

# HWDSB

*Let's* **READ** *Together*

## Early Literacy: An Activity Guide for Families

The Essential Components of Reading



# Early Literacy: An Activity Guide for Families

## Symbols Used in This Guide:



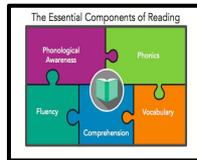
Activity



Extension Activity



Additional Information or Explanation



An Essential Component of Reading -  
What is it? Why is it important?

# Early Literacy: An Activity Guide for Families



## **What is the purpose of *Early Literacy: An Activity Guide for Families*?**

Parents are a child's first teacher and learning happens in the everyday moments you share with your child. Together, with a strong home-school connection, we can support the development of early literacy skills and set our children up for future success.

This guide is intended to be a springboard of sample activities. If your child finds an activity too challenging, then simply modify it or consider returning to it at a later time. Parents are encouraged to have fun with their children and be creative. You are invited to share your ideas and experiences using our hashtag on Twitter: **#homeRSHWDSB** 

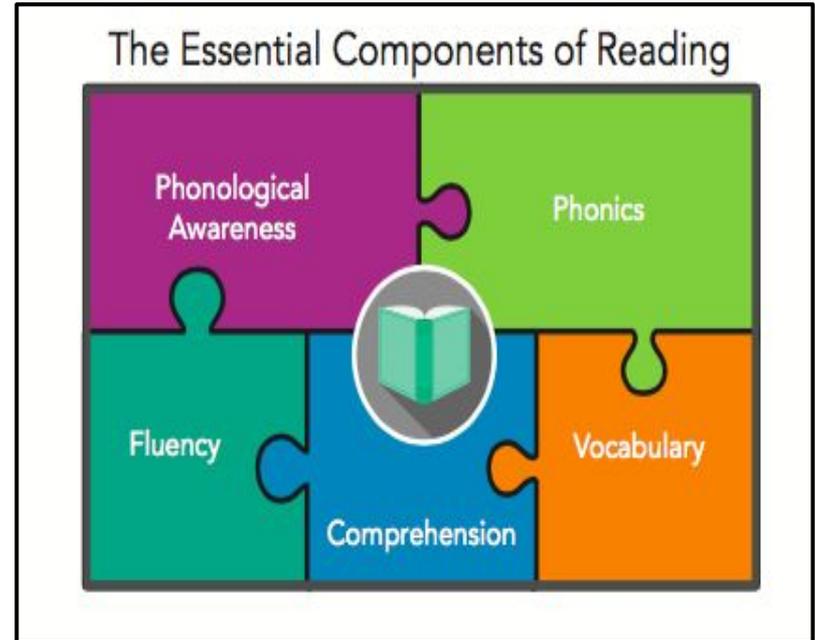
**In this guide, the word *parent* refers to parents, guardians, caregivers and other family members who support the development of early literacy skills.**

# Early Literacy: An Activity Guide for Families



## How is *Early Literacy: An Activity Guide for Families* organized?

*Early Literacy: An Activity Guide for Families* is organized around **The 5 Essential Components of Reading** which are the foundation to becoming a capable, confident and fluent reader.



# Early Literacy: An Activity Guide for Families



## What are the 5 Essential Components of Reading?

**Phonological Awareness** is an **oral skill** that refers to the ability to recognize, manipulate and hear words, syllables and sounds.

**Phonics** is the rules of how letter combinations go together to represent different sounds **in print**.

**Vocabulary** refers to the words children know. It includes both understanding words and using words.

**Fluency** is the ability to read text accurately, with expression, automaticity, phrasing and pausing.

**Comprehension** is the process of understanding, reflecting on and learning from what is read (e.g., books, magazines, recipes, games, invitations).

# Early Literacy: An Activity Guide for Families



## Tips For Reading With Your Child

- ✓ Make reading together a special time and part of your daily routine. Ask your child questions before, during and after reading in English or your home language (e.g., What do you think this book might be about? What do you think is going to happen next? Why do you think the character did that?)
- ✓ It's okay to read the same book more than once. Children enjoy reading books many times.
- ✓ Draw attention to print concepts (e.g., reading left to right, front and back of the book, title, 1-1 finger pointing to words, paying attention to punctuation).
- ✓ Be a reading role model. Children learn by example, so let your child see you read and share your enthusiasm for reading. Show your child that reading is fun and important.

# Early Literacy: An Activity Guide for Families



## Tips For Reading With Your Child

- ✓ Make library visits part of your family routine or access books [online](#) through the public library.
- ✓ Reading should be fun and authentic (e.g., use voices that match the character, point out environmental print such as signs and advertisements, have reading and writing materials readily available, read recipes together).
- ✓ Reading and writing are interconnected. Encouraging your child to write (e.g., grocery lists, thank you notes) will help strengthen their reading skills.
- ✓ Tune into your child's interests. Your child might enjoy reading different kinds of texts such as: fiction, non-fiction, poetry, magazines, comics or graphic novels.
- ✓ If your child's home language is not English, read plenty of books in your home language as well. This will not only maintain and expand their home language, but also accelerate English language acquisition.

# Early Literacy: An Activity Guide for Families



## A Word About the Alphabet

At the earliest stage, learning to read involves recognizing that the symbols (letters) have names and represent sounds. To support this learning, children benefit from exposure to the letters of the alphabet. Notice and name letters in a variety of environments.

### Have fun creating letters and words with:

- *playdough*
- *paper and pencil*
- *markers, crayons*
- *magnetic letters*
- *dry erase markers and boards*
- *chalk and chalkboards*



### Find letters everywhere!

*street signs*  
*licence plates*  
*cereal boxes*  
*on the TV*  
*magazines*  
*on your clothes*  
*alphabet-shaped pasta*

*text messages*  
*recipes*  
*birthday cards*  
*store signs*  
*puzzles*  
*advertisements*  
*newspapers*



# Early Literacy: An Activity Guide for Families



## Multi-Language Families

Parents are **strongly** encouraged to enjoy the activities in this guide, using their home language. Reading stories, singing songs, writing and playing games with children in their home language will help to support English learning. Skills learned in one language transfer to other languages.

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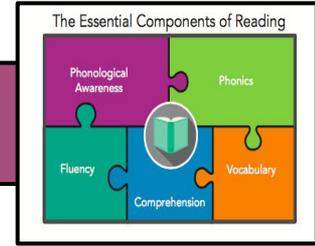
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# Phonological Awareness



## What is Phonological Awareness?

Phonological awareness is an **oral skill** that refers to the ability to recognize, manipulate and hear words, syllables and sounds. Developing phonological awareness includes exposure to rhyme, syllables, blending and segmenting as well as identifying the beginning, middle and ending sounds in words.

## Why is it important?

As children develop phonological awareness, they begin to hear individual sounds in words. This skill paired with letter knowledge is a strong predictor of success in learning to read and write.



*For these activities, focus on the SOUND, not the letter name, or the proper spelling of the word.*



*The number of sounds in a word does not necessarily correspond to the number of letters. For example, the word sh-o-p has 4 letters but only 3 sounds.*

# Phonological Awareness - Syllables



## **Syllable a Name**

Use familiar names to practice clapping syllables (e.g., Al-ex-an-der). Whose name has the most syllables? Whose name has the fewest syllables?



### *Animal Names*

Use animal names to practice clapping syllables.



### *Body Syllables*

Jump, hop, tap or stomp the syllables in familiar words.

# Phonological Awareness - Syllables



## **I Spy**

Play **I Spy** with common objects in your home and in the community. Take turns guessing the objects.

*For Example:*

*Parent: I spy a ta-ble.*

*Child: Table*



If your child has mastered syllables, try playing **I Spy** with rhyming words or first sounds.

*For Example:*

*Parent: I spy something that starts with the sound 'mmm'.*

*Child: Motorcycle*

# Phonological Awareness - Syllables



## Take Away a Part

Practice syllable deletion by taking away part of the word.

*For example:*

*Parent: Say 'popcorn'*

*Child: Popcorn*

*Parent: Say 'popcorn' but don't say 'corn'*

*Child: Pop*

## Possible Word List:

pan**cake**

cook**ie**

wind**ow**

bed**room**

pill**ow**

water

hot**dog**

mon**key**

puzz**le**

foot**ball**

octo**pus**

ele**phant**

play**ground**

ro**bot**

jell**o**



# Phonological Awareness - Rhyming

## Sing a Song

For Example: **Down By the Bay** (Song by Raffi)

*Down by the Bay  
Where the watermelons grow  
Back to my home  
I dare not go  
For if I do  
My mother will say  
Have you ever seen a **goose**  
Kissing a **moose**?  
Down by the bay.*

## Other Animals

**Whale** - with a polka dot **tail**

**Fly** - wearing a **tie**

**Bat** - flying on a **mat**

**Dog** - sailing on a **log**

**Bear** - blow drying his **hair**

**Llamas** - wearing striped **pajamas**

**Goat** - driving a **boat**



Rhyming words don't always have to make sense. Children often learn to rhyme with 'nonsense' or silly sounding words (i.e. table/wable, fork/nork) so continue to praise their efforts for generating a rhyme!

# Phonological Awareness - Rhyming



## **I Hear With My Little Ear**

Play a variation of the game **I Spy**, changing it to **I Hear**.

*For example:*

*Parent: I hear with my little ear something that rhymes with 'moon' and you can eat cereal with it.*

*Child: Spoon*

## **Possible Word List:**

moo-shoe

hest-nest

mable-table

hand-sand

head-bed

word-bird

call-ball

proud-cloud

guide-slide

sock-block

far-car

night-light

# Phonological Awareness - Rhyming



## On the Way to the Store

Begin the game by saying: *I was on my way to the store to buy some \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., **cheese**).*

The next person repeats the sentence and adds a rhyming word: *I was on my way to the store to buy some **cheese** and some **peas**.*

The next person adds on another rhyming word and the game continues in the same way. Real or nonsense words are okay.

## Possible Word List:

milk	soap	jam
cream	meat	candy
cake	potatoes	glue
rice	honey	apples
crackers	noodles	grapes

# Phonological Awareness - Blending



## Simon Says

Play the game **Simon Says**. When you are giving directions segment target words into sounds and invite your child to guess your word. For example: *Simon says touch your f-ee-t.*

## Possible Word List:

ch-ee-k

h-a-n-d

l-i-p-s

h-o-p

h-ea-d

l-e-g

sh-oe

s-k-i-p

b-a-ck

n-o-se

h-a-t

j-u-m-p



Blending is the ability to join the individual sounds in a word. For example, c - a - t makes 'cat' and sh-o-p makes 'shop.' The adult breaks the word apart by saying each sound separately and the child puts the sounds back together to form a word.

# Phonological Awareness - Segmenting



## Step and Say

Say a word and invite your child to take a step for each sound in the word. Children can step on objects such as carpet squares or squares drawn with chalk. Be creative!

## Possible Word List:

g-o

i-ce

m-a-p

t-oo-th

s-ee

ea-t

c-a-ke

f-u-n

sh-ow

o-ff

f-i-ve

b-r-i-ck



Segmenting is the ability to break a word apart into each individual sound. (Cat is c-a-t, shop is sh-o-p). The adult says the word and the child breaks it apart, saying each sound they hear.

# Phonological Awareness - Manipulating Words



## Poem Play With Names

*For Example: Willoughby Wallaby Woo*

Willoughby Wallaby Wee  
An elephant sat on me

Willoughby Wallaby Woo  
An elephant sat on you

Willoughby Wallaby Balik  
An elephant sat on \_\_\_\_ (Malik)

Willoughby Wallaby Bara  
An elephant sat on \_\_\_\_ (Zara)



*Manipulating words involves changing or omitting sounds. Try omitting the first sound in a name.*

*For example:*

*Willoughby Wallaby -ance  
An elephant sat on \_\_\_\_ (Lance)*

*Willoughby Wallaby -enry  
An elephant set on \_\_\_\_ (Henry)*

# Phonological Awareness - First Sounds



## Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down

Play 'Thumbs Up' by first choosing a sound. Say words that *do* start and *do not* start with that sound. Your child can give a 'thumbs up' for those that *do* and a thumbs down for those that *do not*.

*For example:*

*Parent: The sound is 'sss'. What's the sound?*

*Child: 'sss'*

*Parent: soap*

*Child: (puts thumb up)*

*Parent: window*

*Child: (puts thumb down)*

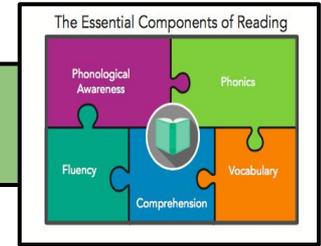


Invite your child to sort toys according to first or last sound.



If your child has mastered first sounds, practice identifying last sounds (e.g., most<sup>t</sup>, sha<sup>k</sup>e) and medial (i.e., middle) sounds in words (e.g. ca<sup>k</sup>e, crea<sup>m</sup>).

# Phonics



## What is Phonics?

Phonics refers to the rules of how letter combinations go together to represent different sounds.

## Why is it important?

Phonics is the link between what readers hear and see in print. After children learn letter-sound relationships and phonological awareness, the next step is making the print connection which is known as phonics (e.g., I **hear** the sounds S-A-T in the word *sat* so I **write** the letters S, A, T).

# Phonics



## Build a Word

Find household items like bottle lids. Use a permanent marker to label each one with a different letter of the alphabet (use a different colour for the vowels). Use them to make real and nonsense 2 and 3 sound words.

Examples of 2 sound words:

**a**t      **o**n      **i**t      **i**n      **u**p

Examples of 3 sound words:

**b**a**t**      **p**e**n**      **s**i**t**      **d**o**g**      **r**u**n**



Vowels are: **a e i o u** and (sometimes) **y**

Consonants are: **b c d f g h j k l m n p q r s t v w x y z**



If your child has mastered 2 and 3 sound words, try 4 sound words.

Examples of 4 sound words:

**s**t**o**p      **m**a**s**k      **c**u**p**s      **f**l**a**p

# Phonics



## Hopscotch with Letter Sounds/ Blends/ Digraphs

Create a hopscotch game with letters, blends and digraphs. When your child lands on a square, invite them to say the corresponding sound. Start with letter sounds, then work toward blends and digraphs.



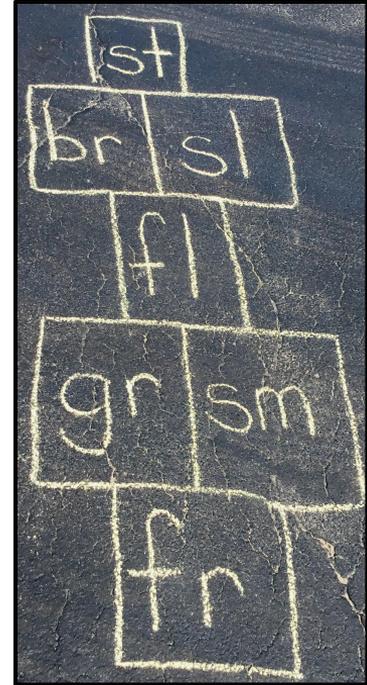
*Invite your child to throw a beanbag or stuffed animal and say the sound that those letters make.*



*A consonant **blend** is when two or more consonants are blended together, but each sound may be heard in the blend. Common beginning consonant blends include: bl, br, cl, cr, dr, fr, tr, fl, gl, gr, pl, pr, sl, sm, sp and st.*



*A consonant **digraph** is when two consonants together produce a single sound. Common consonant digraphs include: ch, sh and th.*



# Phonics

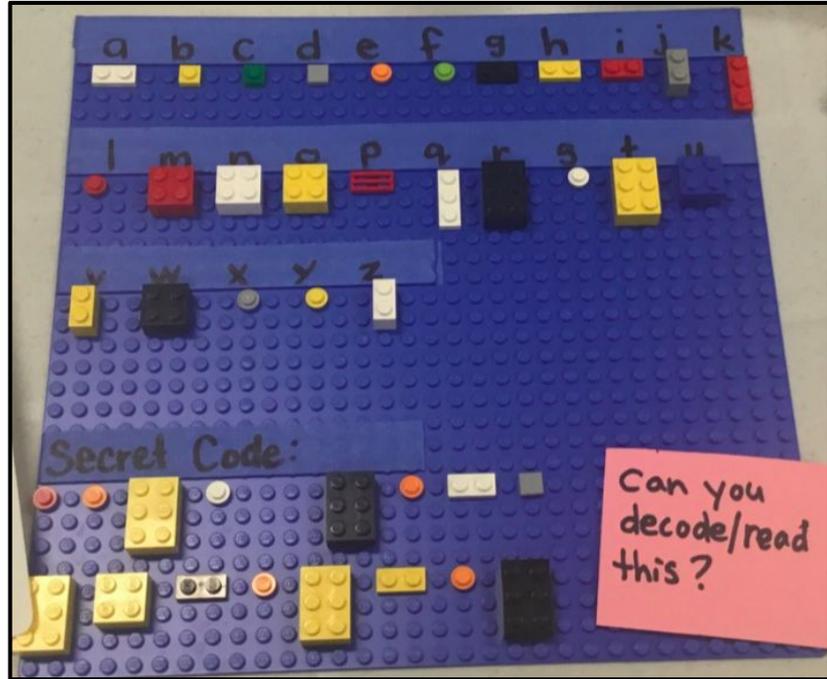


## Coding With Phonics

Create your own “coding board” by matching Lego® to different letters and have your child solve the secret code word or sentence.



Trade roles!



# Phonics



## Tic Tac Toe

Draw a tic tac toe board. Fill in the board with letters, then move on to blends and digraphs. Have your child say the letter sound, blend or digraph before they mark it off with an X or an O.



Invite your child to tell you a word that begins with that letter sound, blend or digraph.

st	pl	sl
br	cr	dr
sp	tr	gl

# Phonics

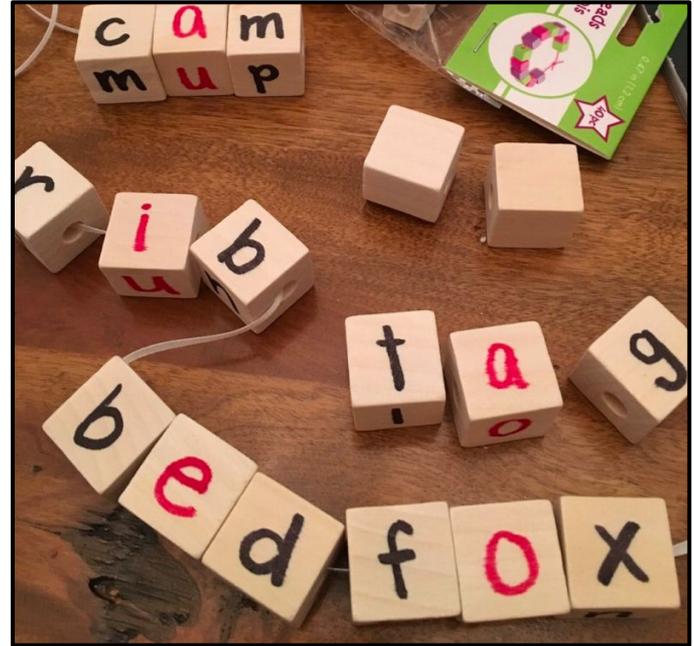


## Spin a Word

Write letters on each face of wooden beads, making the vowels a different colour. String the blocks together. Invite your child to spin the letters and read the words.



Try adding an 'e' as the fourth letter. Notice how the 'e' changes the vowel sound from the short vowel sound to the long vowel sound (e.g., mat - mate).



# Phonics



## Water the Words

Using chalk, write words that *are* and *are not* part of a word family. Invite your child to find words that *do not* belong to the word family by pouring water on them from a bucket.



Use other materials such as a dry erase board and markers.

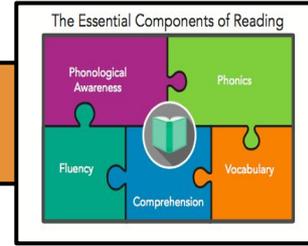
## Possible CVC (Consonant-Vowel-Consonant) Word Family Patterns:

-ad	-ed	-in
-ag	-en	-ip
-am	-et	-og
-ap	-id	-ot
-at	-ig	-ug

## Possible CVCe Word Family Patterns:

-ace	-ice	-oke
-ade	-ise	-ube
-ame	-ite	-ute
-ake	-obe	-use

# Vocabulary



## What is Vocabulary?

Vocabulary refers to the words children know both in conversation and in print. It includes both **understanding** words (hearing) and **using** words (saying).

## Why is it Important?

If children know a word and can say a word, they can read the word. Knowing the meaning of a word helps students understand what they are reading. Developing a large bank of *high frequency words* (i.e., words that occur most often in print) is an important part of vocabulary development.

# Vocabulary



## Kindergarten

a	he	on
am	here	said
an	him	see
and	his	so
at	I	that
be	in	the
big	is	to
can	it	up
do	like	was
get	look	we
go	me	went
got	my	yes
had	no	

## Kindergarten & Grade 1 High Frequency WORD LISTS

## Grade 1

after	have	than
again	her	their
all	how	them
any	into	then
are	I'm	there
away	know	they
because	little	today
behind	looked	under
came	looking	use
can't	looks	want
city	love	were
come	make	what
could	new	when
don't	of	where
down	one	who
eat	our	why
for	over	will
friend	play	with
from	she	very
going	some	you
good	take	your

\*Sample Word Lists

# Vocabulary



## High Frequency Word Games

### Preparation:

Write high frequency words on cards. You will need two sets of words.

### Concentration:

Place cards face down on a table (start with a small # of words and increase slowly). Each player turns over two words and reads them. If a match is made the player keeps the cards and gets another turn. Play until all the cards have been collected.

### Go Fish:

Deal 4 cards to each player. The remaining cards are placed face down in the middle of the table. Player 1 asks another player if they have a word. If they have it, they give it to the player, if not they say, "Go Fish!" and the player selects a card from the middle. If a match is made the player continues with their turn. The game finishes when one player has found a match for all of their cards.

# Vocabulary



## Flashlight Finder

Invite your child to use a flashlight to locate high frequency words in books as you read together.



Your child can follow a text from left to right using a flashlight.



Use a flashlight to read in the dark. It's fun!

# Vocabulary



## Strive for Five

Strive for 5 exchanges in conversations with your child to build oral language skills, including oral vocabulary.

- Start the conversation by making an **observation**.
- Give your child time to **respond**. (Wait 10-15 seconds or longer if needed.)
- Use **open-ended questions** to keep the conversation going! For example: *Tell me more...*
- **Extend** the conversation by asking another question, expanding on your child's comment, or confirming/repeating what the child said, until you've had at least 5 exchanges.

# Vocabulary



## Use-Create-Read

**Use** Environmental Print. Cut out, craft, play games, and make sentences with words from:

- Food packages
- Magazines
- Flyers

**Create** Environmental Print. Label items around your home:

- Furniture
- Food items
- Toys, bins, baskets

**Read** Environmental Print. Draw attention to:

- Signs
- Instructions
- Labels



# Vocabulary



## Million Dollar Words

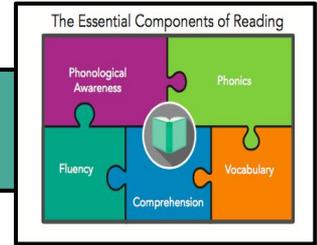
A million dollar word is a word children may not use regularly or might not know the meaning of. Talking about these big words increases their vocabulary. They love to use these big words in their own play!

While reading a book to your child find a “million dollar word” and have a conversation with your child about the meaning of this word. Use the “million dollar word” over and over again so it becomes part of your child’s word bank.

If your child’s home language is not English, translate the word together and use it in a sentence. Keep a personal dictionary of all the million dollar words you learn in English and your home language.

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# Fluency



## What is Fluency?

Fluency is the ability to read like you speak. It involves reading text (in any language) accurately, with expression (changing tone of voice), automaticity (know a word by sight), phrasing (grouping words together) and pausing (paying attention to punctuation).

## Why is it important?

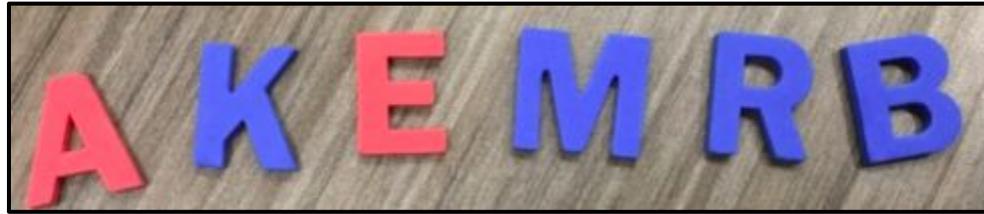
When children read with fluency they are able to use their energy to comprehend what they are reading.

# Fluency



## Letter Sound Fluency

Arrange a row of letters (or write a row of letters) then invite your child to say the sound for each letter, reading left to right. The goal is for your child to read the letters fluently (e.g., accurately, at a reasonable pace).



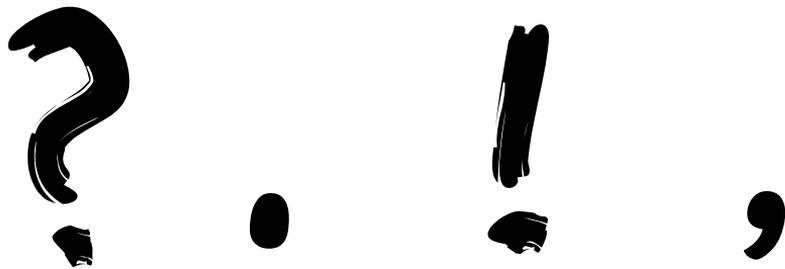
After your child has mastered letter sounds, work on fluent reading of high frequency words. About 10 high frequency words at a time is reasonable. Once one list is mastered, move on to another.

# Fluency



## Punctuation Police

Draw your child's attention to punctuation when you are reading together by inviting your child to be the 'Punctuation Police'. When your voice doesn't match the punctuation, your child can give you a 'ticket'.



Trade roles!

# Fluency



## **Hear! Here!**

Audiobooks can be found at your local library and [online](#). Listening to audiobooks helps your child build fluency by hearing how fluent reading sounds.

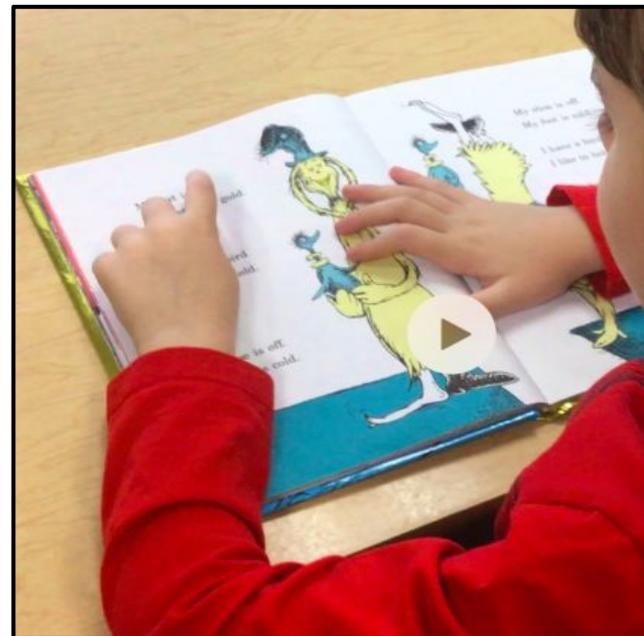


# Fluency



## **Starring...Me!**

Take a video of your child reading a familiar book. Watch the video and talk about things they did well as a fluent reader (e.g., pay attention to punctuation, read at a reasonable pace, read with expression) and next steps to improve fluency. Practice reading the book over the course of a week, then take another video and compare.



# Fluency



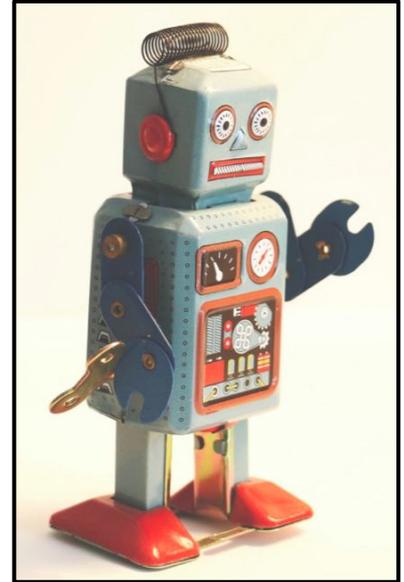
## Robot Reading

Reading a story to your child helps them hear what a fluent reader sounds like. First, read a passage in a “robot voice” (i.e., slowly with no expression).

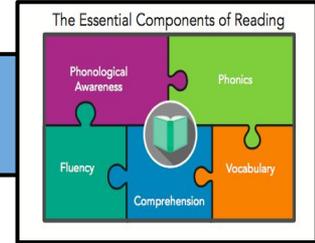
Next, read a passage with fluency (i.e., a reasonable pace, with expression and attention to punctuation). Which sounds better?

 Inviting your child to read in unison or echo read (I read, you read) with you is another way to help build fluency.

 Practice fluency in your home language too!



# Comprehension



## What is Comprehension?

Comprehension involves thinking about, reflecting on and understanding what is read.

## Why is it important?

Comprehension is important because it influences the enjoyment and the effectiveness of reading. To be strong readers, children need to understand, reflect on and think critically about what they are reading.

# Comprehension



## Book Talk: Fiction

Using a fiction book (i.e., imaginary story), choose a question from each section to ask before, during and after reading. Talk about the book in English or your home language.

### BEFORE READING:

Look at the cover and title:

- *What might this story be about?*
- *Have we read any stories like this before?*

### DURING READING:

Stop part of the way through the book and wonder aloud:

- *What might happen next in the story?*
- *How do you think (character) might be feeling?*

### AFTER READING:

Close the book and ask:

- *What does this story remind you of?*
- *What did you think of the story?*



# Comprehension



## Book Talk: Non-Fiction

Using a non-fiction book (i.e., based on facts), choose a question from each section to ask before, during and after reading. Talk about the book in English or your home language.

### BEFORE READING:

Look at the cover and title:

- *What are you wondering?*
- *What do you already know about...?*

### DURING READING:

Stop part of the way through the book and wonder aloud:

- *What have you learned so far?*
- *What surprised you?*

### AFTER READING:

Close the book and ask:

- *What questions do you still have?*
- *What did you think of the book?*



# Comprehension



## Hide and Seek

Give your child clues about a familiar book which you have hidden (e.g., in a box, under a blanket) then invite your child to guess the book.

*For example:*

*The main characters are...*

*The problem is...*

*The setting is...*



Change roles by inviting your child to hide the book and give the clues.



Hide a picture during reading. Ask your child what they are visualizing or invite your child to draw what they are picturing in their head.

# Comprehension



## 3-2-1 Blast Off!

After reading a non-fiction text, take turns sharing:

**Three** things you learned.

**Two** things that surprised you.

**One** question you still have.

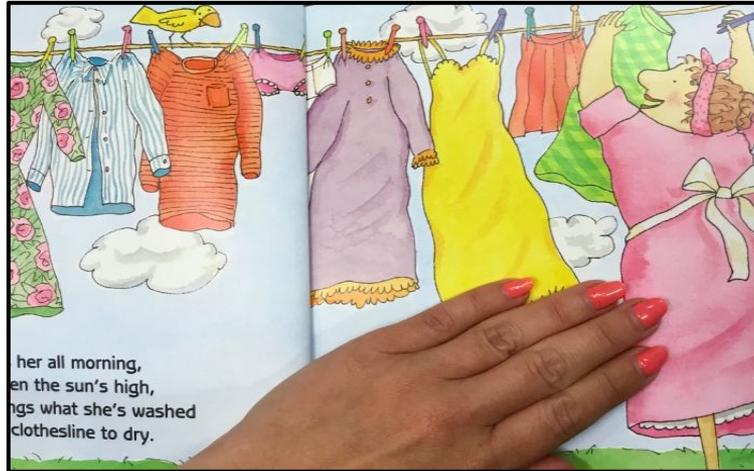


# Comprehension



## Hands Off!

Invite your child to read a short passage of a non-fiction or fiction text. Cover that part with your hand and have them retell what they read.



her all morning,  
en the sun's high,  
ngs what she's washed  
clothesline to dry.

Source: [Mrs. McNosh Hangs Up Her Wash](#)  
Author: Sarah Weeks    Illustrator: Nadine Bernard Westcott

# Comprehension



## Toy Stories

Invite your child to retell (i.e., characters, setting, beginning, middle, end) a favourite story using stuffies, drawings, puppets, or figurines. Your child could even act the story out.



If your family has access to technology, consider creating a mini-movie to retell a story.

# Comprehension



## Take Five

Prior to reading, take five words from the story. Say the words to your child and invite them to predict what the story might be about.



Predictions are thoughtful guesses. There is no right or wrong answer.

**HWDSB**

*Let's* **READ** *Together*

*Every effort has been made to acknowledge original sources and to comply with copyright law. If cases are identified where this has not been done, please contact [program@hwdsb.on.ca](mailto:program@hwdsb.on.ca). Errors or omissions will be corrected in a future revision.*