

The Facts on Education

How Children Learn to Read

The foundation of language and literacy skills is laid during early childhood. Early learning is important to lifelong development. Researchers have identified some of the most important factors that help children learn to read. While there are some definite skills children need to develop, it is also vital that children read things they enjoy, and enjoy what they read.

- **Phonemic Awareness:** helps the child to hear, identify and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) into words (e.g. /g/ = get and /u/ = too). Children need to know these skills.
- **Fluency Instruction:** Reading accurately and quickly can be assisted by modeling fluency (reading aloud to children), providing books at the child's level, repeated oral reading, increasing practice through audiotapes, tutors and peer guidance.
- **Vocabulary:** Ways to teach vocabulary include teaching specific words before reading, providing activities involving those words (mental images/acting out definitions), repeating vocabulary in different contexts, and learning high frequency words
- **Text Comprehension:** Strategies to help children understand what they are reading include: reading comprehension questions, understanding the story structure (e.g. plot, setting), summarizing, reflecting on their prior knowledge to make connections and using graphic organizers (e.g. bubble charts) to organize thinking.
- **Motivation:** Children are motivated to read if they find the text interesting and have background knowledge on the topic. Young children are often drawn to illustrations, graphics and display features. Praise and recognition may also be motivating.

Research suggests that children learn to read in different ways. There is recent evidence that computer technology is an effective tool in teaching reading for children.

An effective parent- teacher partnership can lead to better learning for children. (Our earlier issue on homework can be found at <http://www.cea-ace.ca/facts-on-education>)

For online resources on how children learn to read as well as the research references that inform this issue, please visit:

www.cea-ace.ca/facts-on-education

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The Facts on Education, (February, 2011). "How Children Learn to Read" Produced by OISE and CEA.

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