



The Science of Reading: Tips for Families and Questions for Schools

The Science of Reading... What is it and why is it important?

The [National Center on Improving Literacy](#) explains that the Science of Reading is research about how kids best learn to read. Teaching methods using this research focus on the [5 Big Ideas of Beginning Reading](#), which are part of Ohio's Learning Standards for English Language Arts from kindergarten through grade 12.

To become good readers, children need to develop skills in these areas:

1. **Phonemic awareness:** Ability to identify and play with individual sounds in spoken language
2. **Phonics:** The relationship between the individual sounds in spoken language and the letters we use to represent them in written language
3. **Fluency:** Ability to read accurately, with expression, at a rate that supports comprehension
4. **Vocabulary:** Knowing what words mean and how to say and use them correctly
5. **Comprehension:** The process readers use to understand what they read - this is the goal of reading!

Effective reading instruction must be both systematic and explicit.

Systematic Instruction

Teaching follows a predefined scope and sequence with frequent reviews. Systematic instruction has a logical and specific plan for what should be covered and in what order, from simple to most complex.

Explicit Instruction

The teacher shows students what they need to know, giving them guided practice (with feedback) and independent practice with each skill. The teacher does it first, teacher and student do it together, and the student does it independently.



To download additional tip sheets, visit education.ohio.gov/Literacy-Tipsheets

All children deserve quality reading instruction that is based on research and best practices.

How can you know if your child is getting good reading instruction at school? Families need an answer to this question, because children who don't learn to read well in first and second grade are unlikely to catch up later. What should you ask your child's teacher? What are the signs that your child may not be receiving the instruction needed for later school success? And what should you look for in reading instruction?¹



¹ Citation: Reading Rockets - Reading 101: A Guide for Parents. (2024) Retrieved from: Reading Instruction at Your Child's School | Reading Rockets



Questions to Ask

What to Look/Listen For

CORE INSTRUCTION AND HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

- What are the core skills that my child needs to work on to read proficiently?
- Where can I find the scope and sequence of skills that will be taught throughout the year?
- What instructional materials do you use to teach my child to read?

- Listen for elements of core instruction focused on the five components of reading instruction, as described above.
- Skills should be taught explicitly and systematically, in sequence from simple to most complex.
- “We use [program name] selected from the Department’s [Approved List Of Core Curriculum And Instructional Materials](#).”

ASSESSMENTS AND PROGRESS MONITORING

- Which reading assessments were given this year, and how did my child perform?
- How are you monitoring my child’s reading progress?
- Is my child reading at, above, or below grade level? How do you know?
- May I see my child’s progress monitoring data, so I know what they have mastered and what they still need to work on?

- Listen for an assessment from the Department’s approved list of [reading diagnostic assessments and/or tier 1 dyslexia screeners](#).
- “I frequently give short benchmark assessments to see what skills I need to reteach.”
- Students who are below grade level (or at-risk) need interventions and ongoing progress monitoring.
- “You could practice this skill at home with your child to reinforce what we are working on at school.”

SUPPORT AND INTERVENTION

- What reading supports did the school give my child this year and what progress has my child made?
- What intervention programs does the school use? How often does my child receive reading intervention?
- What resources, tutoring programs, or other afterschool programs are available for my child?

- Students who are deemed “not on-track” receive additional supports for specific areas of need (such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension).
- Listen for programs from the Department’s [approved list of intervention programs](#).
- Listen for a provider from a [list of tutoring programs](#) recognized by the Department for their high quality and potential to accelerate student learning in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

TEACHER TRAINING

- Which training(s) have my child’s teachers completed to refine their reading instruction and support all learners, including students who are not “on-track”?

- Listen for the completion of one or more of the following professional learning options:
 - The Department’s [Science of Reading Professional Development](#) course
 - The Department’s [Dyslexia Professional Development](#) course
 - A similar course from [this list](#)



DID YOU KNOW that your child's reading skills have the potential to substantially impact other academic subject areas? Strong reading skills enable your child to access, interpret, and engage with the curriculum effectively. Listen for examples of how your child is performing reading tasks across different content areas:

Mathematics: Reading comprehension is essential for understanding word problems, instructions, and mathematical concepts presented in text form.

Science: Proficiency in reading enables your child to grasp scientific texts, follow experimental procedures, and understand complex concepts and vocabulary.

Social Studies: Good reading skills help in comprehending historical texts, analyzing primary sources, and understanding geographical and cultural information.

Support Your Child's Literacy Development at Every Age

Tips for Boosting Early Literacy at Home

- Recite nursery rhymes, sing songs, use your hands for shadow plays, and have conversations together.
- Speak (and read) to your child in your home language.
- Notice words that sound the same and play rhyming games together.
- Notice and read environmental print - McDonald's sign, traffic signs, grocery store labels, etc.
- Read aloud to your children and point to and talk about the print.
- Talk about letters and the sounds they make using alphabet cards and magnetic letters, tracing letters in salt, forming letters with Play-Doh, and other activities.
- Play word games, talk about the meaning of words, and use interesting words while speaking.
- Model different kinds of writing daily - Label household objects, make grocery lists and write notes. (Encourage scribbling and drawing for younger children!)
- Allow children to explore and create using a variety of materials - scissors, crayons, markers, glue and Play-Doh. Talk about their creations.

Tips for Enhancing Your Older Child's Literacy at Home

- Talk about school, hobbies, newspaper or magazine articles, and current events.
- Model joyful literacy by reading and writing daily in front of your older reader!
- Provide a wide selection of reading materials for older readers to choose from. Offer a variety of fiction and non-fiction and include topics of interest. Visit the library together.
- Encourage your readers to ask and answer curious questions before, during, and after reading to build background knowledge.
- Incorporate technology! Listen to audiobooks together in the car or on a walk. Talk about the story.
- Play word games together like Scrabble, Boggle, or Wordle. Have a competition and make it fun!
- Focus on vocabulary. Talk about interesting words and use distinctive words while speaking.



Tools and Resources for Families



Additional resources to support literacy development can be found at education.ohio.gov/literacy.