

Introduction to Reading

Congratulations on your decision to assist students with learning how to be the best reader they can be! It's going to be exciting, rewarding and awesome! Below are some introductory facts about reading.

The 5 Key Areas of Reading

Research has shown that good readers excel in five specific areas. These 5 skills are the major things you will be working on with the student you are tutoring.

Phonemic Awareness- ability to hear and distinguish sounds in spoken words and sentences.

- Begins with being able to distinguish words. Bad is different from Dad, or elephant is longer than mouse.
- Then moves into hearing different word parts. Chicken has two syllables, Or Mouse and house rhyme because they sound the same at the end.
- Finally students learn to distinguish between individual sounds like beginning, middle and end sounds. For instance, "What do you hear at the beginning of the word dog?" [d]. "Do you know any other words that start with the same sound?" Dad, door, duck, etc...

**No part of phonemic awareness has anything to do with letters. If we can't hear the sounds, there is no point in confusing things with the introduction of letters.

Phonics/Decoding- Matching sounds with the alphabetic symbol or letter, ability to connect the symbol to the sound.

- Begins first with the consonants and short vowels. We have all seen our children sounding out words, they are matching what they see on the page to the sound that each letter makes.
- A large part of decoding can become confusing as we begin to see vowel combinations, ea for instance doesn't say [e] like in elephant and [a] like in apple, instead it says {e} like in egret, that 'a' doesn't say anything.
- As words become more complex students benefit from learning words by sight, also called sight words as well as learn about specific letter combinations, such as th, sh, ch, wh, and long vowel patters like ee, ea, ie, ai, ou, etc...

Vocabulary- Knowing and understanding a variety of words

As text gets more difficult we encounter words that we can decode but we have no idea what they mean. If we don't understand the words, how can we comprehend the text? There are lots of vocabulary strategies which are explored in the vocabulary section.

Fluency- Rhythm and intonation in reading passages, recognition of pauses and stresses in written works and continuous, fluid reading

Fluency is closely linked to comprehension, but there are many times when a child sounds great, decodes perfectly, but doesn't understand a thing that they read or very little. A fluent reader reads quickly and accurately. Their attention is less on the words and more on the meaning of the text. Signs of fluent reading are changes in pitch when a question mark or exclamation point is found, stresses on appropriate words and a smooth rhythm to reading. When words are being sounded out or decoded, the reading is not fluent, instead it is choppy. The child is spending most of the time focusing on figuring out the words and not on the meaning of the text as a whole. Long pauses or very slow reading are also not signs of fluency.

Fluency is developed in many ways; repeated oral reading of familiar texts is the one method which studies have found to be the most effective. There is no research based evidence at this time to support that silent reading for a sustained amount of time improves fluency, although this is not something I would ever say is not helping a child's reading ability, it is not a strategy for building fluency.

Comprehension- Being able to understand what has been read and draw conclusions and predictions from this information

Signs of comprehension include the ability to retell what was read, relate personally to texts, infer meaning from texts and develop questions about what was read. There are specific comprehension strategies for before, during and after reading. There are many different ways to develop comprehension skills that are discussed in the comprehension section.

Comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading, but it cannot occur until phonemic awareness and decoding in particular are mastered, even in low-level books, which is why it is so important that students read books that are at their individual level.

Reading Levels

Independent- A text the student can read alone without difficulty decoding or comprehending, fluent reading of appropriate leveled text with little unknown vocabulary. A text that is at the student's independent level should be an easy read. Stumbling on one word per page is okay if there are quite a few words/page, but if the page has only three words, much of the meaning of the text lies in that one word.

Instructional- student reads with some assistance in using comprehension, decoding, and vocabulary acquisition strategies. Not a frustrating level, perhaps 3-5 difficult words per page depending on the level.

Frustration- The student spends so much time trying to figure out words that no meaning is drawn from what is being read. There is no point in reading a frustrating text, this would be a perfect book to listen to, but not to help a student learn to read.

Tips for Literacy Tutors

Getting to your session

1. *Be on time*- Arrive a few minutes before the session begins and be sure to sign in at the school office each time.
2. *Be prepared*- Make sure plans for the session and materials you need are ready. If you need materials from the classroom teacher, it would be beneficial to speak about how this can work for both of you, sometimes things can be prepared ahead of time so that you have time to go over it before you begin.
3. *Be committed*- Once you have begun working with a student, remain with the student throughout the year unless there are specific reasons that this isn't appropriate.

While you're with a student

1. *Be diligent*- Work from the beginning of the session to the end of the session.
2. *Be positive*- Praise goes a long way with learners who struggle in reading. Provide positive feedback when giving corrections rather than emphasizing that something is wrong, instead of saying "no" when a student makes a mistake, instead something like, "does that sound right," or "does that make sense" is received more positively by the student.
3. *Be patient*- Show learners that you care about them through your commitment and encouragement, if a text is a struggle, you may want to speak to the teacher about a more appropriately leveled text, stay with the student where they are rather than pushing them to a frustration level.
4. *Be precise*- Provide clear and direct instructions.
5. *Be innovative*- Do your best to keep tutoring sessions dynamic and fun. Try new things, ask the student for feedback.
6. Take notes on progress- Gather performance data on a regular basis, record difficult words, new sight words, tough vocabulary, or missed comprehension to share with the teacher.

When you finish the session

7. Communicate with the teacher- depending on the class schedule, you may have time to talk with the classroom teacher or you may not. If you don't, write down a quick note about how things went and how the student performed.
8. Organize materials for next time- Get together what you'll need for next time, if you need a new book or you have an idea about a task, make copies or write a note to the teacher.

Reading Together

Before Reading

1. **Look at the cover-** discuss the pictures, the title, and encourage the student to make predictions about what the book will be about. Preparing for the topic helps student's activate their background knowledge. Background knowledge assists students in relating to the text and comprehending what they read. This base knowledge will assist the student when getting to words or ideas they don't know because they already have a place to begin from.
2. **Preview any tough or important vocabulary-** If you have time to go through the book, you can pick out words you think might be tough, or you can talk about what you think you'll be reading about. If a book is about a farm, ask the student what type of words they think they will see, most likely animal names and farm buildings such as barns or fields. Discussing words before reading prepares the student's mind for the words they will be reading.
3. **Preview any unique text structures-** Look at any text structures such as a table of contents, glossary, headings or footnotes and discuss what each structure is.

During Reading

1. **Model reading strategies-** Ask questions, re-read, make connections to what is in the book. Specific strategies can be found in each of the five sections on reading skills.
2. **Monitor student's comprehension-** At the end of pages or paragraphs or sections, ask the student questions about what they read including who is in the book, why they did something, what they might be feeling, what they think will happen next.
3. **Assist with decoding-** When a student is struggling on a word, ask the student, "what do we do when we get to a word we don't know?" The student should have some strategies, if not, model one for them, explain exactly what you do when you get to a word you don't know. Celebrate when they get the word.

After Reading

1. **Review the text-** Ask the student questions about what they just read, what part they liked, what surprised them, what they learned, etc...
2. **Make Comparisons and Connections-** Discuss what the book makes the child think about, if they have ever felt the same way as the character, if it reminds them of another book or movie or TV show
3. **Discuss the problem/solution-** Discuss what the problem was and how it was solved, what else might have worked, etc...

Group Reading Methods-

When reading with a student, it doesn't always have to be just the student reading. Reading together or taking turns also assists students especially if they are tired or not fully engaged. Listening to a story or another person read reinforces listening comprehension, which in turn transfers to reading comprehension. The student should be doing his/her fair share of reading, but there are numerous ways to have them involved.

Choral Reading- The readers all read at the same time

Echo Reading- The instructor reads a sentence first, then the student repeats the sentence as an echo

Semi-Echo Reading- The tutor reads $\frac{3}{4}$ of the passage or sentence and the student re-reads the whole thing ($\frac{1}{4}$ on his/her own)

Shared Reading- The tutor and the child take turns, each reading a page or a sentence and switching off.

Paraphrasing- The tutor reads a paragraph and the student summarizes the paragraph.

Cloze Reading- The tutor or student reads independently, but stops randomly in the sentence. The non-reader has to read the word that is stopped at. Be sure that you stop before a word you know the student can read independently. This reinforces following along with the reader.

Popcorn Reading- Like cloze reading, the reader begins reading and chooses a place to stop, but when there are more than 2 people total, in popcorn reading, the reader stops, says "popcorn" and a person in the group's name. IE: If John is reading he would read a sentence and then three words of the next sentence and say, "popcorn Mary". Then Mary picks up where John left off.

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness has to do with sounds and the ability to manipulate sounds. Once a child understands and can hear sounds in language, they can understand that words are made up of sounds, and rearranging sounds creates different words with different meanings. Phonemic awareness is taught without written words, letters, or text.

Some activities to reinforce phonemic awareness include:

Rhyming Games-

There are hundreds of different rhyming games and songs out there. These can include clapping or snapping, or simply just creating strings of rhyming words until you can't think of any more words that rhyme. Students enjoy the challenge of finding as many words as possible that rhyme.

Rhyming games can also be done through picture sorts where students sort pictures into rhyming groups. IE: the student has 10 pictures and sorts them into a pile with pictures of a mouse and a house as one group and a pen, hen, men, number ten, in another group.

Making up silly poems or putting new words in nursery rhymes that kids already know is also fun.

Syllable games-

Clapping out a word helps students hear syllables. Syllable games can be played by gathering objects around the room and sorting them into groups by number of syllables or gathering pictures and doing the same. Students also enjoy the challenge of finding the longest item in the room or the item whose name has the most number of syllables.

Individual Sound games-

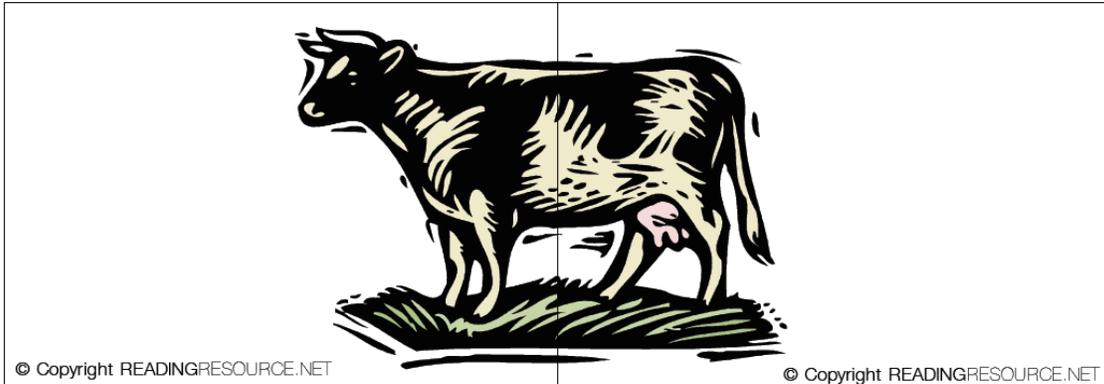
Students learn to pay attention to the beginning, middle and end sounds of words. Beginning sounds are learned first as they are the easiest to hear. After beginning sounds, students progress to end sounds and then lastly to middle sounds. Middle sounds are often the most difficult because they tend to be vowels.

In sound games student say or find items/words that start or end the same, or have the same middle sound. For instance, if you're doing a search for things that begin like pencil, the student might gather paper, pins, people, Peter, or even play dough from the classroom. Students can also sort pictures by individual sound.

Blending and segmenting games-

Once students can hear individual sounds they can practice putting sounds together and pulling them apart. Here's an example of segmenting...

Two Phonemes (Sounds)



A student can be given a picture or a word, such as cow and then they are instructed to pull it apart into the separate sounds. In this picture, there are two boxes for the two sounds, [c] and [ow]. Thinking about bubble gum the stretches out the sounds can help students learn to segment.

Blending is putting together different sounds. A teacher or tutor gives the child individual sounds and then asks the child to put them together and figure out the word. For instance I might say, "let's practice putting sounds together, can you guess this word? [f] [o] [x]- Say the sounds back to me and then see if you can guess the word." The student would then say, "[f] [o] [x]- fox."

Here's an example of a phonemic awareness song...

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Word

Sung to the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star"

Twinkle, twinkle, little word
What's the new word to be heard?
If I take off the **FIRST** sound
What new word will now be found?
Take the /sh/ right off of **shout**.
Now the new word sounds like...
_____. (out)

Twinkle, twinkle, little word
What's the new word to be heard?
If I take off the **LAST** sound
What new word will now be found?
Take the /er/ right off of **hammer**.
Now the new word sounds like...
_____. (ham)

Phonics/Decoding

Phonics also known as decoding is a student's ability to match the sounds they know to letters. Decoding begins with learning to identify letters by name and then to match the letter sound to the letter name.

Letter Name Identification-

When teaching letter identification, it is important to explicitly tell students that this is a letter and it's name is _____. To reinforce this, students can go on letter searches throughout magazines, the classroom walls, a page in a book, you name it, to identify the letters they see. Tracing, cutting, coloring, anything tactile helps students internalize the shape of letters as they are learning about them. They might circle all the letter m's they can find on a page. Music also helps students when learning about letters of the alphabet.

Students sometimes learn the letters of their name more easily because they have seen them before. Also letters in family words like mom and dad can be good places to start. Research shows that letter identification is best learned with repetition and explicit teaching. Talk about the shapes of letters, what makes them unique and explore, explore, explore and practice, practice, practice.

Letter Sounds

Students also need to be explicitly told that the letter m, makes the sound [m]. When teaching letter sounds, research shows that having a visual of the letter along with a word that has the letter and a picture of the word is most effective. Students might have a worksheet with the letter m, the word moon, and a picture of a moon. And then they can find pictures that match the letter m, for instance circling letter m's and the pictures of a mouse, moon, monkey, and mitten. They also might hunt for letter m words and letter m pictures or objects in the classroom.

Letter Combinations-

Not all letter combinations are phonetic, they don't sound out, so it's important to explicitly teach these combinations. These include beginning blends such as wh, th, sh, ch and vowel combinations like ea, ee, ai, ou, and other long vowel sounds such as ow. Other combinations worthy of explicit teaching are y controlled vowels, oy, ay, ey, and r controlled vowels- or, ar, er, ir.

Here are some basic rules to remember:

Soft c- when c is followed by an e, y, or i, it sounds like s...circle, cycle, century

Soft g- when g is followed by an e, y, or i, it sounds like j...giraffe, germ, gym

Letter v- if word ends with a silent e preceded by v, the vowel is short- give, live

Long Vowels- When two vowels go walking, the first one does the talking...

Decoding

Once students have a strong basis for letter names and letter sounds, they are ready to apply these skills to reading. Students begin reading by sounding out simple words, through reading common sight words like the, was, and, said, and reading chunks of words such as those that include special vowel combinations. All the blending and segmenting games played help a ton as students begin sounding out words.

Decoding Strategies

Use a Picture Clue- Have the student look at the first letter and then look at the picture. Are there any pictures of things that start the same. Any clues for the word.

Sound it Out-If the word is phonetic, the student should be able to sound out the word, although this isn't a guarantee because many words are not phonetic.

- What do you see at the beginning of the word? Break it up into pieces, then in the middle, and then the end.

Look for parts you know- If the word is not phonetic, there may be a part of the word that you know. Many words have similar endings or chunks.

Connect to a word you know- Does it look like another word you know? Does it begin the same as another word or end the same?

- Do you see a part you already know? (IE: an –am or –ab) You can even cover up part of the word to help them see the part they know.

Use context clues- Read the rest of the sentence and then cover up the word you don't know and figure out the word that would make sense in the tough word's place. Perhaps it's a synonym of that word, one that means the same thing.

Re-read the sentence- Re-read the sentence to see if you missed a clue before or if you get an idea when re-reading.

Always when decoding, once the word is figured out it helps to read the word again and then go back to the beginning of the sentence. Our short term memory was just spent trying to figure out the word and we have most likely forgotten what we just read before the word.

Sight Word Acquisition

Knowing what we do about reading and long and short term memory, we know that the more time students spend on decoding and sounding out words, the less they can put their mind to enjoying and understanding books. One way to help students get more out of reading is to help them learn some words by sight, words they don't have to sound out, words they can just read and know automatically.

Sight words can be learned in many ways, but one way that works well is just through practice. Flash cards can be used to learn important words as well as repeated reading. The English language has many simple words that are more common than others. Fry's word list, is a list of the first 300 most common words in written English. Practicing and getting to know some of these words as sight words will go a long way.

Fry's first 100 words.

the		or		will		number
of		one		up		no
and		had		other		way
a		by		about		could
to		words		out		people
in		but		many		my
is		not		then		than
you		what		them		first
that		all		these		water
it		were		so		been
he		we		some		called
was		when		her		who
for		your		would		oil
on		can		make		sit
are		said		like		now
as		there		him		find
with		use		into		long
his		an		time		down
they		each		has		day
I		which		look		did
at		she		two		get
be		do		more		come
this		how		write		made
have		their		go		may
from		if		see		part

Fluency

Research shows that children develop fluency through repeated reading of independent text. Practicing repeated reading helps students confidently explore using intonation and inflection in their voice as they read. Fluency is not just reading quickly, it is reading quickly with accuracy and personality.

The key to effective repeated reading is feedback. So, when reading a text with a student, be sure to model and remind the student to make pauses at periods, or to pay attention to meaning while reading, by asking what happened in the text.

When practicing fluency, students can read letters, phrases or chunks of words in place of a text. Monitoring fluency and setting fluency goals makes fluency practice purposeful. To practice fluency, students must have an independent level text to read, one where they have 95% or better accuracy. Then time the student reading for one minute, marking any mistakes the student makes. At the end of one minute have the student stop reading and mark in the text where the student stops. Count the number of words read in that minute and subtract the number of mistakes from the number of words read to calculate the number of words read correctly in one minute.

If for instance, Tom read 25 words correctly today, the next time you meet, you might set a goal of 27 words. Teachers have annual goals for reading fluency and as a tutor you can definitely find these out and be part of practicing to reach that goal.

Comprehension

Comprehension refers to a student's ability to understand and make sense of what they read. In addition, if a student comprehends they can also make use of what is read and apply it to new situations, they can learn from what they read.

Readers with comprehension skills exhibit many key features. They self-correct when they mis-read a word. They recognize when something they read doesn't make sense and they re-read to fix that. They also ask internal questions throughout the time they are reading. They make predictions and also inferences. If the story is about a fire, they can infer that it is dangerous and also hot, without having to read that it is hot.

As tutors, we can assist student's in comprehending by modeling comprehension strategies such as predicting, visualizing, activating background knowledge, and questioning, and can also direct students to use specific strategies as they are learning about them. Here are some things you can do...

- Before reading it is important to **look at the cover** of a book, figure out and **make predictions** about what the book is about.
- It is also important to **activate background knowledge** or "activate your schema" before reading. In our brain the details we know about a particular subject are stored in what is known as schema. Neurons are linked in their firing with other neurons for the topic. When reading about oranges, we activate our schema about oranges. Think of everything we know about an orange; it's a fruit, it grows on a tree, I can smell the aroma and I know that I don't like orange marmalade. By activating schema you fire the neurons for the subject. When we add new information about oranges, it connects to these fired neurons, expanding our schema. When we activate our schema we have a better chance of putting new information into our long-term memory.
- Before reading we also **set a purpose for reading**. This changes the way we read. If we need to find information we read differently from if we are just reading for pleasure. Setting a purpose brings focus to what we must actively be doing while reading. It reminds us if we are looking for something in particular or what we want to be learning.
- During reading it is important to **make connections with the text**. We can make connections to personal experiences, We can also make a connection to another text or media, a text to text connection. The other connections are text to nature, text to world, and text to idea. Text to idea is linking something we read to a well known concept such as love.
- During reading we also learn about how to **use text structures** like headings, table of contents', glossaries, and indexes. Knowing about these structures help us make sense of what we read.

- We also **ask questions while reading**. Most common is, did that make sense? I also ask questions as I'm reading like, why did that happen? Why would he do that? How does she know? What would have happened if?
- **Retelling or summarizing** are also comprehension strategies and indicators at the same time. After reading or during reading it helps to review what has been read. If students have difficulty retelling, they aren't completely understanding what they have read. You can practice retelling by having students retell at intervals in the story, maybe at the end of a page or at the end of a paragraph.
- **Forming mental images-** Throughout reading students who comprehend make a mental image of what it is that they are reading. They can see the setting, with trees or glistening water, they can see what each character looks like and what events unfold.

Activities to support comprehension

Illustrate the story

Draw or write about the beginning, middle and end of the story

Write or discuss the problem in the story, how it was solved, and other ways that it could have been solved

Draw or discuss the main character

Make a Venn diagram to compare two characters, or two books, or two settings

Figure out and discuss the main idea of a text

More than anything, talking about what has been read, gets kids thinking about reading as a purposeful task. If you can make it fun, you can help spread a love of reading!