

The Development of Reading Skills



Learning to read is a long process and all children develop at different rates. There are many different strategies when learning to read including decoding using phonics, visual clues, predicting as well as developing comprehension skills. The following is the usual path children take when learning to read.

Stages of Reading:

1. The pre-reader and the beginning reader:

- likes to look at books and likes to be read to
- likes to behave like a reader - for example, holds books and pretends to read them
- learns about words by looking at picture books and playing with blocks that have letters on them, magnetic letters, and so on
- learns about words from songs, rhymes, traffic signs, and logos on packages of food
- learns how text works - for example, where a story starts and finishes and which way the print proceeds
- begins to understand that his or her own thoughts can be put into print
- uses pictures and memory to tell and retell a story

2. The emerging reader:

- is ready to receive instructions about reading
- learns that text is a common way to tell a story or to convey information
- begins to match written words to spoken words and to perceive relationships between sounds and letters
- begins to experiment with reading, and is willing to try to say words out loud when reading simple texts
- finds the pictures helpful in understanding the text, and learns that the words convey a message consistent with the pictures

3. The early reader:

- develops more confidence and uses a variety of methods, such as relying on visual cues, to identify words in texts
- adapts his or her reading to different kinds of texts
- recognises many words, knows a lot about reading, and is willing to try new texts

4. The fluent reader:

- thinks of reading as a good thing and does it automatically
- uses a variety of methods to identify words and their meanings
- can read various kinds of texts and predict events in a story
- relates the meaning of books to his or her own experience and knowledge, and understands what is new

It takes time to pass through each of these stages, and your child will need plenty of attention and support as he or she moves through them. You can play a leading role in helping your child acquire the reading skills he or she needs to succeed!

