

## Reading Part 2: Helping Your Child Read

By Linda Butler

Reading fluently and understanding what is read are two of the most important and basic tools for learning. In the library's Literacy Center our dedicated volunteers work one-on-one to help children and adults improve their reading.

Here are some things that you can do to help your child improve their reading ability.



### Pre-Reading Literacy Skills

Your child begins learning literacy skills shortly after birth! As your baby listens to your voice, he begins to learn communication skills. He cries and you help him. Soon he reads your facial expressions and responds to them. He also responds to the tone of your voice. By the time your baby is a couple months old, she can focus on simple pictures and shapes in a board book.

Toddlers begin to use words to communicate. They enjoy playing with words. Sharing simple songs and nursery rhymes helps build their vocabulary. Talk with your child wherever and whenever you can. Talk about the various food you're putting in the cart while you're shopping. Talk about your what you're doing while you're doing housework. Find simple picture books and read them with your child. Also talk about the pictures.

Preschoolers want to be like you. They want to write. Give them opportunities to draw and scribble. Invite them to talk about what they've drawn or "written." Soon those scribbles will resemble letters. Help them write their name. Continue reading and sharing books with your child. Come to story times at the Library. Register for the free "1000 Books Before Kindergarten" at the library and read books to your child and earn prizes. Continue to sing and share nursery rhymes with your child.

Older preschoolers enjoy word play. Make up stories together. Help them learn about rhymes. In addition to nursery rhymes, rhyme words together. Even made-up words count: mat, cat, fat, lat, gat, zat...

### Basics for Beginners

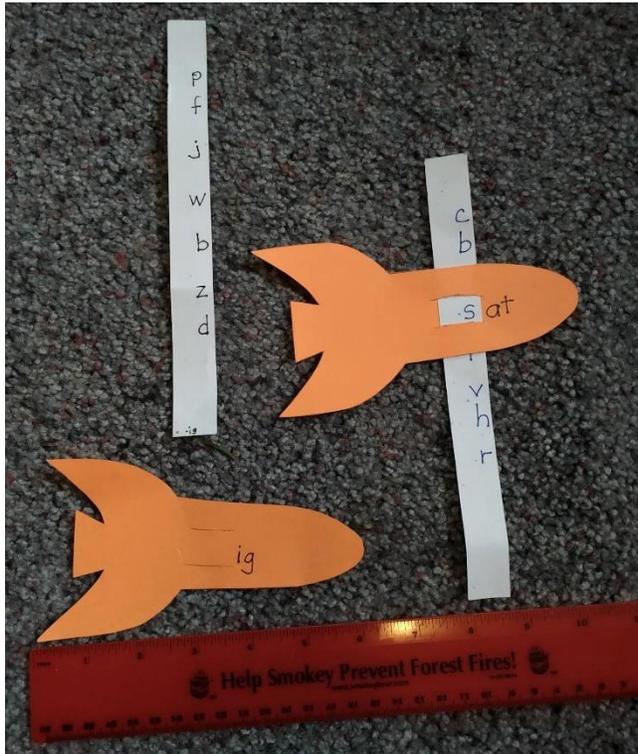
It helps to understand that reading and writing are like using codes. Writing is *encoding* words. You hear a word and use the letters as sound symbols to capture that word onto paper. Reading is *decoding* the words that have been written or printed on paper.

In order to read, a child needs to know how the code works. Phonics is the best way to teach the reading code. Each letter or group of letters makes a particular sound—usually just one, though some—especially vowels—have two or more. Those sounds, or phonemes, combine to form words. "Words" consists of four phonemes—the "wuh" "rrr" duh" and "zzz" sounds.

The simplest phonics books begin with three letter words in the consonant, vowel, consonant pattern (CVC pattern) such as pig, ran, mat. Next come two-letter blends such as the "pl" in plan or the "sk" in

skip. Although they blend together, each separate sound can be heard. Diagraphs are a bit harder, they are 2 or 3 letters that create an entirely different sound, such as the “ch” in chip or the “sh” in wish. Some words are completely irregular and children are taught to memorize them to recognize on sight (and not be sounded out.) For example, we pronounce “said” as “sed.”

Pleasant Grove Library has a variety of early phonics readers available for check out. These come in sets called Kits and include “The McOmer Readers” by Rachel McOmer that come in sets of 5 readers per level; “Bob Books” by Bobby Lynn Maslen; “Phonics Practice Readers” by Modern Curriculum Press.



Another easy to make teaching tool that I used while teaching my children and now with Literacy Center students is “Word Rockets.” I cut a simple rocket shape out of cardstock, use a razor blade or utility knife to make two small cuts where a thin (1/2 x 8 1/2”) slip of paper can be inserted. Each rocket has a word family name listed, and the slip of paper has various beginning sounds. This helps the child learn to read several words quickly and easily.

A list of word families can be found here <https://www.themeasuredmom.com/free-printable-cvc-word-list/>

I find it best to make strips of three-letter CVC words for very beginning readers and a separate strip with blends and diagraphs when they are slightly more advanced.

### Teaching Sight Words

Flash cards are the most common way to build sight word vocabulary. Many teachers in grades K-2 give students lists of sight words to learn. Basic sight word lists can be found here:

<https://cdn.thisreadingmama.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/SightWordLists-ThisReadingMama.pdf>

Print each word onto a small 1 1/2x3” card.

One way to use sight word cards as a review is to have a deck of them and show them, one at a time, to your child. If she gets it right, she keeps it. If she doesn’t, say the word, have her repeat it, then stick it back in your deck (about 3-4 cards down.) Keep going until your child has claimed all of the words and end the session with praise.

Use two copies of each sight word your child needs extra help with and use a group of pairs (5-10pairs or 10-20 cards) to make a memory game. Mix the cards and arrange them face down on a flat surface. Take turns choosing two, turning them back down if they don’t match, keeping the pair if they do.

Making up little games with the word cards can make this more fun. Pile them up and have your child roll a die. The number says how many cards to pick up and read. Use praise when she gets them all right.

This link, [To Teaching Sight Words through Match/Sort/Name/Select](#), will take you to instructions for teaching sight words to students who really struggle with them. This method has helped children who need many repetitions to learn a word, including children with dyslexia, autism, or learning disabilities.

### **Increasing Fluency**

Fluency is the ability to read smoothly with good phrasing and expression. Fluent readers understand and follow punctuation. They can sound out most words smoothly and can generally figure out new words by the context.

Choral reading, reading a short passage together, helps increase fluency. Poetry is great for this. First, read the passage or poem to your child. Read it a bit slower than you normally read aloud. Have him follow along with his finger as you read. Next, read the passage together at the same pace. Have your child match your speed and expression.

A delightful series of books, “You Read to Me, I’ll Read to You” by Mary Ann Hoberman is perfect for choral reading. It is designed so that one reader reads the left-hand side of the page, the other reads the right-hand side of the page and both readers read the central portion in unison. Some of these are available at the Pleasant Grove Library.

Echo reading is similar to choral reading, except you first read a sentence (or short paragraph) aloud and then have your child read the same passage aloud. In choral reading the second reading of the passage is done together, in echo reading the child does the second reading alone.

Reading Mo Willems’ “Elephant and Piggie” books together is another way to read interactively. Have one person be Elephant Gerald and the other be Piggie.

Kids who are older and are practicing reading aloud from chapter books can read with you by taking turns—they read a page, then you read a page. A good way to make sure your child is following along when you are reading is to tell them you’re going to stop on occasion and they need to read the word. Do this from 2-3 times on the page. It builds confidence if you stop on a word you are sure they will know so the reading can continue fluidly.

Children who read independently can be encouraged to read by setting aside time as family reading time. It’s easy—everyone reads. Occasionally snacks can be offered. Or put kids to bed, but let them keep the light on for an extra half hour in order to read. Or, let them have a flashlight to read in bed. Reduce reading stress by removing deadlines, expectations, etc.

Turn on subtitles to TV and movies. Just having the captions there gives your children additional print exposure.

The Pleasant Grove Library Literacy Center provides an hour a week of one on one tutoring to children by trained volunteers. For more information on our program contact [pgliteracycenter@gmail.com](mailto:pgliteracycenter@gmail.com) (Due to Covid-19, Tutoring is currently suspended until the Library has an unrestricted opening.) Feel free to contact us at any time, and we will be in touch as soon as we are able to provide tutoring. If you have questions, please email me. I will try to answer your questions via email or through a future library post.