



Parent's Guide to Emergent Literacy

PRE-READERS: 4 TO 5 YEARS OF AGE

Phonological sensitivity is the ability to hear and manipulate the smaller sounds in words. Most children who have difficulty in reading have trouble in phonological sensitivity. Examples of phonological sensitivity include:

- The ability to say whether or not two words rhyme (e.g., Do “cat” and “hat” rhyme? Do “cat” and “dog” rhyme?)
- The ability to say words with sounds or word chunks left out (e.g., What word would we have if we took the “buh” sound away from “bat”?)
- The ability to put two word chunks together to make a word (e.g., What word would we have if you put “cow” and “boy” together?)

Vocabulary is knowing the names of things, and it is an extremely important skill for children to have when they are learning to read. Most children enter school knowing between 3,000 and 5,000 words.

Print awareness includes learning that writing in English follows basic rules such as flowing from top to bottom and left to right and that the print on the page is what is being read by someone who knows how to read. An example of print awareness is a child's ability to point to the words on the page of a picture book that the child knows well while the parent reads those words.

Narrative skills include being able to understand and tell stories and able to describe things. They are important for children in order for them to be able to understand what they are learning to read. An example of a narrative skill is a child's ability to tell what happens at a birthday party or on a trip to McDonald's.

Letter knowledge includes learning that letters are different from each other, that each letter has a name, and that specific sounds go with specific letters. An example of letter knowledge is a child's ability to tell the name of the letter B and the sound it makes.

Print motivation is a child's interest in and enjoyment of books. A child with good print motivation enjoys being read to, plays with books, pretends to write, asks to be read to, and likes trips to the library.

How can you help?

- **Phonological sensitivity** can be developed by playing word games with your child. Some good games include: saying words with a pause between the syllables (e.g., “rab” and “it”) and having your child guess what word you are saying; categorizing words by their first sound (e.g., find everything in the house that begins with the “buh” sound: “ball,” “bed,” “baby,” “bowl”); making up “silly” words by changing the first sound in a word (e.g., “milk,” “nilk,” “pilk,” “rilk,” “filk”).
- **Vocabulary** and **print awareness** can be developed by reading with your child frequently. Children who are read to 3 times per week or more do much better in later development than children who are read to less than 3 times per week. When you are sharing picture books with your child, ask your child to talk about the book instead of just listening to you read the story. Ask your child questions about the pictures. Ask your child to take turns with you in telling about the pages of a picture book that your child knows well.
- **Narrative skills** can be developed by encouraging your child to tell you about things that the child has done that have a regular sequence to them. For instance, you might ask your child to tell you the steps involved in eating breakfast.
- **Letter knowledge** can be developed by involving your child in a variety of reading or writing activities, like pointing out and naming letters in alphabet books, picture books, or on signs and labels. Help your child write and read his or her name and other familiar words using magnetic letters, crayons, or pencil and paper.
- **Print motivation** can be developed by making trips to the library or bookstore fun outings, by making shared book reading a special time for closeness between you and your child, and by letting your child see that you enjoy reading.

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