

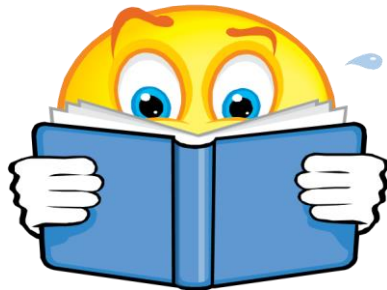
A Ten Minute Toolbox



READING PROCESSES

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Learning to Read



Reading is a very complex process, the main features of which are recognising and understanding written words, and interpreting the meaning of texts, commonly referred to as *decoding* and *comprehension*.

“Decoding is a teachable skill that involves a narrow scope of knowledge (letters, sounds, words) and processes (decoding) that, once acquired, will lead to fast, accurate word recognition.”

“Comprehension is not a skill. It is a complex of higher-level mental processes that include thinking, reasoning, imagining, and interpreting. The processes involved in comprehension are dependent on having specific knowledge in a content area.”



Kamhi, 2007

Word recognition and language comprehension processes interact, and where both are good, lead to skilled, effortless reading.

Reading Processes



Sight Reading

Once the letter sequence of a word has been linked to its meaning and pronunciation, it should be recognised instantly as a sight word, and is the goal for fluent reading. This process is used to read irregular words, sometimes called exception words, which do not follow the usual letter to sound conversion rules, for example *people* and *what*. So far, so simple, but storage and sight word processing rely on working memory, and developing automatic links between different parts of the processing system may take time.

Decoding

Alongside sight word recognition processes, phonological (sound based) processes are used to read new words, by applying knowledge of letter to sound conversion rules to decode them. As for sight word processing, phonological processing depends on working memory, as well as processing speech sounds reliably, so that they can be mapped onto letter patterns. There are several links in this process which may also take a great deal of time and effort to develop.



Helping at Home



You can help your child learn to develop both reading processes by focusing on the following:

- building a wide vocabulary, including rare words, by making time to talk to your child about a range of topics.
- developing a love of books by introducing and sharing stories, re-reading them many times so that your child begins to understand and use story vocabulary, and can pick up a favourite book to read by themselves because they know the text by heart.
- building awareness of sounds in words by reading stories with rhyme and patterned language.
- developing awareness of print by drawing attention to print in the environment.
- introducing the alphabet, using the sounds, not letter names, assisted by the *Letterland* programme used in school.
- revising letter to sound rules for one or two minutes every day.
- revising sight words regularly, using flashcards, add new words weekly and practise for one or two minutes every day.
- where the number of sounds in a word to be decoded exceeds working memory capacity, assisting your child to chunk words into smaller units and blend each chunk, e.g. *d-r-a-g-o-n* might need to be decoded as *d-r-a-g drag* + *o-n on* = *drag-on*.
- increasing your child's exposure to print.

Good Progress

The processes involved in reading are developmental and cannot be rushed, however you can prepare your child by ensuring that exposure to good oral language models and print are age appropriate, and as good as they can be. Your child's teacher will assess their progress at school, and is the best person to speak to if you have any concerns about their reading.

Sometimes children make rapid progress using their sight word processing skills, reading books from the Reading Scheme apparently effortlessly. The teacher may have noticed that their phonological processing skills are not progressing as well; evidence for this is often seen in their writing, which you may not have noticed at home. The teacher

may then select texts to target identified next steps, which may seem like a step backwards to you. As every child is different, their learning needs will also be different, and your child's teacher will use their considerable expertise to select instructional texts which will help your child meet their current learning targets.

If you are already doing all the things mentioned in the list above and would like to do more to accelerate your child's reading progress, please speak to the class teacher, who will let you know what else you can do.

Extra Help at School



We currently offer a subscription service to the Fast ForWord suite of modules. Fast ForWord is a language and literacy programme which works by improving auditory and phonological processing, developing vocabulary and grammatical understanding, and promotes sight word and phonological processing. Alongside Fast ForWord, children may use Reading Assistant, which uses advanced speech recognition technology and enables children to listen to a model of fluent reading, preview vocabulary, then record, play back and review their own reading. Short quizzes, before and after reading, enable comprehension to be monitored.

We have found that children using this programme regularly, for three months or more, improve their scores on a range of measures, including phonological awareness, vocabulary, decoding and reading comprehension. Fast ForWord works well because the constant repetition and intensity level of the work provides the necessary drill and practice for learning to take place. This type of presentation works for all children but is particularly helpful for those with working memory restrictions.

It may be possible to arrange for your child's teacher to supervise some sessions in school, and the programme may also be used at home. If you would like to find out more about Fast ForWord, please visit the website at www.myscilearn.com, or speak to the class teacher or SENDCo.