

Early Literacy Skills to Support Home Reading

Learning to read is a complex process. The reader needs to co-ordinate many different skills simultaneously and with mastery to decode and comprehend a text with fluency. For some early readers, extra practice with some of these specific skills may be needed.

Families that are able to read regularly with their child – sharing reading “jobs” like holding the book, turning the pages, tracking the words with a finger while reading, talking about what the text is about, modelling phrasing, pausing and intonation – are already doing so much to support a child’s reading ability (thank you!). However, if you are able to also focus on some of the specific skills that could benefit your child as they become an independent reader, this package can provide you with some ideas and specific areas to target.

A Look at the Specific Skills to Target:

When we look at the components that are needed for successful, independent reading, they fall into five categories, as explained below.

Phonological Awareness	Phonics	Vocabulary	Fluency	Comprehension
<i>What is it?</i>				
Phonological awareness is a speaking and listening skill. It refers to the ability to recognize, manipulate and hear words, syllables and sounds.	Phonics is moving from the sounds to the written word. Specifically, it is the rules of how letter combinations go together to represent different sounds.	Vocabulary refers to the words a reader knows, including understanding what words mean and using words.	Fluency refers to the ability to read a text accurately, at a good rate, with expression, automaticity (i.e. doesn’t need to sound out all of the words), phrasing and pausing.	Comprehension refers to the process of understanding, reflecting on and learning from text.
<i>Why Do We Need This?</i>				
When readers develop phonological awareness, they hear individual sounds in words. This helps readers sound out words when decoding (reading) a text and when writing words.	When readers learn the important link between sounds they hear and the letters in print that represent those sounds, they start to see the sounds on the page, the patterns that give them reading “shortcuts” (e.g. if I know cAT , I know bAT) in rhymes, common word beginnings/ endings and finding smaller words within bigger ones.	Having a strong vocabulary allows students to understand a text, and predict unknown words within a text.	Readers who can read fluently have greater success comprehending what they have read. Readers who need to decode most words, or read very slowly or with limited expression find texts much more difficult to comprehend.	This is the goal of reading. We read to understand a text and make personal meaning for ourselves.

What Does It Look Like?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hearing the difference between a letter, sound and word • Stretching words into syllable sounds (e.g. but-ter-fly) • Hearing and making rhymes • Blend (combine sounds together) and segment (break words down into individual sounds) words • Playing with the sounds of words (e.g. moon and spoon share “oon” sounds, Peter Piper picked a peck of peppers has lots of “p” sounds) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking letters to make sounds (reading) or taking sounds to make letters (writing) • Focus for beginning readers is on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Individual consonant sounds ○ Long vowel sounds ○ Short vowel sounds ○ Words with 2 to 3 sounds • As readers progress, they will move to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consonant blends of two sounds (e.g. st, bl, pr) ○ Consonant digraphs of one sound (e.g. sh, ch, th) ○ Vowel teams (e.g. oi, oo) ○ Words with 3 to 5 sounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using new vocabulary • Recognizing high frequency words (e.g. popcorn words that pop up in texts a lot) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading with automaticity (e.g. read “cat” instead of sounding out “c-a-t”) • Developing a sight vocabulary (e.g. popcorn words) • Reading with pausing – knowing which words to group together and when to slow down/ stop • Reading with expression – knowing when and how to alter your voice to give the reading more meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding and explaining what has happened in a text. In early readers, we practice these skills with both texts that are read and texts that are read to them (oral texts) • Thinking about and beyond a text to use these strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Linking prior knowledge to a text’s meaning ○ Predicting ○ Determining important ideas from the text ○ Asking questions about the text ○ Visualizing ○ Connecting own ideas, other texts or information from the world to the text ○ Inferring (comprehending something that wasn’t directly said in the text) ○ Self-monitoring (realizing when you have made a mistake or don’t understand a text and knowing what to do to fix that)
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Ideas to Support Phonological Awareness

<p>Syllables and the Name Game</p> <p>Use your child's name and the names of family and friends for this activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -clap each name in syllables -discuss whose name has the most syllables? -discuss whose name has the least syllables? -write the names on cards and circle the syllables -sort the cards into groups by number of syllables 	<p>Shrinking Syllables</p> <p>Say the words listed below, then clap them out in syllables.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -discuss how each word could be shortened to have fewer syllables (e.g. Al-ex-an-der can shrink to A-lex). Clap out the new, shrunk words. <p>kangaroo hippopotamus alligator crocodile refrigerator television tyrannosaurus rex</p> <p>-once the word is shrunk, grow it again and clap out the long version again</p>	<p>Syllables in the Room</p> <p>Have your child look around the room and name items and people they see.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ask your child to say the items' names, then clap them in syllables. (e.g. I see a table. Ta-ble) -Challenge your child to find an item that has only one syllable, two syllables, etc. Say them and clap them out. -Challenge your child to find the item in the room that has the most syllables. Test out the guesses by saying them and clapping them out. 	<p>Tapping Game</p> <p>Have your child keep track of the number of syllables in a word by tapping specific body parts for each syllable.</p> <p>1st syllable- tap fingertips 2nd syllable-tap wrist 3rd syllable-tap inside of elbow 4th syllable-tap shoulder 5th syllable-tap nose</p> <p>-choose different words to tap. How many of your words get to your elbow? How many get to your nose?</p>	<p>I SPY</p> <p>Use a book, magazine or device to find photos or pictures of items recognizable to your child.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Point to a photo and have your child stretch it into syllables by clapping or hopping for each syllable 																												
<p>Sing a Song</p> <p>Use the lyrics below to practice syllables in words, particularly when exploring new vocabulary.</p> <p><i>Hickety Tickety Bumblebee.</i> <i>Won't you say this word with me.</i> <i>Let's all say it _____</i> <i>Let's all clap it _____</i> <i>Let's all snap it _____</i> <i>Hickety Tickety _____</i></p>	<p>Take Away a Part</p> <p>Practice deleting syllables to help students think of words in segments.</p> <p>E.g. Parent: "say ruler" Child: "Ruler" Parent: "Say ruler again but don't say ru" Child: "ler"</p> <p>Words to get you started practicing:</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td>(jel)lo</td> <td>mark(er)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>play(ing)</td> <td>(win)dow</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(gir)affe</td> <td>(ro)bot</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(mon)key</td> <td>(ba)nana</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ap(ple)</td> <td>ele(phant)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>cook(ie)</td> <td>(pine)apple</td> </tr> </table>	(jel)lo	mark(er)	play(ing)	(win)dow	(gir)affe	(ro)bot	(mon)key	(ba)nana	ap(ple)	ele(phant)	cook(ie)	(pine)apple	<p>Simon Says</p> <p>Play the Simon Says game. When you are giving directions, segment the target words into sounds.</p> <p>e.g. Parent: "Simon says touch your n/o/se" Other words that can be segmented for this game:</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td>f/ee/t</td> <td>j/u/m/p</td> </tr> <tr> <td>h/a/n/d</td> <td>h/o/p</td> </tr> <tr> <td>e/ye</td> <td>s/k/i/p</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ch/ee/k</td> <td>s/m/i/le</td> </tr> <tr> <td>b/a/ck</td> <td>b/ow</td> </tr> <tr> <td>t/o/es</td> <td>b/ar/k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>h/ea/d</td> <td>w/a/ve</td> </tr> <tr> <td>kn/ee/s</td> <td>s/t/o/p</td> </tr> </table>	f/ee/t	j/u/m/p	h/a/n/d	h/o/p	e/ye	s/k/i/p	ch/ee/k	s/m/i/le	b/a/ck	b/ow	t/o/es	b/ar/k	h/ea/d	w/a/ve	kn/ee/s	s/t/o/p	<p>Sounds on the Bus</p> <p>Use the familiar tune for "The Wheels on the Bus" but use words that can be segmented into 3 sounds and see if your child can guess the word.</p> <p>e.g. <i>The sounds in the word go H/o/p</i> <i>h/o/p</i> <i>The sounds in the word go h/o/p</i> <i>All through the town.</i></p>	<p>Eat a Sound</p> <p>Use small edible items (e.g goldfish, cheerios or blueberries). Give your child a small pile of the edible items in a bowl or pile. Have your child choose one piece of edible for each sound they hear in a word.</p> <p>e.g. Parent: "If I say m/e, how many goldfish do you get?" (2) "If I say m/a/t, how many blueberries do you get?" (3)</p>
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<p>Hopping Tongue Twisters Have your child stand up and ask them to listen for a specific sound. Then give them a sentence that has that sound in it multiple times. Ask your child to jump each time they hear the sound. Here are some sounds and sentences to get you started: B – The little boy built a big boat. C – A cat climbed up a vine. D – The dog is digging a deep hole. F – My Friend has four fun books. G – The goose is going to the pond. H – Harry is having a happy birthday. J – Jordan ate jumping jelly beans. K – The king is kind to all kids. L – Little Lucy loves lollipops. M – My mother met a mad dog. N – Norbert needs a necktie.</p>	<p>Find a Sound Give your child a sound (not a letter) and ask them to find an object in the room that starts with that sound. Begin with single consonants. As your child grows comfortable with those sounds, add in consonant blends (e.g. st, bl, pr) and consonant digraphs (e.g. sh, ch, th). The game can be repeated with expert players by asking them to find an object that ends with the sound instead of beginning with it.</p>	<p>Going on a Picnic Take turns with your child playing the going on a picnic game. First model it with these examples: <i>Going on a picnic,</i> <i>Sandra brings the soup</i> <i>Going on a picnic,</i> <i>Ben brings the bananas</i> <i>Going on a picnic,</i> <i>Moira brings the mushrooms.</i></p> <p>Give your child a name (or have them think one up) and tell them that that name can only bring something to the picnic that starts with the same sound as the name. Take turns seeing how many people can bring different things to the picnic.</p>	<p>Solve the Stretch Tell your child that they need to guess a word that you are stretching out. Then, sound out a word slowly, pausing between each sound. Repeat if necessary. For early readers, begin by just breaking the word into two segments: e.g. b – ook For more advanced readers, break the word into all the different sounds: e.g. b – oo - k</p>	
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Some activities taken from, or adapted from, Sound Bites (HWDSB)

Ideas to Support Phonics

<p>Sing a Song Sing this song, inserting names familiar to your child. You fill in the first blank with the name substituting a W for the beginning sound and have your child fill in the second blank with the correct beginning sound.</p> <p><i>Willoughby wallaby wee</i> <i>An elephant sat on me</i> <i>Willoughby wallaby woo</i> <i>An elephant sat on you</i> <i>Willoughby Wallaby Wustin</i> <i>An elephant sat on Justin</i> <i>Willoughby Wallaby _____</i> <i>An elephant sat on _____</i></p>	<p>Down by the Bay Sing this song, having your child choose animals and rhymes to substitute (some examples are below the song)</p> <p><i>Down by the bay</i> <i>Where the watermelons grow</i> <i>Back to my home</i> <i>I dare not go</i> <i>For if I do</i> <i>My mother will say</i> <i>“Have you ever seen a goose</i> <i>Kissing a moose?”</i> <i>Down by the bay.</i></p> <p>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 pyjamas Elephant – eating a peppermint Goat – driving a race boat</p>	<p>How Many Rhymes Can We Make? Choose a word with a common ending and challenge your child to come up with as many words as they can to rhyme with it. The words can be real or silly. Be sure to comment when it is a made up word.</p>	<p>I Hear with my little Ear This is a variation on the game “I Spy” to make it an oral sound game. Start with the adult making the clues and your child guessing the word. As your child develops the skills of the game, trade off roles. e.g. <i>“I hear with my little ear, something that rhymes with mable and you can put things on it.”</i></p> <p>Possible Word list book-hook marker-barker cup-pup pen-hen truck-duck spoon-moon brush-mush chair-bear block-shock sand-band</p>	<p>Dinner Guessing Game When your child asks what’s for dinner/snack/ breakfast, provide them the information in a rhyme and see if they can guess what the word is. If you provide several rhyming clues, be prepared to repeat it several times as your child decodes each rhyme or pause for each rhyme before continuing.</p> <p>e.g. <i>“We’re having maghetti (pause for a guess) and bilk (pause for a guess), with drawberries (pause for a guess) and mice cream (pause for a guess) for dessert”.</i></p>
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<p>Rhyme or No Rhyme Give (say) your child two words and ask if they rhyme or not. Include some rhyming words, some words that start with the same sound, and some words that are related in meaning. Some examples are below to get you started.</p> <p>cat/dog walk/talk snail/pail tomato/potato shark/bat grape/ape rug/room car/road bed/sled socks/shoes</p>	<p>Odd Word Out Ask your child to guess which word doesn't belong, then say three words – two rhyming and one that doesn't rhyme. Say the words slowly and repeat for your child as necessary. Some examples are below to get you started.</p> <p>cat/bear/bat snail/bed/pail rat/bear/tear shark/bat/park grape/ten/hen ape/cape/pen desk/seal/deal clock/rock/ring rose/frog/nose</p>	<p>Guess My Word Ask your child what word you are thinking about using this structure. <i>"I'm thinking of a word that rhymes with bright but starts with l ____"</i> As child becomes accustomed to the game, have them add a third rhyming word without a prompt. e.g. <i>"Light rhymes with bright. So does sight."</i></p>	<p>Read a Rhyme Read a story or poem that relies on rhyme. When you come to the first of the rhyming words, emphasize it with your voice. Continue reading the next line, then pause before the rhyming word to see if your child can guess what the rhyme is.</p>	<p>Change a Word Give students a word from the list below and tell them they can change it to another word by taking off the beginning sound. Use the example "fat" without the "f" is "at". Some example words are below to get you started.</p> <p>meat sit seat fan win sat gate boat pan pit bit pat</p>
<p>Popcorn Word War Game Use cards with a set of the popcorn words and play a game of modified "war" with them. Shuffle the cards and give half to your child and keep half for yourself, stacked face down. Each player turns a card over at the same time. The first person to read their word correctly gets both cards.</p>	<p>Popcorn Word I Spy Spread out a number of the popcorn word cards on a table and give your child a clue about a card/cards. E.g. <i>I spy three words that start with the "t" sound.</i> Your child guesses which cards they are and says the words.</p>	<p>Popcorn Word Memory Use two copies of popcorn word cards and spread them out, face down on the table. Take turns with your child turning over two cards, reading them each time. If two cards turned over have the same word, the player gets to keep both cards. Continue until all the cards are matched and claimed by a player.</p>		

Some activities taken from, or adapted from, Sound Bites (HWDSB)

Ideas to Support Vocabulary

<p>What Word Means the Same? Tell your child a word, then tell them two more words, one of which means the same thing as the first word. Ask them to explain which one means the same as the original word. e.g. blue – red – navy love – adore – hate choose – pick - ignore</p>	<p>Picture Walk for New Words Taking a text you have read or will read, have your child look for words they don't recognize and discuss them. You can also tell your child some words you think they may not know the meaning of and discuss these before reading.</p>	<p>Million Dollar Word Game Give your child a sentence with a generic word in it and ask them to substitute a better word for it. e.g. "That is a <u>nice</u> coat." Becomes "That is a <u>spectacular</u> coat."</p>	<p>Dissecting Big Words Find a multi-syllable word in a text and look at it closely with your child. Determine what little words can be found in it. Discuss how the word can be changed to change the meaning and use these new words in a sentence. e.g. important – has the little words "an", "ant" and "import" in it. Can be changed to "importance".</p>	
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Ideas to Support Fluency

<p>Unlocking the Robot Take turns with your child reading (or rereading) a line of text as a robot - no intonation, no pausing, no expression. Then try again using expression appropriate to the text. Talk with your child about how it helps us understand what we are reading when we can “hear” some of the meaning through expression.</p>	<p>Nursery Rhymes and Poems Practise reading nursery rhymes and familiar poems while following in a text to help your child get the feel of reading at a reasonable pace.</p>	<p>Share a Story Read a text with your child that has a repetitive component to it and allow your child to read the familiar, repetitive parts while you read the unfamiliar text. e.g. any Robert Munsch books are good examples <u>The Gingerbread Man</u> <u>Brown Bear, Brown Bear</u> <u>Something from Nothing</u> <u>No David!</u> <u>Five Little Monkeys</u> <u>Pete the Cat: I Love My</u> <u>White Shoes</u></p>	<p>Breathing Breaks Before starting a familiar text, point out the punctuation in a text to your child. Talk about the periods, commas, exclamation and question marks as different pauses we put into our reading to help us make sense. Each time they get to punctuation in the text, model for them to take a breath to break up the text.</p>	
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Ideas to Support Comprehension

<p>Supporting Prediction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at the cover of the book and discuss what you think might happen in the text. • Read the title and make another guess. • Do a picture walk through the text and continue to discuss what the text may be about. • Read through the beginning and middle of the text before pausing to predict what may happen at the end • Use personal connections, information learned from other texts, and knowledge of the subject to make predictions <p>Some prompts you can use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think this will happen because... • When I think about another text, this happened, so I predict... 	<p>Making Connections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss what is the same about the text and your child’s own experiences. What is the same? What is different? If he/she was in the story, would it be the same? • Discuss what other texts this text reminds you of (e.g. similar topics, characters who act the same) <p>Some prompts you can use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That reminds me of... • It makes me think of... • I read another book where... • This is different from... 	<p>Demonstrating Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After reading, discuss what the story was about. Retelling key points (characters, setting, beginning, middle, end, problem/resolution) <p>Some prompts you can use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think the main idea of the text is... • In the text, what comes first? Next? Then? Last? • The problem was ... 	<p>Making Inferences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During or after reading a text, talk about what the characters might be feeling and why they chose the actions they did • Look at the text and discuss what clues they had about the characters (e.g. frown on the face made them think the character was unhappy) <p>Some prompts you can use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I’m guessing that... • I predict... • It would be better if...
<p>Responding to and Evaluating Texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss what you think of the text; did you like it? Why or why not? What in the text helped you decide that? • Discuss what you think of the characters; do you like them? Why or why not? What in the text helps you make that choice? <p>Some prompts you can use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was confused when... • I’m not sure why... • I am curious about... • I liked...because... • I didn’t like...because... 	<p>Understanding Point of View</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss who is telling the story (e.g. narrator, a character) and why he/she would be telling this story • Discuss how the story would be different if a different character was telling it <p>Some prompts you can use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If I were the main character... • If ... was the main character... • It was important for...to tell the story because... 	<p>Analyzing Texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss what the connection is between the written text and the accompanying pictures • Discuss how the author made the text surprising, funny or interesting • Discuss what kind of text it is (e.g. fiction/non fiction) <p>Some prompts you can use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be better if... • I really liked how.... <p>What is interesting/ surprising/ funny in the text is...</p>	

Some activities adapted from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades K-8, Pinnell and Fountas, 2007*

Popcorn Word List #1

like	in	to	no	am
a	that	can	me	yes
I	of	the	said	we
he	is	was	go	see
and	it	big	my	went

Popcorn Word List #2

you	are	mom	dad	on
look	he	she	very	cat
name	our	dog	for	up
her	his	they	at	be
love	do	play	good	your

Popcorn Word List #3

as	little	has	from	two
too	had	did	them	with
over	five	but	nine	day
us	all	by	three	six
ten	here	one	four	seven
eight	they	are	was	an

Popcorn Word List #4

have	this	not	there	their
were	put	if	come	some
get	so	him	now	about
man	asked	into	will	an
or	came	just	saw	because

Popcorn Word List #5

mother	father	make	I'm	put
away	going	could	would	than
before	after	then	don't	back
who	when	how	where	what
hi	bye			