



Literacy Strategies for Parents

Phonemic Awareness

- **One person names a word** and then you both see who can make the most rhymes from it. Nonsense words are perfectly acceptable in this game (people, meeples, steeple, creeple, cheeple)
- **Teach your child Nursery Rhymes.** Substitute rhyming words for words in the poem by deleting the first sound and letting your child supply the new sound/word. Ex: Hickory, dickory, dock The mouse ran up the clock. Changes to: Lickory, Lickory, Lock The mouse ran up the zlock.
- **Play “I spy” with rhyming words.** After looking around the room, you might say, “I spy with my little eye something that rhymes with sock.” Your child could answer “clock.”
- **Clap the syllables** of names of people in the family, places the family has visited, food in the pantry, toys in the toy box, or friends at school. For example, as the family passes in front of a Target, the parent might say, "There is Target. Let's clap to see how many syllables are in Target." The parent and child then would clap their hands to each syllable in the word Target.
- **Place a few common objects into a bag.** Ask your child to pull one of the objects out of the bag and then clap or pronounce the name of the object segmented into syllables (e.g., mar-ker, ap-ple, un-der-wear).
- **A scavenger hunt** - The parent and child can hunt -- around the house, at the store, in the yard, at the park, in the car, or any place at all -- for things that begin with the same sound as the child's name, or some other sound.
- **Sing a little jingle together** using objects familiar to the child. An example of a jingle you can use (sung to “Old MacDonald Had a Farm”) is: What's the sound that starts these words: mom, McDonald's, meat? What's the sound that starts these words: mom, McDonald's, meat? M is the sound that starts the words mom, McDonald's, and meat.
- **Onset & Rime** - start by providing just the onset (beginning) and rime (ending) and moving toward each individual sound. For example, say the following sounds and let your child blend them together to tell you the correct word. /h/ at. Your child should say hat.
- **Segment the entire word**, sound by sound. Show your child a picture. Show him how to say each sound in the word (by stretching it out slowly) while moving a penny at the same time (to keep track of the number of sounds). For example: cat /k/-/a/- /t/. The parent says the word slowly, so the child can distinguish each sound individually.
- **Substitute sounds** to make new words. Say a word such as “pig.” Tell your child to take away the /p/ sound and change it to /b/. Then ask what the new word is (big). You can continue working with each word, changing it by just one letter (either at the beginning or the end) until you have come up with 5 or 6 new words from the starting point.



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Phonics

- **Look for letters** in your house or neighborhood. Point out and talk about the letters you see and the sounds they make as you read words on signs, labels, menus, and the TV.
- **Writing** is a great way to practice phonics skills with your child. Have her help you write a shopping list, birthday card, or an email.
- **Go on a hunt** for certain letters, sounds, or chunks. For example, look through a magazine, book, or ad with your child to find the letter /s/ or the blend /cr/ in words.
- **Between the Lions** the TV program on PBS can help your child learn and practice phonics skills. This show also has a free website with games, puzzles, and video clips at <http://pbskids.org/lions/>
- **Make letters in fun ways** such as in clay, play- dough, or sand and talk about the sound each letter makes and the sounds they make when they are combined.
- **Practice chunks**, sometimes called spelling patterns or rimes, with your child. This list of 37 chunks can be used to read and spell over 500 words! Point out these chunks as you read and write with your child. You can also write as many words as you can think of for each chunk. For example, if the chunk is “ack” you and your child might think of and write: “back,” “hack,” “jack,” “pack,” “rack,” “tack,” “black,” “crack,” and “snack.”

Fluency

- **Reading and re-reading easy books** is a great way to build your child’s reading fluency. Have your child select a favorite book and read it aloud two or three times. This approach, called repeated readings, is one of the best ways to promote reading fluency.
- **Model fluent reading** for your child by reading aloud daily. Be sure to use expression in your reading. You can even use funny voices for dialogue as you read aloud.
- **Echo reading** helps to build reading fluency. You read a phrase, sentence, or paragraph aloud to model fluent reading. Your child then reads the same phrase, sentence, or paragraph afterwards, like an echo. Continue this pattern until you have read a book, story, or page of text with your child.
- **Poetry and nursery rhymes** can be used to practice fluency. Take turns with your child reading a short poem or nursery rhyme until he or she can read it fluently.
- **Use paired reading** to build reading fluency with your child. First, you will read a poem or short passage to your child. Then, you and the child will read the poem or passage together several times.
- **Review basic sight words** with your child to make sure that he or she knows these words automatically. Knowing these common words on sight will help to improve your child’s reading accuracy and rate.
- **Choose a comic strip** from the newspaper. Read the comic strip aloud, using expression. Then ask your child to read the comic strip aloud.
- **Set aside reading practice time every day.** Even 10 minutes of reading fluency practice using any of the activities listed above will help to develop your child’s reading fluency.



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Vocabulary

- **Talk with your child** and try to use new and interesting words. Exposing your child to new words is a great way to build your child's interest in learning words.
- **Read to your child as often as possible.** Choose books that are more difficult than your child can read independently. Point out and discuss interesting words in the book.
- **Play a word guessing game** to help your child think about words. For example, you can say, "I'm thinking of a word that starts with "br" and means that a person is not afraid (brave). If your child doesn't guess the word, provide examples or more information to help him or her figure out the word. Then, ask your child to give you a word and clue.
- **Encourage your child to read** as often as possible. Children who read more have larger vocabularies and tend to do better in school.
- **Play oral word games** to build your child's vocabulary. For example, play the opposite game where you say a word such as "inside" and ask your child to say a word that has an opposite meaning (outside). Or, you can play the synonym game where you say a word such as "happy" and take turns with your child saying words that have similar meanings such as "glad," "joyful," and "content."
- **Learning common prefixes** can help your child learn many new words. For example, the prefixes "dis," "re," and "un" are the most common ones in the English language. If children can identify these prefixes, they can unlock the meaning of many new words. Have your child look for these prefixes when reading and listen for them in conversations. Work with your child to brainstorm as many words with each prefix as you can. Write these words and prefixes on a sheet of paper and post it on your refrigerator. As you find new words for each prefix, add them to your list.
- **Play a Memory Game** If your child has vocabulary words to learn for school, help your child make 2 cards for each word. On one card, your child should write the word, and on the other card, he or she should write the word's meaning. Spread the cards out on the table, face-down. Have your child play a "Memory Game" by turning over one card and then turning over a second card to try and match the word to its definition. If the cards don't match, your child should put them back and begin again. Have your child continue the process until all words have been matched to the correct definition.



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Comprehension

- **Read, read, read!** Read to your children and have them read to you every day. Make it part of your bedtime routine, an after-dinner activity, or a fun way to spend time together on the couch. At the end of each chapter, discuss what happened. Parents can still share books with older children by reading the same book separately. Ask your child every day, "Where are you in the book? Did you get to Chapter 5 yet? What do you think about what happened to Harry?" Allowing children to retell a story that they read lets them practice comprehension skills.
- **Cook or bake with a recipe.** Find a lengthy recipe for something that your children love to eat and make it together. Turn over recipe reading duties to your children and watch them take what they've read and turn it into something delicious.
- **Play with inflection.** Try this with your young child: Read a line from a book and have your child repeat it back to you with dramatic expression, inflection and phrasing.
- **Set a good example** by letting your children see you read. Show them that reading is a good choice for leisure activity and sure beats watching TV. Talk about the book you're reading. Listening to you summarize your book teaches your children how to take what they've read, absorb it and condense it.
- **Use pre-reading comprehension techniques.** Before reading a book, have your child look at the cover and the inside pictures and predict what the story is about.
- **Play board games with your children.** Board games require putting into action everything that is read, and can help increase reading comprehension. Help your children read the instructions to a new board game or review the rules of an old favorite. Ask if they'd like to change the rules or game play slightly and implement their suggestions.