

5 Essential Components of Reading



Marrickville Public School

Learning to read involves various different skills. There are five essential skills all children need in order to successfully learn how to read.

1. **Phonics** – recognising the connection between letters and the sounds they make
2. **Phonemic awareness** – the ability to hear and manipulate the different sounds in words
3. **Vocabulary** – understanding the meaning of words, their definitions, and their context
4. **Fluency** – the ability to read aloud with speed, understanding and accuracy
5. **Reading comprehension** – understand the meaning of text, both in storybooks and information books

1. Phonics

Phonics is the process of mapping the sounds in words to written letters. This is one of the earliest reading skills children should develop, because it introduces them to the link between letters and sounds, known as the alphabetic principle.

Letter Races

This game requires a magnetic board, magnetic letters, and a lot of space! Set up the magnetic board on one side of the room, and place the magnetic letters in a basket or bowl on the other side. Call out a sound, or a word starting or ending in a particular sound. Then ask your child (with a ready, set, go!) to pick out the correct magnetic letters and run over as fast as they can to stick it on the board.

I Spy the Sound

'I Spy the Sound' is a fun way to build phonics skills and phonemic awareness. In this variation of the classic game, 'I Spy', ask your child to spy words that begin with a certain sound, rather than a letter. For example, "I spy with my little eye, something beginning with mmm."

Matching Rhymes

Rhymes help children understand that sounds in our language have meaning and follow certain patterns. Find a corkboard or something you can stick pins into. Write down a list of words on one side of a sheet of paper, and on the other side write down words that rhyme with these words, but in a different order. Then stick pins next to each word. Give your child some rubber bands and ask them to match the rhyming words on each side of the page by placing the rubber bands on the pins to connect the rhyming pair.

Phonics Hopscotch

This game helps children develop their ability to match letters to their sounds. All you need for this fun phonics activity is a piece of chalk and the ground. Simply draw hopscotch markings on the ground. In each square draw a letter of the alphabet. There are many ways you can play this game – you can call out a letter or combination of letters and ask your child to jump on those letters, and as they do, for them to sound out each letter. Or you can ask your child to jump on the letters in alphabetical order, sounding them out as they go along. You can also roll dice and ask your child to jump to the square that matches the number rolled, counting the squares as they jump and sounding the letter out at the end.

Without phonics, words are simply a bunch of squiggles on a page.

2. Phonemic Awareness

Children develop phonemic awareness by learning about sounds (phonemes), syllables and words.

Every word in the English language is made up of a combination of individual units of sound, known as phonemes.

c/r/a/b

Crab has 4 individual units of sound

Phonemic awareness is being able to hear, identify and manipulate these individual sounds.

What to do?

Play word games, rhyming games, listen to a parent read.

3. Vocabulary

Building vocabulary is a fundamental part of academic and reading success. The more words we know, the better we become at reading and understanding the texts that we read.

The larger a child's speaking and listening vocabulary, the more words they will be able to add to their reading and writing vocabularies with relative ease.

Reading widely : mix up the variety

Sight words : make up more than 50% of most texts for early readers

What to do?

Introduce new words and use them regularly.

Use more difficult words in conversation swapping them in and out with a simpler understanding of the word. Eg. My friend made me laugh hysterically. She made me laugh madly/crazily/hysterically.

Can your child use other information on the page eg. images, other words, graphs etc to determine the meaning of the word?

Play synonym games

Practice using a thesaurus with your older child.

a	friend	it	run	upon
after	from	like	said	two
again	gave	little	saw	up
and	get	looked	say	us
at	girl	love	school	use
away	give	made	see	very
because	goes	make	she	was
been	good	me	should	we
before	had	mum	so	went
big	have	my	stayed	were
boy	he	not	that	what
by	her	of	the	when
came	him	off	their	where
come	his	on	them	which
could	how	one	then	who
dad	I	our	there	why
didn't	if	out	they	will
do	in	over	this	with
down	into	people	to	you
for	is	play	too	your

4. Fluency

Skills that build reading fluency in young children;

- strong phonic decoding skills
- an expanding bank of high frequency words recognised at sight
- the amount of time that children spend reading books at an appropriate level

The more children read, the better they are at understanding and reading with speed and accuracy.

Fluency enables readers to quickly span the gap between recognising a word and understanding its meaning. Since fluent readers no longer need to concentrate on decoding the words on a page, they can enjoy the freedom of focusing on the *meaning* conveyed by words and sentences.

Fluency is something that comes as a child develops their phonemic awareness, phonics skills and vocabulary.

What to do?

Regular reading practice is essential to developing reading fluency.

Reading aloud regularly to your child can provide them with a vocal model to help them understand what fluent reading sounds like.

If your child is getting bogged down with individual words then move to a text that enables them to experience better fluency and build up from there.

5. Reading Comprehension (or Understanding Texts)

Great readers are deeply immersed in the stories they read. They visualise the characters, they hear the dialogue in their heads, and they imagine details beyond the borders of the page. Great readers think about what is happening in a story and share the emotional journey of the characters.

In nonfiction books, great readers gain new information, increase their vocabulary, and link what they read with other sources of information in order to deepen their level of understanding of new concepts and topics.

These are all indicators that your child has a full and rich comprehension of the texts they read. It is a complex skill that requires time and practice to develop fully, but inevitably reaps great rewards. It's no secret that reading for meaning is the ultimate goal of learning to read.

Comprehension is a skill that will not only affect a child's future reading ability, but also their academic ability throughout school and beyond.

What to do?

Encouraging your child to talk about what they read is a great way to both monitor how much they understand and improve their comprehension skills.

Encourage your child to make connections with the text. Do they relate to the main character? Have you heard/read something similar before?

Get your child to summarise what they have read.

Ask them what are the key messages in the story?

Read the same story with your child and get them to ask you questions about the story.

For the older reader, ask them inferential questions from the text (information that cannot be taken directly from the text).

Bibliography and further reading

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