

Second and Third Grades



WHAT TO DO AT HOME

The top three

- Talk often with your child to build listening and speaking skills.
- Read to and with your child—often. Talk to her about the words and ideas in books. Encourage your child to read on her own.
- Ask your child’s teacher how you can help your child practice at home what she is learning at school.

Use reading opportunities to help your child develop fluency

1. **Listen to your child read books that he has brought home from school.** Be patient as your child practices reading. Let him know that you are proud of his reading.
2. **If your child is not a very fluent reader (that is, she reads slowly and makes lots of mistakes), ask her to reread a paragraph or page a few times.**

Find opportunities for your child to spell and write

1. **Encourage your child to write often—for example, letters and thank-you notes to relatives and friends, simple stories, e-mails, and items for the grocery list.**
2. **Help your child learn the correct spellings of words.**

Find opportunities to help your child develop vocabulary, knowledge of the world, and comprehension

1. **Talk about new words that your child has read or heard.** Ask her to make up sentences with the new words or use the words in other situations.
2. **Help your child use the dictionary or thesaurus to check on the meanings of new words she reads or hears.**
3. **Help your child become aware of prefixes, suffixes, and root words.** Point them out in books you are reading together or in print materials around the house. Ask her to think of other words related to the words you are discussing.

PARENT TALK

*“Can you think of any other words that have the word move in them?”
(Some possible answers are moveable, movement, moving, and moved.)
“Here’s the word disappear. What other words do you know that start with dis-?” (Some possible answers are disappoint, disagree, and disbelieve.)*

- 4. Show your child how to use context—the sentences, words, and pictures around an unfamiliar word—to figure out the word’s meaning.**

PARENT TALK

Read a line from a book, such as this line from Eric Carle’s Pancakes, Pancakes! “Take a sickle and cut as much wheat as the donkey can carry.” Then ask a question, such as “Look at the picture of Jack cutting the wheat. What is he using? That’s right, it’s a sickle. A sickle is a tool for cutting wheat and other kinds of grain.”

- 5. As you read a book with your child, stop now and then to talk to her about the meaning of the book.** Help her relate the experiences or events in the book to experiences or events in her life or to other books you have read together. Ask her questions that encourage her to talk about the information in a nonfiction book, or about the characters or events of a fiction book. Encourage your child to ask questions. Ask her to tell in her own words what the book was about.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN SECOND AND THIRD GRADE CLASSROOMS

In effective second and third grade classrooms, you will see literacy instruction that focuses on:

Promoting reading accuracy

The teacher helps children continue to use their knowledge of phonics to sound out and pronounce new words. The teacher helps children recognize simple, common spelling patterns in words. She also helps children learn the spellings and meanings of word parts such as prefixes, suffixes, and root words.

The children become more able to read words accurately by using their knowledge of phonics. They use the other words in a sentence (the context) to figure out the pronunciations and meanings of new words.

Building fluency

The teacher reads aloud to children, modeling fluent reading. She makes sure that children are working on developing fluency and monitors their progress. By listening to children read aloud, or by sometimes timing children's reading rates, the teacher ensures that children are becoming fluent readers.

The children are becoming more fluent readers by reading, reading, reading. They are improving their oral reading fluency by rereading selections aloud.

FLUENCY INSTRUCTION

In second and third grade classrooms, effective instruction will include some of the following activities for building fluency.

- Teachers listen to individual children read aloud and provide assistance and encouragement as they repeatedly read until they are fluent.
- Teachers read aloud and children read along as a group. The children repeat the reading until they are fluent.
- In a listening center, children read along in their books as they listen to a fluent reader read a book on an audiotape. The children read with the tape until they can read the book without support.
- Pairs of children read paragraphs from a book to each other, taking turns and assisting each other until they can read the paragraphs fluently.
- Teachers time children as they read aloud paragraphs or pages of a selection. They also note children's reading errors.

Teaching spelling and writing

The teacher teaches some common spelling patterns. He encourages children to write in many different forms, such as letters, stories, poetry, reviews, directions, and reports. He helps children prepare for and plan their writing. He teaches them how to revise, edit, and refine what they have written and helps them write using a computer.

The children write often, and for different audiences and purposes. They correctly spell previously studied words. When they spell new words, they represent all of the sounds in the

words. In their writing, the children use figurative language, dialogue, and vivid descriptions. They read their writing to others and discuss one another's writing, offering helpful suggestions.

Developing vocabulary and knowledge of the world

The teacher is excited about words and shows students that they have a personal interest in learning new and intriguing words. He tries to develop children's awareness of and interest in words, their meanings, and their power. As the teacher reads aloud to children, he discusses some of the important new words in the book. He relates new words to words the children already know and to their experiences. The teacher encourages children to read a lot, both in school and outside of school. He encourages them to explore topics that interest them and to use a variety of sources of information, including the Internet.

The children are interested in learning new words and are eager to share new vocabulary at school and at home. They are learning how to figure out the meanings of unknown words by using word parts such as prefixes, suffixes, and root words. They are able to use different

VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION

In second and third grade classrooms, effective instruction will include both specific word instruction and instruction in word learning strategies.

Specific word instruction

- Teachers teach specific words from selections the students are about to read. These words are important for the students to know in order to understand what they will read.
- Teachers use the new words over an extended period of time.
- The children see, hear, and work with the words in many ways and in various contexts.

Word learning strategies

- Teachers show children how to use the dictionary and thesaurus to learn about the meanings of words. Teachers show how some words have more than one definition, and they teach children how to find the right definition for their particular situation.
- Teachers teach children how to use word parts (prefixes, suffixes, and root words) to determine the meaning of unknown words.
- Teachers provide instruction in how to use the meanings of known words in a reading selection (context) to figure out the meaning of unknown words.

parts of speech correctly, including nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. They read a lot on their own, and explore topics independently, often using computers.

Increasing comprehension

The teacher guides children’s understanding of what they are reading by discussing selections with them before, during, and after reading. The teacher shows children how to use simple strategies to get meaning from what they read.

The children read many different kinds of books, both with the teacher’s guidance and on their own. They offer answers to “how,” “why,” and “what-if” questions, and read to find the answers to their own questions. They compare and contrast characters and events across stories. They explain and describe new information in their own words. They also interpret information from diagrams, charts, and graphs.

In second and third grades, children improve their word-recognition and word-study skills and develop fluency—their ability to read quickly and accurately. These years also are the time to extend comprehension and vocabulary knowledge and to refine writing and spelling skills.

It is critical that children are up to “reading speed” by the end of third grade. Children who fail to make good progress in reading by the time they enter fourth grade are likely to have trouble in the upper grades and to drop out of school before graduating.

The following are lists of some accomplishments that you can expect of your child by the end of second and third grade. These lists are based on research in the fields of reading, early childhood education, and child development. Remember, though, that children don’t develop and learn at the same pace and in the same way. Your child may be more advanced or need more help than others in her age group. You are, of course, the best judge of your child’s abilities and needs. You should take the accomplishments as guidelines and not as hard-and-fast rules. If you have concerns or questions about your child’s reading development, talk to his teacher.

WHAT CHILDREN SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO BY THE END OF SECOND GRADE

Phonics and word recognition

By the end of second grade, a child:

- Can read a large number of regularly spelled one- and two-syllable words
- Figures out how to read a large number of words with more than two syllables
- Uses knowledge of phonics to sound out unfamiliar words
- Accurately reads many sight words

READING COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTION

Quality instruction includes teaching children strategies that they can use to get meaning from the materials they read. These comprehension strategies include being aware of how well they comprehend a selection, using graphic organizers, answering questions, asking questions, recognizing the way stories are organized, and summarizing.

To teach comprehension strategies, teachers first demonstrate the strategy, tell why it is important, and how, when, and where to use it. Then the children practice the strategy until they are able to use it on their own. Here are some examples of strategy instruction:

- To help children understand and remember what they read, a teacher presents a diagram called a “story map” that shows the structure, or organization, of simple stories. (*See the story map example on the next page.*) She and the children talk about the story they have just read—its setting (where it takes place), the characters, the problems the characters face, the different events in the story, the resolutions of the characters’ problems, and the theme or moral of the story. As they talk, the teacher fills in the story map. After several lessons with their teacher, the children are able to complete story maps on their own.
- To help children better understand and remember what they have read, a teacher teaches them how to ask themselves “main idea” questions about what they are reading. The class has just finished reading a selection about redwood trees in an informational book. The teacher gives the children several examples of main idea questions and contrasts them with detail questions. He points out that the main idea questions often start with “why” or “how.” Then, under his guidance, the children practice asking main idea questions about several more selections in the book.
- To help children understand, learn from, and remember the information in their social studies textbook, a teacher helps them learn how to write a summary. She demonstrates how to write a summary of one of the sections in the chapter they are reading. She shows them how to make use of the section headings and the topic sentences of each paragraph. She then shows the children how to eliminate details. Under her direction, the children work together to write summaries of several sections of a chapter in their social studies textbook. In subsequent lessons the children write summaries of the chapters in their science book. The teacher provides feedback so that children include the important parts of the chapters in their summaries.

A STORY MAP FOR "THE THREE LITTLE PIGS"

Setting	A make-believe time and place
Characters	Mother pig, three little pigs, big bad wolf
Problem or Goal	The three little pigs are ready to move out of their mother's house and live on their own.
Event 1	The first little pig builds a house of straw. The big bad wolf blows the house down.
Event 2	The second little pig builds a house of sticks. The big bad wolf blows the house down.
Event 3	The third little pig builds a house of bricks. The big bad wolf cannot blow the house down.
Event 4	The big bad wolf runs away or is killed (depending on version).
Solution	The three little pigs live happily ever after in the safe brick house.
Theme or Moral	Hard work pays off in the end.

Reading

By the end of second grade, a child:

- Reads and understands a variety of second grade level fiction and nonfiction books
- Knows how to read for specific purposes and to seek answers to specific questions
- Answers "how," "why," and "what-if" questions
- Interprets information from diagrams, charts, and graphs
- Recalls information, main ideas, and details after reading
- Compares and connects information read in different books and articles
- Takes part in creative responses to stories, such as dramatizations of stories and oral presentations

Spelling and writing

By the end of second grade, a child:

- Pays attention to how words are spelled
- Correctly spells words he has studied
- Spells a word the way it sounds if she doesn't know how to spell it
- Writes for many different purposes
- Writes different types of compositions (for example, stories, reports, and letters)
- Makes good judgments about what to include in her writing
- Takes part in writing conferences and then revises and edits what he has written
- Pays attention to the mechanics of writing (for example, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation) in the final versions of compositions

Vocabulary and knowledge of the world

By the end of second grade, a child:

- Wants to learn new words and share those words at school and home
- Uses clues from the context to figure out what words mean
- Uses knowledge of word parts such as prefixes, suffixes, and root words to figure out word meanings
- Increases vocabulary through the use of synonyms and antonyms
- Can use different parts of speech correctly, including nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs
- Learns more new words through independent reading
- Explores and investigates topics of interest on her own

WHAT CHILDREN SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO BY THE END OF THIRD GRADE

Phonics and word recognition

By the end of third grade, a child:

- Uses phonics knowledge and word parts (prefixes, roots, suffixes) to figure out how to pronounce words she doesn't recognize

Reading

By the end of third grade, a child:

- Reads with fluency
- Reads a variety of third grade level texts (for example, story books, informational books, magazine articles, computer screens) with fluency and comprehension
- Reads longer stories and chapter books independently
- Summarizes major points from both fiction and nonfiction books

- Identifies and then discusses specific words or phrases that interfere with comprehension
- Discusses the themes or messages of stories
- Asks “how,” “why,” and “what-if” questions
- Distinguishes cause from effect, fact from opinion, and main ideas from supporting details
- Uses information gathered and his own reasoning to evaluate the explanations and opinions he reads about
- Understands and reads graphics and charts
- Uses context clues to get meaning from what she reads

Spelling and writing

By the end of third grade, a child:

- Correctly spells previously studied words
- Independently reviews her own written work for errors in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation
- Begins to use literary words and sentences in his writing, such as figurative language
- Combines information in compositions from a variety of sources, including books, articles, and computer information
- With assistance from teachers and classmates, edits and revises her compositions to make them easier to read and understand
- Discusses her own writing with other children and responds helpfully to the writing of other children

Vocabulary and knowledge of the world

By the end of third grade, a child:

- Wants to learn and share new words at school and at home
- Uses clues from context to figure out word meanings
- Uses her knowledge of word parts such as prefixes, suffixes, and root words to figure out word meanings
- Increases his vocabulary through the use of synonyms and antonyms
- Is able to use different parts of speech correctly, including nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs
- Develops her vocabulary and knowledge through independent reading
- Explores and investigates topics of interest on his own
- Uses a variety of sources to find information, including computers

The main source for this list of accomplishments is Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children. For more information about this book, see Bibliography in the back of this booklet.

SOME HELPFUL TERMS TO KNOW

Teachers and day care providers might use these terms when talking to you about how your child is learning to read. Some of them are used in this booklet.

- **alphabetic knowledge**—Knowing the names and shapes of the letters of the alphabet.
- **alphabetic principle**—The understanding that written letters represent sounds. For example, the word *big* has three sounds and three letters.
- **big books**—Oversized books that allow for the sharing of print and illustrations with a group of children.
- **blending**—Putting together individual sounds to make spoken words.
- **comprehension**—The ability to understand and gain meaning from what has been read.
- **decodable books**—Books that are made up of words that contain only the letter-sound relationships that the children are learning, along with a few words that are taught as sight words.
- **decode**—The ability to recognize and read words by translating the letters into speech sounds to determine the word’s pronunciation and meaning.
- **developmental spelling**—The use of letter-sound relationship information to attempt to write words.
- **emergent literacy**—The view that literacy learning begins at birth and is encouraged through participation with adults in meaningful reading and writing activities.
- **environmental print**—Print that is a part of everyday life, such as signs, billboards, labels, and business logos.
- **experimental writing**—Efforts by young children to experiment with writing by creating pretend and real letters and by organizing scribbles and marks on paper.
- **explicit instruction**—Direct, structured, systematic teaching of a task.
- **fluency**—The ability to read text accurately and quickly and with expression and comprehension.
- **graphic organizers**—Diagrams that visually represent the organization and relationships of ideas in a text.
- **invented spelling**—See developmental spelling.
- **irregular words**—Frequently used words that don’t follow the letter-sound relationship rules that children are learning.
- **leveled books**—Books that have been assigned a particular level (usually a number or letter, such as Level 1 or Level B) intended to indicate how difficult the book is for children to read.
- **literacy**—Includes all the activities involved in speaking, listening, reading, writing, and appreciating both spoken and written language.

- **phonemes**—The smallest parts of spoken language that combine to form words. For example, the word *hit* is made up of three phonemes (/h/ /i/ /t/) and differs by one phoneme from the words *pit*, *hip*, and *hot*.
- **phonemic awareness**—The ability to hear and identify the individual sounds in spoken words.
- **phonics**—The relationship between the sounds of spoken words and the individual letters or groups of letters that represent those sounds in written words.
- **phonological awareness**—The understanding that spoken language is made up of individual and separate sounds. Phonological awareness activities can involve work with rhymes, words, sentences, syllables, and phonemes.
- **predictable books**—Books that have repeated words or sentences, rhymes, or other patterns.
- **prefix**—A word part such as *re-*, *un-*, or *pre-* that is added to the beginning of a root word to form a new word with a new meaning.
- **pretend reading**—Children’s attempts to “read” a book before they have learned to read. Usually children pretend read a familiar book that they have practically memorized.
- **print awareness**—Knowing about print and books and how they are used.
- **root word**—A word or word part to which a prefix or suffix is added.
- **segmentation**—Taking spoken words apart sound by sound.
- **sight words**—Words that a reader recognizes without having to sound them out. Some sight words are “irregular,” or have letter-sound relationships that are uncommon. Some examples of sight words are *you*, *are*, *have*, and *said*.
- **suffix**—A word part such as *-ness*, *-able*, or *-er* that is added to the end of a root word to form a new word with a new meaning.
- **syllable**—A word part that contains a vowel or, in spoken language, a vowel sound (*e-vent*, *news-pa-per*, *pret-ty*).
- **vocabulary**—The words we must know in order to communicate effectively.
Oral vocabulary refers to words that we use in speaking or recognize in listening.
Reading vocabulary refers to words we recognize or use in print.
- **word walls**—Word-study and vocabulary words that are posted on the classroom wall so all children can easily see them. Usually, word walls are arranged alphabetically, with words starting with a certain letter listed under that letter for easy location.
- **word recognition**—The ability to identify printed words and to translate them into their corresponding sounds quickly and accurately so as to figure out their meanings.

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RESOURCES FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

The following web sites can provide you with useful information about learning to read.

The Partnership for Reading. www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading

National Parent Information Network (NPIN). www.npin.org

National Institute for Literacy (NIFL). www.nifl.gov

No Child Left Behind web site describes the current education law and how it affects K-3 schools, parents, and children. www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.html

Reading Rockets offers activities and ideas for building your child's reading skills at home. www.readingrockets.org/families

PBS Parents can help parents learn how children become readers and writers by helping them develop by talking, reading, and writing together every day. www.pbs.org/parents/readinglanguage

The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans offers resources on helping the language development of infants and young children. www.yesican.gov/earlychildhood/index.html

The American Federation of Teachers web site offers pages for parents on building strong partnerships with schools. www.aft.org/parents/index.htm

The National Education Association web site contains information on parent involvement in literacy and other topics. www.nea.org/parents/index.html

Parents as Teachers National Center suggests ways for parents to interact with their children to develop early literacy. www.parentsasteachers.org

Resource list provided by the Parent Information and Resource Centers, U.S. Department of Education.