

The Five Essential Components of Reading

Scientific research shows that there are five essential components of reading that children must be taught in order to learn to read. Adults can help children learn to be good readers by systematically practicing these five components.



Phonemic awareness:

Children need to be taught to hear sounds in words and that words are made up of the smallest parts of sounds, or phonemes. They need to recognize and use individual sounds to create words. Ways to help your young children develop phonemic awareness are:

- ❁ Read books to your child that focus on **alliteration**, or, the same letter sounds. For example, Six Sleepy Sheep by Jeffie Ross Gordon or Four Fur Feet by Margaret Wise Brown.
- ❁ Read books to your child that focus on **rhyming** patterns. For example, Hop on Pop by Dr. Seuss or Sheep in a Jeep by Nancy Shaw. Look for books of poetry or nursery rhymes in your local library.
- ❁ Play word games with your child such as:
Odd Word Out: Say four words to your child - three rhyming, one non-rhyming. For example, (head, bed, desk, said). Then ask, "Which word doesn't belong?"
Rhyming Pairs: Think of two words and ask your child, "Do these sound the same (hose, nose) or different (bus, train)?"



Phonics:

Children need to understand the relationship between written letters and spoken sounds. They need to be taught the sounds individual printed letters and groups of letters make. Knowing the relationship between letters and sounds helps children recognize familiar words accurately and automatically, and "decode" new words. Ways to help your children with phonics are:

- ❁ Read alphabet books with your child. There are alphabet books out there for all ages - from simple books for preschoolers to more complex ones for older kids.
- ❁ Make a game of it. For example, have your child go on an alphabet scavenger hunt in the house. First, she must find something that begins with "a", then "b" and so on. At the end, take a picture of your child with all of the objects.
- ❁ Ask your child's teacher what you can do at home that will support phonics learning.

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Parts of this tip sheet were reprinted from the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education's "The Five Essential Components of Reading" which was posted on the South Dakota Parent Resource Network Web site at ww.bhssc.org/sdprn. Other parts of this tip sheet were inspired from a variety of sources, including *Developing Phonemic Awareness* at <http://208.183.128.8/read/Phonemic.htm>; *Vocabulary Development* from www.drdeanmooney.com/vocabdevelopment.htm; *Teaching Phonics to Kids* at www.azaz.essortment.com; *5 Surefire Strategies for Developing Reading Fluency* by Lisa Blau at www.teacher.scholastic.com/professional/teachstrat/readingfluencystrategies.htm and *Fluency - "The Forgotten Reading Strategy"* at www.web.rbe.sk.ca/lang/Summer%202001/Fluency.htm

The Five Essential Components of Reading - continued



Reading Fluency:

Children must develop the ability to read text accurately and quickly in order to understand what is read. When fluent readers read silently, they recognize words automatically. When fluent readers read aloud, they read effortlessly and with expression. Readers who are weak in fluency read slowly, word by word, and spend so much effort decoding, that they miss the meaning of the text. Ways to help your children develop reading fluency are:

- ✿ Read aloud to your child and model reading fluency. Make sure to read with expression. If it is a new book, preview it beforehand so that you know you can read it smoothly. Encourage your young reader to then read the book to you a couple of times. Reading practice helps improve fluency.
- ✿ Try "echo reading" when reading a poem to your child, in which you read a line, and then your child repeats it back to you. This way, your child will get the feel for how words should be chunked together to sound like natural speech.



Vocabulary Development:

It is very important for children to learn the meaning and pronunciation of words, and actively expand their knowledge of written and spoken words and how those words are used. The larger and stronger a child's spoken vocabulary, the more background knowledge that child will bring to his or her reading experience. Ways you can help your children develop a rich vocabulary are:

- ✿ Talk about a variety of things with your child. Take family trips to the park, zoo, a local apple orchard, farm, ...wherever, and talk about what you see. This will expose your child to new words. Have dinner together as a family where each member can talk about their day.
- ✿ When reading with your child, highlight the vocabulary in the book. Talk about new words. Since they are in the context of the story, they will be more meaningful and easier for your child to remember.
- ✿ Read a variety of books with your children, including joke books. Not only are joke books fun, but humor often plays on words and can teach your child figurative and multiple meanings of words.



Reading Comprehension:

Children need to acquire strategies to understand, remember, and communicate what they've read. Students who are in control of their own reading comprehension become purposeful, active readers.

- ✿ Good readers visualize what is happening in the story while they are reading. When reading with your children, have them close their eyes when reading certain parts of the book. See if they can "picture" what a character or place looks like or what is happening. Have them use their vocabulary to describe what they "see."
- ✿ After reading a story to your children, close the book have them retell it back to you. Read the book again to see how much was remembered.