

Four Stages of Reading Development

Ideas for helping children learn at each stage.

1. Sound Stage: Learning to hear sounds in words.

- Teach the sounds crisply without adding an “uh” on the end of consonants.
- Recognize the “schwa” (or the lazy “UH”) sound as the most common vowel sound in the English language.
- Use music and chants to speed up learning of the sounds. (Phonics By Spelling Books/CDs)
- Teach all 44 phonetic sounds in preschool, kindergarten and first grade.
- Touch the letters while singing *The ABC Song* for letter recognition. (See *The ABC Song* page)
- Associate the sounds with words in their environment, instead of words that start with the sounds. (For example, the “Hh” sound is made when running hard.)
- Play rhyming games and activities. (Example: It starts like “boat”; It rhymes with “cat”. “bat”)
- Read or memorize predictable readers (books with repetition.)
- Pick out the 44 phonetic sounds from the beginning/middle/end of words using pictures of objects. (See free worksheets on website www.phonicsbyspelling.com)
- Play sound Bingo-type games (Like Phonics By Spelling *Cinco*).
- Teach the difference between vowels and consonants through music.

2. Emerging stage: Blending sounds to start reading.

- Sounding out words in simple reading books.
- Do word-family activities (cat, hat, bat, sat). (See *Phonogram Fun*)
- Sound out 3 letter words with or without pictures (“b” “e” “d” then together “bed”).
- Have child unscramble simple words (use pictures with the separate letters for the word).
- Put different vowels in the middle of consonants (net, not, nut, night).
- Do short vowel /long vowel chant with the silent “e” words (cub/cube).
- Play sight word Bingo or other games (See *Cinco* game).
- Teach sight words in groups with the same vowel sound.

3. Beginning Reader Stage: Reads but requires help.

- Have child read simple sentences.
- Have child unscramble simple sentences.
- Review phonetic sounds and sight words in a simple book. Then have the child read. (*Student Books* help review the sounds by drawing the sound and writing words.)
- Do mini-lessons on letter combinations and their sounds, such as “igh”. (See *Words for Reading Instruction* page and *Phonogram Fun*)
- Do chants with consonant blends (“t”, “r”, “tr”, train, trip, trap). (See *Multi Sound Blends, Book 3*)
- Encourage sounding out words.
- Help child break multi-syllable words into syllables, then sound out.

4. Fluent Reader Stage: Reads independently.

- Reading out loud improves comprehension and expression.
- Read hard books out loud, alternate reading every other paragraph. Easy books are fun and help with fluency. Just right books build vocabulary and independence.
- Reading books with audio CDs builds vocabulary, reading fun and expression.
- Have children explain what’s happening in the story or have them write questions about what is happening in the story to increase comprehension.
- Covering parts of multi-syllable words with your finger helps children sound them out.
- Pick some words in each chapter to look up in the dictionary.