage, article, or a part from a favorite book. Model appropriate rate, phrasing, and intonation (the emphasis on certain words). The goal isn't just to reread the words. Focus on each sentence, thinking about to make it sound smoother. (Rereading three times is sufficient.)

Record Your Reading

It can be helpful for kids to hear themselves read. Recording themselves can be fun! After recording, give them time to listen to the recording. Practice the text again and record a second time. Celebrate the improvements in fluency. Choose one thing to focus on for the next recording (expression, attending to punctuation, phrasing, rate).

Comprehension

Comprehension is the ability to understand and interpret what is read. It is an active process, where the reader uses their own experiences, knowledge, and vocabulary to bring meaning to the text. Many children are excellent decoders, but they may not be comprehending what they are reading. Other readers may be so focused on decoding, they are not able to pay attention to what is being read. In order to comprehend successfully, readers must interact with the text as they read. True comprehension goes beyond basic understanding of a text. The reader must engage before, during, and after reading for optimal comprehension. Good readers are able to apply strategies to help them make sense of a text.

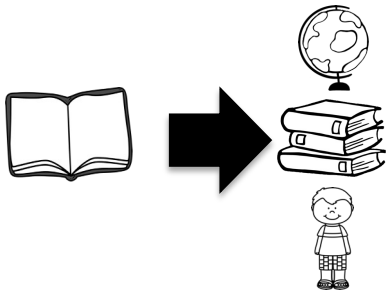
How you can help:

- Reading aloud to your child provides a great opportunity to strengthen their ability to comprehend.
- Help your students **self-monitor**:
    - As you are reading, encourage your child to stop and check for understanding.
    - Encourage your child to go back and reread when there is confusion. Model by saying things like, "I'm not sure what happened here," or "I'm not sure what this means. I'm going to go back and figure it out".
- **Vocabulary**: Vocabulary building is key to successful reading comprehension
    - While reading, discuss words that your child may not know or that they may have a partial understanding of. Give examples of how to use the word in a sentence and teach them synonyms (words that have similar meaning). Try to use those words in daily interactions.
- **Model your own thinking**: We all have thoughts as we read, we just might not be aware of it. Make a point to say these thoughts out loud. Examples, *I wonder why… I wonder how… That's silly! Why do you think the character did that?*
- **Connect**: Good readers connect to prior knowledge and experiences to help them understand what they are reading.
    - Connect to **Prior Knowledge**: Help your child connect to what they already know about the topic you are reading.
    - Connect to **Experiences**: You may say, "This reminds me of when…" or "This is just like…"
- Ask **questions** before, during, and after reading to help them "read between the lines" (**make inferences**). Make sure the questions do not just have a "yes" or "no" answer. For example, after stopping to discuss a character's action, you may ask, "Why do you think he did that? How will that make the other character feel? What might happen because of that?"
- **Retelling**: After reading, have your child retell what they read.
    - Fiction: **Summarize** the story and retell the most important events.
    - Nonfiction: Discuss big ideas of the text. Help them determine the **main idea** and then find the important details.
- Build **background knowledge**: Background knowledge is essential for comprehension. Background knowledge is simply what a child knows. The more knowledge a reader has about a topic, the more likely they will understand the text and remember information about it. Reading aloud to your child or giving them access to audio books is a great way to expose them to more information, vocabulary, or character experiences.
    - To build knowledge, read several books on the same topic with your child.
    - Find a child-friendly video online related to that topic.
    - Have discussions with your child to fill in any gaps and help them make connections.

Comprehension Strategies

These strategies may help students read for purpose and meaning. Strategies are *intentional* actions that a reader can utilize while reading to help them figure out and remember the information. The more a child interacts with a text using these strategies, the deeper their comprehension will be. Below are a few of the comprehension strategies to use *while* reading.

Connect



to the world

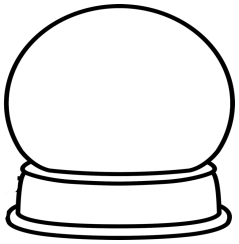
to other texts

to your life.

What does this remind you of?

Predict

Think about what will happen next?

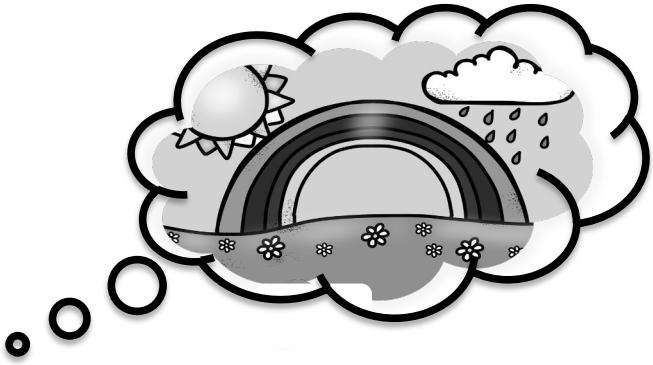


Make a prediction based on the title and the cover. As you read, change or confirm your prediction based on new clues from the text. Continue making, confirming, and changing predictions throughout the book.

Ask Questions

Ask WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, and WHY as you read.

Visualize

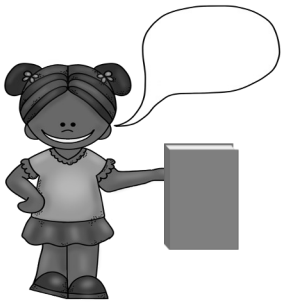


Make a picture in your mind.

Clarify

Look closer when something is confusing.

Summarize



Retell the most important events.

Summarize *as* you read.

Use these questions and prompts as your read with your child.

		Comprehension Questions/Prompts
Characters	Fiction	•How would you describe _____? (character name) What part of the book made you think that? •How does one character affect the events in the story? •How did _____ affect the character's feelings, thoughts or actions in the story? •What events led to a change in a character? •Why did the character say _____? What did he/she mean? •Why do you think the character did that? •What is your opinion of this character? Why? •What did the character learn? How did he/she learn it?
Sequencing	Fiction	•What happened in the beginning, middle, and end of the text? •What happened before/after _____?
Story Elements	Fiction	•What is the problem or conflict in this story? •How is the problem solved? •What are the important details/events from this text? •Describe the setting? Did it change? •How can you tell where the character is right now? (Text clues)
Author's Purpose	Both	•Why did the author write this text? (to give information, to entertain, or to convince/persuade me) •What is the author trying to tell me? •What lesson is the author trying to teach me through these characters?
	Nonfiction	•What is the author's point of view/opinion? What facts does the author give to support the claim? •Is the author trying to persuade you? What is the author trying to convince you of? •Is this a fact that can be backed up or an author's opinion? •Do I agree with the author?
Compare and Contrast	Fiction	•In what ways were these two stories similar/different? (events, characters, setting) •How was the theme or message of these two texts similar? How are they different? •How did each author teach the reader a lesson?
	Nonfiction	•How are _____ and _____ the same? different? •What two things does the author compare? What is the author trying to say? •What two ideas are the author trying to connect for you? Why is the author comparing the two? •How are those two people/events similar? Different? •How did these two authors present their information, perspective, and reasoning on the topic?
Main Idea	Fiction	•Fiction: What is this story mostly about? (Tell me in 2-3 sentences.) •Which details/events are most important?
	Nonfiction	•What is the author trying to show or tell you about this topic? •What similar ideas or words keep coming up? •What details support the main idea? (By paragraph, by section, or whole text) •What are the most important details?
Cause and Effect	Fiction	•What was the consequences (effect) of_____'s actions or words (cause)? •What caused the problem? •How did _____ affect _____
	Nonfiction	•What caused _____ ? •What was the effect of _____ ? •Why did the author include this cause and effect relationship? What was he trying to tell/show you?