



PEN Notes: Fact Sheet #10

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Raising a Reader

Learning to read happens over time in a developmental sequence. Children will use several strategies for reading within the same sentence such as sight, sound or how the word fits in the sentence. Many experiences and activities help children learn to read, such as talking and interacting, recognizing and connecting sounds and letters, life experiences themselves, and being exposed to all types of reading materials throughout life.



Reading is the written form of language. Children need vocabulary and word recognition skills, phonics skills (sounding out words), and ways to see if what they read makes sense. Toddlers and preschoolers learn about reading by being read to and by early attempts to write and translate what they have written. The correct translation can be written below the scribbles and read back to the child. Reading and writing go hand in hand, and plenty of reading and writing materials should be available in the home. These materials say reading is important, but it goes beyond this. Children must be discouraged from watching too much television and encouraged to do other activities such as homework, playing games, and having conversations with family members.



To be successful readers, children need to spend lots of time reading or being read to. Parents can make reading fun for children by having a regular routine for reading—before bed each night, after dinner, before school or any time during the day for preschoolers. The important thing is that it happens regularly and that it is a **positive** experience.

"Understandings" About Reading

1. Reading is a construction of meaning from written text and involves thinking and feelings.
2. Background knowledge and prior experience are critical to reading.
3. Social interaction is essential to learning to read.
4. Reading and writing develop together.
5. Reading involves complex thinking.
6. Environment should be filled with reading and writing experiences.
7. Children must be interested and motivated.
8. Children's understanding of print is different from adult's understanding.
9. Children learn phonics by practicing the sounds of letters that make up words and by putting the separate sounds together.
10. Children need to be taught many different reading strategies.
11. Children need the opportunity to read, read, read, and it is important that they are monitored and assessed.

Ages and Stages

Infants:

- Enjoy action nursery rhymes and Mother Goose verses
- Fall asleep to nursery songs and lullabies
- Listen to stories as they are rocked
- Make the sounds of animals in books
- React to rhythm, repetition and rhyme
- Point to objects in pictures

Toddlers:

- Like to read the same books over and over
- Pick favorite books from the shelf
- Begin to repeat Mother Goose verses
- Can name objects in books and magazines

Things To Do:

- Expect them to munch on books
- Provide books with heavy pages
- Read over and over to them
- Talk about the books to them
- Repeat nursery rhymes
- Listen to children's music and move to it

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Preschoolers:

- Hold books correctly
- Are able to write some letters in name
- Pretend to read own "writing" and books
- Can tell difference between print and picture
- Know some letters and point to them
- Can tell what a story is about

Kindergarteners:

- Recognize individual letters and words
- Can read and write name and some words
- Use illustrations to tell a story
- Can say some rhyming words that start with sounds such as "t", "m", and "d"

First-graders:

- Recognize and know letters and sounds
- Write some small words from memory
- Can read "easy to read" books
- Enjoy fairy tales, alphabet and counting

Things to do:

- Read daily to your child and visit the library
- Reread the story and let her tell the ending
- Let child tell story from his drawing
- Label furniture in his room or house
- Let child read aloud and make mistakes

Second-graders:

- Take pride in showing off their reading
- Can read early reader and "transitional" books
- Are able to read silently
- Can work out unknown words

Third-graders:

- Use encyclopedia, computer and atlas
- Read assignments and follow directions
- Make predictions to outcome of story
- "Read between the lines" in a story
- Write beginning, middle and ending of stories

Things to do:

- Follow your child's interest
- Play games that involve reading
- Continue to read harder books
- Get blank books for writing experience
- Limit television viewing

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Fourth-graders:

- Read familiar text with ease
- Can tell fact from opinion
- Can read silently for extended periods
- Read and understand instructions/recipes

Fifth-graders:

- Read for new information
- Use tables of content
- Use reference material
- Choose to read for leisure

Things to do:

- Keep reading aloud to your child
- Link movies and TV shows to books
- Have the child look for phone numbers

By the time children are in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, they are fluent, independent readers who use reading as an important part of their everyday lives. They read for entertainment, information and learning. Remember to model reading and give gifts that encourage reading!