

READING rockets

Launching Young Readers

Teachers' Guide





Dear Educator,

If reading came naturally, teaching would be a much easier job. Children would learn to read as readily as they learn to speak. Teachers would only need to give students the chance to practice their skills.

But children don't learn to read just from being exposed to books. Reading must be taught. For many children, reading must be taught explicitly and systematically, one small step at a time.

Researchers have made a lot of progress in determining how to teach reading more effectively. For teachers, the challenge is how to use that research to address the needs of your students ... especially children who struggle. That's what **Launching Young Readers** is all about.

In producing our PBS series and this guide, our goal was to bring the reading research to life — and to present it in a way that teachers would find most helpful. This guide includes some research-based principles for teaching reading, a glossary of reading terms, and a list of resources.

Launching Young Readers is part of **Reading Rockets**, a multimedia project that also includes a one-hour documentary, extensive outreach, and a series of teleconferences for educators. We also have a comprehensive Web site, www.ReadingRockets.org, with detailed information about teaching reading and helping children who fall behind. Please visit us on the Web and let us know what you think.

We hope you enjoy the series and this guide. Best wishes on launching successful young readers in your classroom!

Cordially,

Noel Gunther
Executive Director, Reading Rockets

Babies are born with the instinct to speak,
the way spiders are born with the instinct to spin
webs. You don't need to train babies to speak;
they just do. But reading is different.

— S t e v e n P i n k e r , M I T



WRITTEN BY READING ROCKETS ADVISOR DR. LOUISE SPEAR-SWERLING

Reading Rockets is a service of WETA, Washington, D.C.'s flagship public television station, with funding provided by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

This guide was created by WETA, which is solely responsible for its content.

Reading Rockets: Launching Young Readers is a co-production of WETA and Rubin Tarrant Productions.

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Many things we need can wait. The child cannot.
Now is the time his bones are formed, his mind
developed. To him we cannot say tomorrow,
his name is today.

— Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral



About the Television Series

Reading Rockets: Launching Young Readers is a public TV series designed for teachers, parents, caregivers, and anyone else interested in helping children learn to read. Based on the latest research findings, the series consists of five 30-minute programs that explore the stages of reading that every child goes through. It features the country's top reading experts and model classrooms.

Each program presents six or seven closely linked stories, illustrating the distinct stages of how children learn to read and how adults can help them. Hosted by popular personalities such as Fred Rogers, the programs each feature a short segment on a prominent children's book author.

Program 1: The Roots of Reading looks at the earliest stages of literacy and offers practical advice for parents, child care providers, and kindergarten teachers. Hosted by children's television personality Fred Rogers and featuring children's book author and illustrator Rosemary Wells (*Timothy Goes to School*).

Program 2: Sounds and Symbols focuses on two critical skills that early readers need for decoding the printed word: phonemic awareness and phonics. Hosted by actress Annette Bening and featuring Norman Bridwell, creator of *Clifford the Big Red Dog*.

Program 3: Fluent Reading highlights successful strategies for helping children become fluent readers and shows how early testing and intervention can help struggling readers. Hosted by television personalities Deborah Norville and Theo from **Between the Lions** and featuring celebrated children's author William Joyce (*George Shrinks*).

Program 4: Writing and Spelling offers successful methods that encourage children to write, build vocabulary, and develop spelling skills. Hosted by actress Vivica A. Fox and featuring children's book author Kate Duke (*Aunt Isabel Tells a Good One*).

Program 5: Reading for Meaning presents effective strategies to help children understand and care about what they read. Hosted by teacher and author Frank McCourt (*Angela's Ashes*) and featuring award-winning children's book author Walter Dean Myers (*Harlem*).

The **Reading Rockets: Launching Young Readers** television series is available for purchase in either VHS or DVD-ROM format. For information, log on to www.ReadingRockets.org or call 800-228-4630. Additional copies of this guide can be downloaded free of charge at www.ReadingRockets.org.



Why Is Early Reading Achievement So Important?

Reading achievement is central to success in school. Difficulty in reading soon affects almost every aspect of a child's academic performance. It is important, therefore, to identify and address problems with reading as soon as possible. Studies have shown that most struggling readers who are identified early and taught appropriately can learn to read on grade level. That is one of the most promising findings of recent reading research.

Without early identification and intervention, children who struggle during these early grades typically continue to have reading problems. In the absence of an effective intervention, these students tend to fall farther behind their peers with each passing year as the demands of the curriculum become more intense. Poor readers are also at increased risk for many other problems, such as:

- >> Emotional and behavioral problems
- >> Substance abuse
- >> Dropping out of school
- >> Poverty and low achievement as adults

Although older children and adults often benefit from intervention, reading problems become harder to remediate with age.

Learning to Read and Write

Speaking a language comes naturally to most children. Reading, by contrast, is not "natural." The *process* of learning to read is far different from the process of learning to speak.

Current research indicates that **language abilities** (the ability to speak and understand a language) and not **visual perceptual abilities** (the ability to visually distinguish between objects, such as the letters in words) serve as the essential foundation of reading and writing. Consequently, children who lack oral language competence in English are at increased risk for difficulty in learning to read and write.

Much of this guide will focus on the specific abilities that are important to achievement in reading and writing, such as:

- >> Phonemic awareness (sensitivity to the speech sounds in spoken words)
- >> Vocabulary knowledge
- >> The ability to read individual words accurately and rapidly

Reading and writing are interrelated, but for clarity and ease of discussion they are dealt with separately in this guide and in the television series.

The Nature of Written English

Because English is an alphabetic language — that is, the letters used in writing generally relate to sounds in spoken English words — beginning readers need a high degree of sensitivity to individual sounds in words. This sensitivity is not an easy or automatic achievement for many children.

The English alphabetic system is relatively complex. Many English letters can have more than one sound (e.g., the letter “a” sounds different in “cat,” “cave,” “ball,” and “dark”). To decode unfamiliar words, a reader must pay attention to letter patterns as well as the individual letters. For instance, it is easier for beginning readers to decode the word “dark” if they know that the printed letters “ar” usually sound like /ar/ as in “car,” “farm,” “spark,” “barn,” etc. (The presentation of letters within slash marks is intended to represent the letters’ sound rather than letter names.)

English is also a **morphophonemic** system. Many **letter patterns** convey information about the meaning of a word as well as the way it sounds. The **root morpheme** is the part of the word that contains the most meaning. For example, the root morpheme “vis” in words such as “vision,” “visible,” “vista,” and “visual” indicates that these words are semantically related and involve the process of seeing. The same principle applies to **prefixes** (the beginning of a word — for example: “un-” which means “not”) and to **suffixes** (the end of a word, such as “-ology,” which means “the study of”). In all of these examples, word parts can be used not only to help children read words but also to help predict the meaning of unknown words and to help students detect the semantic relationships between words.

Correct spelling also makes it easier to grasp the meaning of words. Meaning can be revealed if words are spelled properly and obscured if they are not. For example, it is impossible to hear that the second vowel in “competition” is spelled with an “e,” but seeing the word spelled correctly makes it easier to recognize the relationship of “competition” to its root word, “compete.” And as students become more adept in looking for — and recognizing — letter patterns, they are likely to become better spellers and more fluent readers, too.

Instruction in spelling-sound relationships and phonics is indispensable for beginning readers and spellers, but to be effective beyond the earliest stages of learning to read, instruction must also incorporate the teaching of common letter patterns and morphemic relationships.

Why Some Children Learn to Read Easily While Others Struggle

There are many factors contributing to a child’s success in reading. Learning to read comes more easily to some children than to others, just as children differ in how easily they learn mathematics, play sports, or master a musical instrument. Children are individuals who have different ability levels in different areas.

Equally important, some children start school with far more exposure to language than others. Children who have been exposed to rich oral language, who have already learned letters and their sounds, and who have been read to regularly are far more likely to make progress quickly once they start school.

Where that foundation is not in place, children are at risk for falling behind. Children with limited exposure to oral and written language are more likely to struggle in school. Students who are learning English as a second language may also need extra help. And the majority of children with learning disabilities also experience difficulty learning to read. Students with reading disabilities must work much harder and require more intensive instruction than their non-disabled peers in order to learn the same material.

The good news is that we now know that almost every child can become a successful reader with the help of effective instruction. Parental involvement, effective teaching, good schools, and community support all play key roles in children’s literacy development.

>> Parents can build the foundation for reading achievement by reading and talking to their children from the time that they are infants. As children begin to speak, parents should engage in meaningful discussions in which children are encouraged to tell stories and to ask and answer questions that involve more than a yes-or-no response. Activities such as playing

word games, discussing letters and letter sounds, and introducing children to the library are also important. Parents should convey that reading and writing are valued activities by allowing children to see them engaged in those activities.

»» **Effective teachers** are:

- Knowledgeable about the nature of written English, about abilities important in learning to read, and about typical literacy development
- Skilled at teaching important literacy skills to a wide range of children
- Ready to broaden their knowledge through professional development
- Interested in exposing their students to excellent children's books
- Able to motivate children to get excited about reading

Good teachers make an enormous difference in children's reading achievement. A skilled teacher is especially important in promoting achievement among children at risk for reading problems.

»» **Good schools** provide support for reading instruction by allocating sufficient time for reading in the school day, by adopting a comprehensive curriculum of instruction that addresses all of the skills important in learning to read, and by making an unequivocal commitment **to serve the needs of a wide range of children.**

»» **Communities** can play a role by providing sufficient funding for public schools and libraries and by engaging in volunteer and community programs related to reading.

The Role of Motivation

Most children enter school eager to learn and wanting to please adults. Motivated children try harder and learn more quickly. But children who struggle with reading can lose motivation rapidly — as early as first grade. Because effort and practice are important in learning any complex skill, loss of motivation tends to compound the problems of struggling readers.

There is a direct relationship between low motivation and low achievement. In first and second grade, when so much classroom time is focused on reading out loud, children who struggle stand out in the classroom. They often become discouraged, and when that happens, they tend to fall even further behind. Instead of getting the extra help and practice they need, they often do anything they can to avoid having to read.

Low achievement is not the only factor affecting motivation. Children who read well can lose interest in reading because they lack access to stimulating books or to books that are at an appropriate level of difficulty. And children do not necessarily have equal motivation for reading and writing; for example, a child who struggles with the basic motor demands of handwriting may be an avid reader but may dislike writing.

Research suggests that adults can foster children's motivation to read and write. If low motivation is associated with achievement difficulties, addressing those underlying problems is essential. For all children, it's important to provide access to a wide array of reading materials matched to the child's interests, reading levels, and experience. Teachers can foster motivation by giving children choices in reading and writing activities; by encouraging them to share favorite books, authors, and their own writings with each other; and by establishing a positive classroom environment that supports progress in all children.

Children Who Are at Risk for Reading Difficulties

Some children are at increased risk for reading difficulties. The more risk factors a child has, the more likely it is that he or she will encounter reading problems, but the presence of even one indicator suggests an increase in risk status. Being at risk does not mean that the child is doomed to be a poor reader, but it does indicate that he or she may need especially close monitoring and prompt intervention to prevent reading difficulties.

A list of risk factors follows. Please note that the list is not all-inclusive and should be interpreted with reference to age and grade expectations.

Reading Risk Indicators by Grade Level

Risk indicators for preschoolers:

- **A history of significant language delay or disorder**, even if the child currently appears to have age-appropriate language abilities
- **Limited exposure to oral and written language** before beginning school
- **A native language other than English**
- **A disability** that affects oral language acquisition, such as a hearing impairment
- A significant history of **reading difficulties in close family members**
- **Oral language difficulties** (poor vocabulary, listening comprehension, or grammatical abilities for the child's age)

Risk indicators for children in kindergarten and first grade:

All of the above, plus the following:

- **Poor phonological/phonemic awareness** (inability to rhyme, identify initial and final sounds of spoken words, or to blend and segment one-syllable spoken words)
- **Lack of familiarity with basic print concepts** such as (1) print conveys meaning, (2) print is read left to right, and (3) words are separated by spaces
- **Poor knowledge of common letter-sound relationships**
- **Difficulty decoding** unfamiliar words at the middle or end of first grade, especially as measured by reading of nonsense words such as “zat”

Risk indicators for children in second and third grade:

All of the above, plus the following:

- **Ongoing difficulties** with decoding of unfamiliar words
- **Slow, labored, dysfluent reading** in grade-appropriate text
- **Poor reading comprehension**
- **Poor spelling**

How to Help an At-Risk Child

If a child's history suggests increased risk for reading difficulties, it is critical that he or she:

1. **Receive prompt, appropriate intervention** for any ongoing difficulties, such as language or hearing problems in the preschool years,
2. Receive a **comprehensive, high-quality program of early reading instruction**, and
3. **Be monitored** closely for any signs of reading difficulties in the early grades so that these difficulties may be addressed as quickly as possible.

These practices are helpful for all children but especially for children at risk. **Research shows that excellent instruction, coupled with ongoing monitoring and assessment of progress, can prevent reading problems in many children.**

Comprehensive, high-quality instruction means that instruction addresses all of the basic abilities that are important in learning to read and write — phonemic awareness, knowledge of sounds for letters and letter patterns, word decoding, language comprehension and vocabulary, reading comprehension, spelling, and written expression. And it does so in a manner that is consistent with research-based principles (e.g., that the instruction is explicit and systematic).

Knowledgeable teachers and first-rate pre-service teacher preparation are vital for providing children with this kind of instruction. However, to meet the wide range of children's needs that exist in any classroom, teachers also require support — the support of involved parents and administrators, adequate instructional resources, adequate allocation of time in the school day, access to specialists, and ongoing professional development opportunities.

Finally, even with excellent instruction and parental support, some children may continue to experience difficulties in reading or writing. For these children, more intensive and sometimes long-term interventions — including, in some cases, special education services — may be needed. But high-quality classroom instruction and short-term early intervention can go a long way toward preventing or at least ameliorating many reading problems.



Program 1: The Roots of Reading

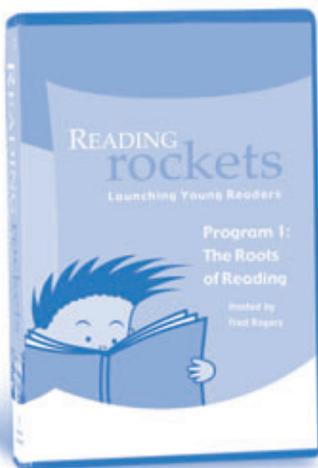
Program Description: **The Roots of Reading** looks at the earliest stages of literacy and offers practical advice for parents and concrete suggestions for child care providers and kindergarten teachers. The program is hosted by Fred Rogers of the PBS series **Mister Rogers' Neighborhood**. Features a segment with children's book author and illustrator Rosemary Wells (*Timothy Goes to School*). You'll also see:

- >> Parents playing alphabet games and reading and writing interactively with their children
- >> Scientists measuring infants' amazing ability to distinguish between speech sounds
- >> Reading experts explaining the importance of early exposure to language and print
- >> Child care providers learning how to "read" toddlers' attempts at communication

Key Topic: Foundations of literacy — oral language competence, print awareness, and phonological awareness.

Summary of Key Ideas

Long before they start kindergarten, most children have acquired certain kinds of language and literacy experiences and have developed abilities that serve as a foundation for learning to read in school. These abilities include oral language competence, print awareness, and phonological awareness.





A child can learn that a book is an opportunity for pleasurable interaction with parents. And parents can learn that sharing a book with an infant is a source of pleasure, a source of opportunities to enjoy the infant and see the infant learn. And this can happen in the first twelve months of life.

DR. RUSS WHITEHURST, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF EDUCATION FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND IMPROVEMENT, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Print awareness (basic print concepts) involves children’s knowledge about print and about how it is typically organized on a page. Through everyday experiences with print, many preschoolers gradually acquire such basic print concepts as the understanding that print conveys meaning; the idea that it is not the pictures but the print that is “read”; the knowledge that words are composed of letters; and the understanding that print is read left to right and top to bottom on a page. Many preschoolers acquire some familiarity with letters, especially those in their names.

Phonological awareness involves the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate larger parts of spoken language, such as words, syllables, onsets, and phonemes.

Many preschoolers can rhyme words, recognize some words with similar sounds, and appreciate tongue twisters. (A specialized type of phonological awareness called **phonemic awareness** typically comes later in grades K–1 and will be discussed in Program 2.)

Parental involvement* is especially critical during these early years. By reading to children early and often, parents provide a foundation for later reading achievements. Books should be rich in language and vocabulary, have attractive and colorful illustrations, and be well matched to the child’s interests and stage of language development. Parents can also promote literacy development by discussing word meanings, drawing the preschooler’s attention to print in the environment, and playing rhyming and other word games.

List of Typical Achievements

The following is a list of typical preschool achievements necessary for later literacy learning:

- » Age-appropriate **oral language competence**, including grammatical competence and vocabulary knowledge, in English.**
- » **An interest in books** and reading.
- » **Knowledge of at least some letter names** and/or sounds, especially in the child’s own name.
- » Rudimentary **phonological awareness** (demonstrated, for example, by being able to rhyme words in songs or poems).
- » **Awareness of print** (understanding that print conveys meaning, that words are composed of letters, and that a book has a “front” and a “back”).
- » **Pretend reading** (“reads” from memory a familiar book that he or she has heard repeatedly, often turning the pages at appropriate places).
- » **Pretend writing** (“writes” a message using scribbles or drawings on a page).

**Please note that throughout this guide, the term “parent” is used generally and is inclusive of grandparents, caregivers, and all primary parent figures in a child’s life.*

***Children who lack oral competence in English because it is not their native language may learn to read easily and well in their mother tongue; however, without oral competence in English, they will have trouble learning to read in English.*

Suggestions for Fostering Language and Foundational Literacy Skills in Preschoolers

The following list is applicable to parents, child care providers, and early childhood educators because many of the activities that benefit young children's development are similar, whether they occur at home or in a preschool setting.

- **Set aside time for reading** to children on a routine daily basis.
- Approach reading time as **an experience to be savored** rather than a task to be completed.
- Engage the children in the reading activity and **emphasize the enjoyment of reading.** (Discuss the story, answer children's questions, ask them questions, and listen to their comments.)
- **Read expressively and with humor,** using different voices for different characters.
- **Know when to put a book down.** If a child loses interest or has trouble paying attention to a story, just put the book aside for a while. Then think of ways you might successfully engage the child next time. (Read books on favorite topics and try to match books to the child's listening abilities.)
- Indulge children's usual desire to hear favorite stories over and over again. Research suggests that these **repeated readings help to promote children's language** and literacy development.
- **Draw attention to letters and print,** especially letters that are familiar or have a special meaning, such as the letters in their names. Encourage them to link the letter with its sound. ("See, Jimmy, the word 'jump' begins with the same sound as your name does: 'Jimmy,' 'jump.' And they both begin with the same letter, 'J.'")
- Sing songs, read rhyming books, and **say silly tongue twisters.** These enjoyable activities help children become sensitive to sounds in words.
- **Play with puppets.** Games involving puppetry are especially appealing to young children and help to develop a variety of language and phonological awareness abilities. ("This is Mark. He only likes words that rhyme with his name. Do you think he likes the word 'park'? 'Shark'? 'Tree'?" Give children a chance to respond, then pantomime the puppet's reaction to the word.)
- Enrich children's vocabulary by exposing them to **new experiences** (a visit to a zoo, park, or museum) and by talking with them. Discuss the meanings of words and encourage children's interest in them.
- If you have concerns about a child's oral language development or hearing, seek (or encourage caregivers to seek) **a prompt, thorough evaluation.**



Program 2: Sounds and Symbols

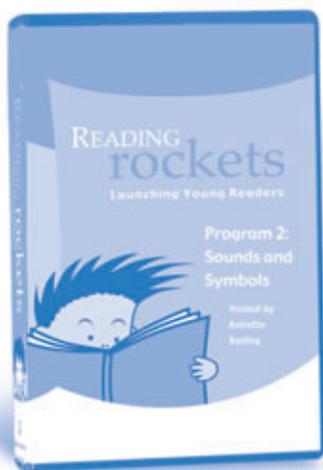
Program Description: **Sounds and Symbols** focuses on the two most important skills early readers need to decode the printed word: phonemic awareness and phonics. Hosted by actress Annette Bening and featuring Norman Bridwell, creator of *Clifford the Big Red Dog*, this show spotlights teachers using innovative strategies to help kids crack the code of reading. From the legendary Lab School in Washington, D.C., which specializes in teaching students with learning disabilities, to Mark Hopkins Elementary School in Sacramento, California, which has a large multicultural student population, you will see:

- » Parents promoting phonemic awareness by playing rhyming games with their children
- » Reading expert Dr. G. Reid Lyon explaining the importance of understanding sounds and recognizing letters in print
- » A Hmong-American kindergarten teacher mixing serious instruction with lively play for his English-as-a-second-language students
- » Students with learning disabilities receiving one-on-one assessment and guidance from special education teachers
- » Deaf children learning the letters and sounds of “cued speech” to improve their reading skills

Key Topics: Word decoding, phonemic awareness, and phonics.

Summary of Key Ideas

Word decoding, the ability to figure out unfamiliar words using knowledge about letter-sound relationships and the alphabetic code, is perhaps the most critical achievement of early reading. Adults would have little difficulty recognizing that a word like “streck” is a nonsense word. But for beginning readers, most real words are like “streck” — they are unfamiliar. And children need a set of skills for decoding them.



Typical achievements of children in phonemic awareness and word decoding*

Preschool Rudimentary level of phonological awareness (rhyming)
Some knowledge of letter names/sounds
Some basic print concepts

Kindergarten — First Grade Knowledge of all individual letter names and sounds (K)
Can identify spoken words with the same initial sound or same final sound (K)
More advanced basic print concepts (e.g., printed words are separated by spaces) (K)
Can blend individual phonemes to form a one-syllable word (Gr. 1)
Can segment a spoken one-syllable word into individual phonemes (Gr. 1)
Knowledge of sounds for some common letter patterns, such as “sh,” “ch,” “th,” “ee,” “oo,” “ay” (Gr. 1)
Can decode a wide variety of one-syllable words (e.g., “fast,” “bike,” “shook,” “stay,” “chip”) (Gr. 1)

Second — Third Grade Increasing knowledge of sounds for common letter patterns (Gr. 2)
Increasing skill in decoding two-syllable and multisyllable words (Gr. 2)
Knowledge of sounds for common prefixes (“in-,” “re-,” “un-”) and suffixes (“-tion,” “-ment,” “-ness”) (Gr. 2–3)
Use knowledge about root words and morphemic relationships to read multisyllable words (Gr. 3)
Have skills for decoding accurately and quickly most words, including multisyllable words (Gr. 3)

**These word-decoding achievements are typical of children who are learning to read English. Children who are learning to read a more transparent alphabetic language — for instance, Spanish-speaking children who are learning to read Spanish, a language in which the relationship between letters and sounds is more straightforward than in English — may attain accuracy in word decoding somewhat faster than the table indicates.*

Three kinds of knowledge are especially important for developing word-decoding skills:

Phonemic awareness, a specific type of phonological awareness, involves sensitivity to individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words. Children with phonemic awareness will recognize that “cat” includes three distinct sounds — /c/, /a/, /t/— and that “shape” does, too — /sh/, /ā/, /p/. Because sounds in spoken words are co-articulated — that is, they overlap in an unbroken stream of speech — phonemic awareness is not a natural or spontaneous achievement for beginning readers.

Children also need to develop their **knowledge of letter sounds**, not only for individual letters but also for common letter patterns such as “sh,” “ch,” and “ph.”

Finally, children need to grasp the **alphabetic principle**, the basic concept that written language is a code in which letters represent sounds in spoken words.

Explicit, systematic instruction is essential for helping many children to develop phonemic awareness and word decoding skills. The instruction should be direct and clear, with opportunities for practice, and there should be a planned, logical

sequence of instruction (e.g., children should not be expected to decode multisyllable words until they first can decode one-syllable words). Ongoing assessment of children’s development in word decoding and other reading abilities is also vital so that any difficulties may be addressed promptly.

Suggestions for Fostering Children’s Phonemic Awareness and Word Decoding Skills

For parents:

- **Play word games** that blend and segment individual sounds in words. (“Can you guess what this word is? /m/, /a/, /s/, /k/.”)
- **Help your child with reading homework** such as learning of letter sounds and sight words.
- **Have your child read aloud** to you on a routine basis. Alternating reading (you read a page, your child reads a page) may be helpful.
- When a child makes a mistake in reading a word, **focus the child’s attention on all the letters in the word**. Point out letters the child overlooked or read incorrectly; ask questions such as “Do you remember what sound this letter makes?” Many beginning readers will guess wildly at words based on the initial letter and need encouragement to attend carefully to all of the letters in the word.
- **Select appropriate books** for reading that are at the child’s level of difficulty. A child should be able to read at least 90 percent of the words in a grade-appropriate book correctly without assistance.

For teachers:

- **Teach phonemic awareness skills** such as phoneme blending and segmentation explicitly and systematically, linking this instruction to children’s learning of letter sounds (teach letters for the same sounds that you are using in phonemic awareness activities).
- **Begin instruction with “continuous sound” consonants** like “m,” “s,” and “f,” rather than “stop” consonants such as “b,” “d,” and “t”; the former are easier for children to blend.

- In phonemic awareness activities, **encourage children to watch your lips and mouth** while you form certain sounds or to think about how their own lips and tongue move while they are saying a sound. (“Can you feel how your mouth moves the same way at the beginning of the words ‘mouse,’ ‘mother,’ and ‘man’? Watch my mouth while I say them. Now you say the words and feel how your lips make the /m/.”)
- **Use hands-on materials**, such as Unifix Letter Cubes or blocks, in phoneme segmentation activities (i.e., when you’re asking children to identify the phonemes in a word).
- **Use multisensory activities in teaching letter sounds**, such as having children repeatedly trace a letter and say its sound at the same time.
- **Teach word decoding and spelling systematically and explicitly** and use them to reinforce each other, but also take advantage of opportunities for incidental learning. (As you point to the word “vat” in a read-aloud book, you might say, “Look, here is another ‘v’ word. Can anyone figure out how to read it? Do you know what it means?”)
- In teaching word decoding, **try word-building activities** with letter tiles or letter cubes, focusing on words with similar patterns; first vary the initial consonant (“mat” to “fat” to “sat”), then the final consonant (“sat” to “sag” to “sap”), then the medial vowel (“sap” to “sip”).
- Provide children with books that will give them **opportunities to apply their decoding skills** in context. Provide feedback that encourages application of known decoding skills (for example, point to letters in a word that a child has overlooked or misread rather than emphasizing the use of picture cues or sentence context).
- **Allow sufficient “wait time” for children to decode words** on their own, providing nonverbal cues (such as pointing) and verbal cues (such as questions) as necessary. If the child is reading a book rather than a word in isolation, after he or she has successfully decoded the word, have him or her re-read the sentence to establish comprehension and fluency.



Program 3: Fluent Reading

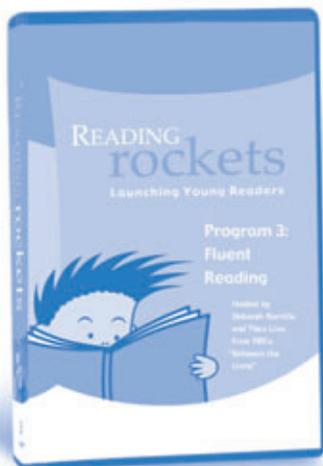
Program Description: **Fluent Reading** explores the next milestone in a young reader’s development — the ability to decode quickly and achieve fluency. The program is hosted by television personalities Deborah Norville and Theo from public television’s **Between the Lions** and features celebrated children’s author William Joyce (*George Shrinks*).

Fluency means reading text accurately and quickly. Fluent readers read aloud without hesitations or false starts and with good inflection that can come only from knowing the meaning of words. **Fluent Reading** highlights successful strategies for helping children become fluent readers and shows how early testing and intervention can help struggling readers.

From Mississippi to Vermont, you’ll see:

- » A master teacher modeling fun and practical fluency lessons
- » A scientific researcher revealing how complicated the process of reading is by demonstrating differences in the eye movements of skilled and unskilled readers
- » Reading disability experts and their students demonstrating the benefits of early diagnosis and intervention
- » A committed and well-trained adult volunteer helping her six-year-old “book buddy” read smoothly
- » A leading reading researcher and a determined mayor collaborating to create a successful after-school program for young struggling readers

Key Topics: Reading fluency naming speeds, motivation, and practice.



Summary of Key Ideas

Reading fluency is the **ability to read text accurately and quickly**. It depends on the accurate, automatic decoding of individual words and also on the ability to understand meaning rapidly during the actual process of reading.

Without reading fluency, children have to expend so much mental energy on the mechanics of reading that they can't absorb the meaning of what they're reading. Children may, for example, demonstrate poor reading comprehension for material that they would understand easily if it were read aloud to them. Children with fluency difficulties tend to find reading laborious, so they are especially likely to lose motivation for reading.

One predictor of reading fluency is a child's naming speed for "overlearned" stimuli such as letters and single-digit numbers. **Children with slow naming speeds tend to have poor reading fluency.** And children with a "double deficit" in both phonemic awareness and naming speed tend to have particularly serious reading difficulties.

Practice is very important to the development of fluency. Ample experience in reading is essential for building reading fluency, so stimulating motivation to read and encouraging independent reading are especially critical.

Typical achievements of children in reading fluency

Preschool

Few children can read at this age, so reading fluency is nonexistent for most children.

Kindergarten — First Grade

Few kindergarten children are reading text fluently, but most can name letters quickly, automatically, and accurately by the end of kindergarten.

First graders are developing accuracy in decoding one-syllable words but may have some difficulty reading with expression or attending to punctuation (e.g., child may fail to pause at commas and periods).

Children read at least 40 words correctly per minute in grade-appropriate texts by the end of first grade.*

Second — Third Grade

Prime time for the development of fluency — children are not only accurate but increasingly fast and automatic in reading grade-appropriate texts

Read aloud with good expression and with attention to punctuation

Recognize and use larger letter patterns (e.g., "-ight" and "-ear") in reading words

Read at least 90 words correctly per minute in grade-appropriate texts by the end of second grade*

Read at least 110 words correctly per minute in grade-appropriate texts by the end of third grade*

* Source: Good, Simmons, and Kame'enui, "The importance and decision-making utility of a continuum of fluency-based indicators of foundational reading skills for third-grade high-stakes outcomes," *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 2001.

Some Suggestions for Fostering Children's Reading Fluency

For parents:

- » Encourage **independent reading** by taking children to the library, reading with them, buying books as gifts, etc.
- » Encourage **re-reading of favorite books**.
- » Subscribe to **children's magazines** that relate to their interests.
- » Help children **find books that interest them**. Introduce them to appealing book series (*The Boxcar Children*) and books by a favorite author. Teachers, librarians, and booksellers are excellent resources for information. ("My daughter loved Ursula LeGuin's *Catwings*. Can you suggest any other books like that one?")
- » **Limit television viewing, video games, and computer games**. It's difficult for reading to compete with these activities, especially when children are still struggling to develop reading fluency.
- » Bring along books or magazines for children to **read during "waiting" times** such as doctor or dentist appointments.
- » **Establish a bedtime reading ritual**. About 30 minutes before the time you want children to actually go to sleep, tell them they can read for half an hour or they can just go to sleep. Most children will opt for reading.
- » Help children **pick reading materials at an appropriate level of difficulty**. (Again, teachers, librarians, and booksellers can help.)

For teachers:

- » **Make sure that children are placed at an appropriate level of difficulty for reading instruction** — in texts in which they can achieve at least 90% word accuracy. It is extremely difficult for children to build fluency in texts that are too hard for them.
- » **Use a variety of strategies** to foster children's independent reading: assign independent reading as homework and encourage reading as a "free time" activity.

- » **Allow choice** in independent reading and in class projects and activities, but monitor children's choices to make sure they are skill-level appropriate (poor readers will often choose overly difficult books to "save face" and then be unable actually to read them).
- » **Model expressive reading** and attention to punctuation when reading orally.
- » Especially in K-1, **discuss the ways that punctuation represents certain features** of oral language. ("When we talk, we usually pause a little bit at the end of a sentence. The way we show this pause in writing is to use a period.")
- » **Assign repeated readings** of familiar texts. Poems, plays, and favorite books work well for repeated readings. Strive for 90-95% word accuracy.
- » Have children **"partner read"** with classmates or be **"book buddies"** to younger children. Older children experience much-needed success in reading by being a "book buddy" to a younger child.
- » After reading the selected passage, have the child **read the passage simultaneously with a fluent reader**.
- » Teach students to **"self-chart" progress**. As fluency rate increases, the child should set a new goal as a target rate and continue practicing the reading passage until that goal is met.
- » **Develop automaticity** in word decoding and sight word recognition. Speed drills on high-frequency words in isolation or computer games with a speed factor built in can be especially helpful in building automaticity. Use speed drills only if the child has already attained accuracy in reading those words.
- » Give children **practice** reading selected words and phrases before they read a text aloud.
- » **Integrate instruction in vocabulary** and multiple meanings of words ("jam" = something to put on toast vs. "jam" = trouble vs. "jam" = cars stuck in traffic) with instruction in word decoding and sight word recognition. Children with fluency difficulties have less difficulty retrieving words when they have a high degree of familiarity with the meaning of the word.



Program 4: Writing and Spelling

Program Description: **Writing and Spelling** examines the connection between reading and writing and between spelling and composition. The show features successful methods of encouraging children to write, building their vocabulary, and developing their spelling skills. It's hosted by actress Vivica A. Fox and features children's book author Kate Duke (*Aunt Isabel Tells a Good One*). You'll also see:

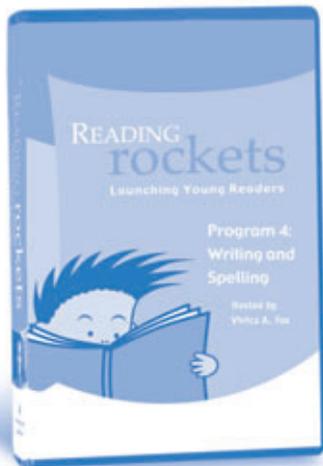
- » Enthusiastic second graders clapping out syllables, making up words, and playing word root games as they learn how to spell
- » Young writers creating anthologies of poems ("Splash blue-green fish live in water") as they practice self-expression and vocabulary-building
- » A seven-year-old blind girl whose compelling stories, written in Braille, have helped her find new confidence at school
- » Reading experts explaining why parents should create opportunities for their children to write

Key Topics: Spelling and writing, including phonemic awareness, letter-sound relationships, the alphabetic principle, morphemic relationships, and word decoding.

Summary of Key Ideas

Learning to spell words draws upon many of the same abilities you need to read them, such as phonemic awareness, knowledge of letter-sound relationships, understanding of the alphabetic principle, and knowledge of morphemic relationships. Children who **decode words** well are usually good spellers, whereas children with decoding difficulties typically are poor spellers.

In the early stages of learning to spell, children tend to use **invented (or phonetic) spellings** rather than conventional spellings of many words ("rit" for "write" or "loshin" for "lotion"). Analysis of children's invented spellings and spelling mistakes can provide a valuable tool for teachers. (A first grader who consistently omits sounds from words — e.g., "set" for "sent" or "fsh" for "fish" — likely needs instruction in phonemic awareness and perhaps also letter-sound knowledge.)



Typical achievements of children in reading fluency

Preschool

Little to no spelling ability, except perhaps ability to spell own name
Limited understanding of basic print concepts. Children may copy words or letters backwards, write from right to left instead of left to right, etc.
Demonstrate interest in drawing and writing
Understand that writing conveys meaning
May “pretend write” messages or stories, using a variety of scribbles, drawings, and letters or letter-like forms

Kindergarten — First Grade

Spell first and last name correctly (K)
Use some letter-sound relationships correctly in spelling, especially first and last letter of a word (K)
Demonstrate increased understanding of basic print concepts (write from left to right on a page) (K)
Represent most sounds in words correctly, so spelling is increasingly phonetic and recognizable even if not conventionally correct (Gr. 1)
Spell some common irregular words correctly (e.g., the, of, are) (Gr. 1)
Use some very basic mechanical conventions (capitalize first word of a sentence and use ending punctuation) (Gr. 1)
Write readable short compositions with a clear beginning, middle, and end (Gr. 1)

Second — Third Grade

Increased ability to spell words in a conventionally correct way, using not only knowledge of letter sounds but also knowledge of common letter patterns, spelling rules, and morphemic relationships (Gr. 2–3)
Spell correctly many common irregular words and some common homophones (e.g., “to,” “two,” “too”) (Gr. 2–3)
Write in complete and varied sentences (Gr. 2–3)
Elaborate details and write longer compositions (Gr. 2–3)
Increased use of mechanical conventions in writing (e.g., apostrophe in contractions and to show possession, capitalization of proper nouns and titles) (Gr. 2–3)
Use some revision of content, as well as editing of mechanics (Gr. 2–3)
Demonstrate increased organization of content in written work (Gr. 2–3)
Produce a variety of types of writing (e.g., stories, short reports, reading responses) (Gr. 3)



Spelling is a visible record of language processing. It is language written down. If we know how to look at a child's spelling, we can tell what that child understands about word structure, about speech sounds, about how we use letters to represent those. And as it turns out, anything that is going to cause trouble with a child's reading will show up even more dramatically in the child's spelling and writing. So it's a wonderful diagnostic tool.

DR. LOUISA MOATS, FORMER DIRECTOR, NICHD EARLY INTERVENTIONS PROJECT

Children must soon learn the **conventional spellings** of words. This requires the abilities mentioned above, as well as close attention to common letter patterns within words (sometimes termed **orthographic knowledge** — “ay” as in “stay,” “play,” and “gray”; or “igh” as in “light,” “night,” and “might”) and knowledge of spelling rules (to spell the sound /k/ before the letters “e,” “i,” or “y,” use the letter “k,” not the letter “c” — as in “kite,” “key,” or “like”).

Direct teaching of spelling rules, orthographic patterns, and morphemic relationships; heavy exposure to printed words (through independent reading); and ample opportunities to practice (using spelling in writing longer compositions) — all are important in children's learning to spell.

Learning to write also requires knowing how to use the **mechanical conventions of writing** (such as punctuation, capitalization, and standard English grammar), knowing how to **organize and sequence ideas** within a composition, how to elaborate on ideas, and how to use vocabulary, such as rich descriptive words.

Many of these abilities are similar to those involved in reading, and children who read widely are exposed to many models of good writing. But there also are important differences between reading and writing. Writing requires:

- **Planning** (brainstorming ideas and writing a web or outline before trying to compose a first draft) and **repeated revision of content**.
- **The ability to write for an audience** — that is, to express ideas in a way that will be clear and meaningful for prospective readers and to recognize that different audiences may require different styles of writing.
- **Motor skills**. Writing must be done by hand or typing on a computer keyboard.

Some Suggestions for Promoting Spelling and Writing Skills

For parents:

- Supply preschool youngsters with **drawing and writing materials**. Express interest in their attempts at writing by asking children to “read” their writing back to you.
- **Have your child dictate a story** to you and write it down for him or her.
- Involve children in **oral storytelling games** (make up a story and take turns adding to it). This develops a child's sense of narrative structure and the ability to elaborate details. It also fosters a child's motivation for telling stories.
- Find everyday **opportunities for children to write**. Have them help you with shopping lists, thank-you notes, or invitations.
- Find ways to **foster writing skills when reading** while keying your comments to the child's level of development. (Draw a preschooler's attention to basic print concepts such as that you are reading from left to right and that words are separated by spaces. With a third grader, you might point out an author's use of descriptive language.)
- When helping children practice words for spelling tests, emphasize **looking at the sequence of letters in a word** rather than just spelling it orally. Have the child write the word as he or she spells it aloud.
- Encourage an **interest in word spellings and word meanings**. Talk about words, point out written words in the environment, respond with interest to children's questions about words, and ask children to find new words. (“On our car trip, see if you can find a new word somewhere and guess what it means.”)

- » **Model use of the dictionary.** (“Hmm, I’m not sure myself what that word means. ... I think I’ll look it up.”)
- » Help children see **relationships among words.** (If a child is having difficulty spelling the word “knowledge,” for example, help him or her by pointing out that the word is related to the word “know.” You can use a similar strategy to help children figure out meanings of words.)

For teachers:

- » With beginning readers and writers, integrate instruction in phonemic awareness, letter-sound knowledge, word decoding, and spelling. Have children **use word-building activities** to spell the same kinds of words that they are learning to decode.
- » Explicitly **teach common letter patterns** used in spelling and show generalizations about the use of those patterns — such as that long /a/ at the end of a short word is often spelled with “ay,” as in “stay” and “play,” or that /aw/ at the end of a short word is usually spelled with “aw,” as in “saw” and “claw.”
- » **Teach common spelling rules** such as those for adding endings (e.g., “-ing,” “-ed”) to words. Books such as *Speech to Print: Language Essentials for Teachers* (by Louisa Moats), *Phonics from A to Z* (by Wiley Blevins), and *Teaching Reading Sourcebook for Kindergarten through Eighth Grade* (by Bill Honig, Linda Diamond, and Linda Gutlohn) are excellent resources. (See “Resources and References” for additional suggested readings.)
- » **Emphasize looking at words**, writing them, and spelling with letter cards or letter tiles rather than oral spelling activities.
- » Use words from content areas such as social studies and science to **illustrate morphemic relationships** among words and how this knowledge is useful, both in spelling words and in determining their meanings. (For example, if you know what “colony” means and how to spell it, you also can spell and understand words such as “colonist” and “colonial.”)
- » Especially in grades two and three, help children become used to the idea that **writing is a process**

that involves planning, composing an initial draft, revising the content, and editing.

- » **Have a published author speak** to the class about the process of writing. Young children and poor writers often think they are just “stupid” if they can’t sit down and compose a perfect piece of writing on the first try. It can be very helpful for them to hear an author discuss how crucial revision and editing are to good writing.
- » Have children **use checklists** to help them edit their own or a classmate’s work. (“Do all of my sentences start with a capital? Yes/No.”)
- » **Provide specific rubrics** to older children (third graders) that will help them both in understanding how their writing will be evaluated and in revising and editing their work (to be evaluated as “excellent” or “A” work, a reading response must be at least half a page long, refer to at least one specific detail in the reading, answer the question clearly and completely, contain no more than one mechanical error, and so forth).
- » Continue to provide older children **opportunities for choice in writing** (writing a story or report on a topic of their choice). Use assignments to help develop a range of writing abilities (poetry, narratives, and expository pieces).
- » **Link reading and writing** in the curriculum. If children are learning how to write figurative language, they can look for examples of this kind of language in the books they are reading and then discuss why a particular example is effective (or not effective).
- » **Use short, focused pieces of writing** to help in developing specific writing skills. (After reading a book by an author who uses particularly good descriptions, children might be given an assignment to write a descriptive paragraph that uses all of the five senses.)
- » With older children, **encourage use of a computer** to produce and revise written work. Teach them how to use technological aids such as spell-checkers and grammar-checkers.



Program 5: Reading for Meaning

Program Description: The act of reading isn't complete until a student learns to comprehend the words on the page. **Reading for Meaning** will highlight effective strategies used across the country to help kids understand — and care about — what they read. Hosted by teacher and author Frank McCourt (*Angela's Ashes*) and spotlighting award-winning children's book author Walter Dean Myers (*Harlem*), the program also features:

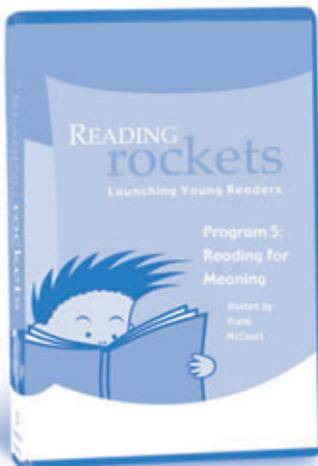
- » Students building their own weather stations as part of a hands-on science project aimed at motivating kids to read nonfiction
- » A tennis pro turned third-grade teacher whose impassioned, interactive book readings spur his students to become prolific, critical readers
- » Second graders leading class discussion through an innovative program called Reciprocal Teaching
- » A mother and son visiting their local library to find books about dinosaurs

Key Topics: Reading comprehension, vocabulary, comprehension strategies.

Summary of Key Ideas

Good reading comprehension depends on abilities in two broad areas: (1) accuracy and ease of reading individual words and (2) oral language comprehension. Children who have poor reading comprehension typically have difficulties in one or both of these areas.

An especially critical aspect of comprehension is **vocabulary** (knowledge of word meanings). Young children learn nearly all new vocabulary through listening. But as children grow older, their own reading becomes an increasingly important source of vocabulary development because many words are encountered through reading that are not typically found in everyday conversational language. Explicit teaching of vocabulary is essential.



Another key aspect of comprehension involves the use of **comprehension strategies**. These include **summarization** (being able to sum up important points), **prediction** (guessing what might happen next), and **inferring word meanings** from context (using the rest of a sentence to figure out what an unfamiliar word might mean). Comprehension strategies should be taught explicitly through activities such as modeling and think-alouds (the teacher models his or her own summarization of a text by thinking out loud for children), discussion, cooperative learning activities, and the use of examples (children look at a summary of a longer text and discuss why the summary is, or isn't, a good one).

The use of context to aid **comprehension** should be differentiated from the use of context to aid **word decoding**. Good readers are highly skilled at the former use of context; for instance, they might read a sentence such as "Maggie put white powder on her face so that she would look pale" and use sentence context or a picture to figure out that "pale" means "whitish."

Skilled reading is characterized by the rapid development of accurate, fluent word decoding. Beyond the very earliest stages of learning to read, readers should not need to rely heavily on context to decode words (because they should be able to actually read the word "pale" correctly and automatically). By contrast, poor readers often continue to rely on context to compensate for weak or dysfluent word reading. This compensation strategy tends to impair reading comprehension, especially as children grow older and have to read more difficult texts.

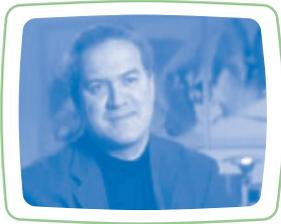
Finally, effective comprehension instruction fosters active **construction of meaning**. That includes monitoring your own comprehension as you read, actively trying to make sense of a text, and using your background knowledge to make inferences and "read between the lines." To promote the active construction of meaning, ask questions about the text and encourage students to elaborate on what they have read and to draw inferences.

Typical achievements of children in comprehension

Preschool Age-appropriate listening comprehension and vocabulary knowledge
(Reading comprehension is nonexistent or very limited in most children, because most children cannot yet read.)

Kindergarten — First Grade Beginning to develop reading skill, but listening remains the main vehicle for developing comprehension and vocabulary in most children
Some knowledge of comprehension strategies such as summarization, prediction, and using context to infer word meanings, but these are more readily applied in listening than in reading
Can answer correctly literal, inferential, and vocabulary questions about grade-appropriate texts
Can retell in own words material from grade-appropriate texts

Second — Third Grade Children's own reading increasingly becomes a vehicle for developing comprehension abilities and vocabulary knowledge, but listening also remains important.
Can increasingly apply comprehension strategies to their own reading as well as to listening
Can answer correctly literal, inferential, and vocabulary questions about grade-appropriate texts
Can retell in own words material from grade-appropriate texts



Usually comprehension failure indicates word recognition problems. Kids are not reading words at a rate that allows them to read quickly, effortlessly. Think about kids riding a bike. Once you start riding a bike you need enough momentum to be able to gain speed. And once you gain speed then you're off and you're rolling. Fluency is no different. If you're not facile with the text, then you're not going to be fluent, and most likely you're not going to comprehend.

DR. EDWARD J. KAME'ENUI, UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

Suggestions for Fostering Comprehension Skills

For parents:

- » With preschoolers, **play games** that involve naming or pointing to objects. (“Where is your chin?”)
- » Take time to **discuss stories** and word meanings.
- » Read a variety of types of books to children and **encourage variety** in their reading choices so that they are exposed to a range of text types. (Different types of texts have different structures — narrative is organized around characters, a setting, and a plot line, whereas nonfiction texts often are organized around main ideas and details.)
- » Help children **link experiences with what they are hearing** (or reading in books). If a child is reading a book about exotic animals, you might remind him or her about a trip to the zoo and talk about the animals you saw.
- » Activities that foster comprehension don't always have to involve reading. Discussing daily activities with children helps to build background knowledge, which is critical in listening and reading comprehension. Discussing movies and television programs, taking children to new places, **talking about everyday experiences** such as cooking and gardening all contribute to growth in comprehension.
- » **Tell stories.** Oral storytelling indulges children's passion to hear stories about their family's experiences: what life was like when Grandma was growing up, or that time you got in trouble at school.

For teachers:

- » **Read to children** to foster listening comprehension abilities and to help develop children's motivation for reading. Discussing the reading and involving the students (in retelling the story or answering questions) are central to developing comprehension, whether children are being read to or doing the reading themselves.
- » **Make vocabulary instruction a major component of the curriculum.** Focus on unfamiliar words that can be found in a wide range of texts (words like “discouraged” and “promptly” rather than technical words from a specific domain). To help promote learning and retention of new words, teach word meanings explicitly, give children many opportunities to use new words (in their writing as well as in reading), and help children relate new words to their own experiences and to other words that they have learned.
- » Also **encourage independent learning** of new vocabulary from context. Children might pick an unfamiliar word from the book they are reading independently, use context to make their “best guess” about what the word might mean, and then look the word up in a dictionary to check the accuracy of their guess.
- » **Teach meanings of prefixes, suffixes, and common roots** (“un-” and “re-,” “-less” and “-ful,” “geo” and “graph”). Encourage children to attend to these word parts when they encounter new words, to aid vocabulary learning.



Not being able to read isn't just an academic issue. It's an emotional issue, a motivational issue. It's very dear to the kid. Consider kids who come into the first grade and second grade and third grade. Their job is to read. They read out loud a great deal, they read in groups. If you don't do that well, your major job, people think you're stupid ... In fact, by the end of the first grade, we can watch kids having difficulty in front of their peers begin to withdraw from the reading process. Kids aren't as resilient as we thought.

DR. G. REID LYON, NIH

- » Use comprehension approaches that foster the active construction of meaning, such as **Reciprocal Teaching** and **Questioning the Author**, rather than passive reading of a text. (See “Resources and References” below.)
- » **Teach comprehension strategies** such as summarization, prediction, answering questions about texts, and inferring word meanings from context using explicit instruction, modeling, “think-alouds,” and discussion.
- » **Use graphic organizers** to help children grasp key concepts, relationships among concepts, and text structure. A story map can help children understand the basic elements of a narrative; a semantic map can help children see relationships among different ideas or vocabulary words.
- » **Encourage active construction of meaning** through extensive discussion of stories as children read them. For example, you and your students can take turns reading sections of a text out loud, with discussion after each section.
- » Ask rich questions that **require children to form inferences**. (“Why do you think Clifford did that?”) To draw students out, use questions that may have more than one right answer and that require a longer response. Avoid excessive use of narrowly focused, yes-or-no or right-or-wrong questions that can be answered with a single word.
- » **Determine the roots of reading comprehension difficulties** so that you can provide appropriate instruction. Are the weaknesses related to word decoding, oral language comprehension, or both? Use nonsense words such as “fot” to assess students’ skill in decoding words. Compare a child’s oral language comprehension to reading comprehension. Children who have poor reading comprehension of material that they would understand if it were read to them typically have problems that center upon poor word decoding or poor fluency. By contrast, children with oral language weaknesses will demonstrate those weaknesses in listening as well as in reading.



Videos and Guides

Reading Rockets: Launching Young Readers

The **Reading Rockets: Launching Young Readers** series is available for purchase on VHS videotapes or on DVD.

To order online, go to <http://gpn.unl.edu/>

Or phone, fax, or mail your order:

- >> **Phone:** 800-228-4630
- >> **Fax:** 402-472-4076 (include item title and credit card information)
- >> **Mail:** GPN, PO Box 80669, Lincoln, NE 68501-0669 (include check, money order, credit card, or purchase order information with your order)

>> Videotape set

Includes a complete set of five VHS videotapes; the Viewers' Guide; plus your choice of either the Family Guide or the Teachers' Guide.

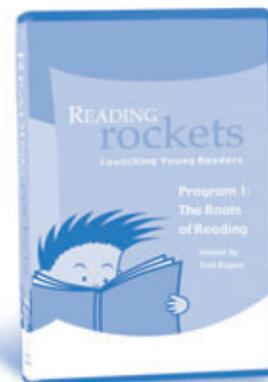
>> DVD

One DVD containing all five episodes plus bonus segments featuring additional interviews with reading experts, teachers, and others; the Viewers' Guide; plus your choice of either the Family Guide or the Teachers' Guide.

>> Individual videotapes

Includes one 30-minute episode (see titles below) and a viewers' guide.

- >> The Roots of Reading
- >> Sounds and Symbols
- >> Fluent Reading
- >> Writing and Spelling
- >> Reading for Meaning



Print Guides

There are three print guides available online at www.ReadingRockets.org:

- >> Teachers' Guide
- >> Family Guide
- >> Viewers' Guide

Reading Rockets Web Sites

Reading Rockets has two Web sites with a vast array of additional resources and online forums.



www.ReadingRockets.org

At this continuously updated Web site, you can:

- » Read daily news headlines about reading.
- » Sign up for a free monthly newsletter.
- » Read research-based articles on teaching kids to read and helping kids who struggle.
- » Receive monthly recommended book lists.
- » Watch and hear exclusive interviews with the country's most acclaimed children's book authors, and much more!



www.pbs.org/launchingreaders

For more information, including additional interviews with experts and other extras from the making of the television series, see our Web site at www.pbs.org/launchingreaders.

From the site you can:

- » Send a free e-card to encourage young readers in your class. Each card features original drawings from award-winning children's book authors and illustrators.
- » Find parent tips you can print out and send home with students.
- » Discover which research-based strategies work at home and school.

Glossary

alphabetic principle: the basic idea that written language is a code in which letters represent the sounds in spoken words

comprehension strategies: techniques to teach reading comprehension, including summarization, prediction, and inferring word meanings from context

fluency: the ability to read text accurately and quickly

morpheme: the smallest meaningful unit of language. A morpheme can be one syllable (“book”) or more than one syllable (“bookcase”); it can be a whole word or a part of a word such as a prefix or suffix. For example, the word “ungrateful” contains three morphemes: “un,” “grate,” “ful.”

morphemic relationship: the relationship between one morpheme and another. In the word “books,” “book” is a *free morpheme* (it has meaning by itself) and “-s” is a *bound morpheme* (it has meaning only when attached to a free morpheme).

morphophonemic: relating to the use of a word’s letter patterns to help determine, in part, the meaning and pronunciation of the word. For example, the morpheme “vis” in words such as “vision” and “visible” is from the Latin root word that means *to see*; and the “ay” in “stay” is pronounced the same in the words “gray” and “play.”

naming speed: the rate at which a child can recite “overlearned” stimuli such as letters and single-digit numbers

oral language difficulties: poor vocabulary, listening comprehension, or grammatical abilities for one’s age

orthographic knowledge: understanding that the sounds in a language are represented by written or printed symbols

phoneme: the smallest part of spoken language that makes a difference in the meaning of words. The word “bat” has three phonemes (b/a/t); so does the word “check” (ch/e/k/).

phonemic awareness: the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate the individual sounds — phonemes — in spoken words.

phonics: the understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes (the sounds of spoken language) and graphemes (the letters and spellings that represent those words in written language).

phonological awareness: a broad term that includes phonemic awareness. In addition to phonemes, phonological awareness activities can involve work with larger units of spoken language — words, syllables, onsets (the first sound in a word), and rimes (what’s left of a word after the first sound is removed). Phonological awareness also encompasses an understanding of other aspects of sound such as rhyming and alliteration.

print awareness/basic print concepts: basic knowledge about print and how it is typically organized on a page, e.g., print conveys meaning, print is read left to right, and words are separated by spaces.

visual perceptual abilities: the ability to recognize and visually distinguish between the letters in words

word decoding: the process of figuring out an unfamiliar word by breaking it into individual sounds; the reader uses knowledge about letter-sound relationships and the alphabetic code to decode words.

Books and References

Suggested Resources for Parents*

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*Parents may also find some of the teacher resources helpful, and vice versa.

Acknowledgments

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Special thanks to Diane Henry Leipzig, Ph.D.

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