Learning about Your Child’s Reading Development
Facilitator’s Guide: Skills Needed to Read

For more information: [https://improvingliteracy.org/kit/learning-about-yourchilds-reading-development](https://improvingliteracy.org/kit/learning-about-yourchilds-reading-development)

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Overview of The National Center on Improving Literacy (NCIL)
The NCIL’s mission is to increase access to, and use of, evidence-based approaches to screen, identify, and teach pre-K to grade 12 students with literacy-related disabilities, including dyslexia.
Note: This slide explains why the topic is important/the session big ideas.

Skills needed to learn to read. Reading involves many different skills that must be taught to your child. Learning these skills does not come naturally. They take practice to master, just like playing a sport or learning arithmetic. Explicit instruction in phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension in school is necessary for your child to learn to read. You can also help your child read by practicing skills learned at school.
Learning Objectives

• To learn evidence-based information on the skills needed to learn to read
• To learn how to interact with children in ways that support and monitor their language and reading development

Note: Participant learning objectives to display and communicate when the workshop begins
What is reading? Reading is a complex system of making meaning from print that requires many skills. Reading successfully involves both correct word reading (accuracy and fluency) and understanding material read (meaning). This is called the simple view of reading. Explicit and systematic instruction in the skills needed to read accurately, fluency, and with meaning is key to becoming a skilled reader later. These skills are discussed next. Click the simple view of reading icon to learn more. Click Watch Video to hear Dr. G. Reid Lyon discuss the process of reading.

**Video:** Play Reading Rockets (1.20)
What we do know is that at this time, reading is critical. It’s much more critical because of the internet, it is much more critical to make a living. You see a lot of individual differences in kids as they come into the early grades and even preschool and kindergarten on their development if these basic capabilities. Some teachers will say, “Well you don’t have to teach all of these skills because I got quite a few kids that seem to know them just on their own.”; it does appear natural. When we study those children and then go back and study what they did at home we find their parents are very good teachers. These are not naturally acquired skills. Reading is a skill. It’s like piano playing, it’s like tennis, it’s like anything that incorporates a number of subcomponents. The upshot is that parents can be extraordinarily good teachers and provide a number of foundational skills that lead teachers sometimes to think that it is a natural process. It’s not taught it’s just inherent; that’s not true. Reading is not natural. I can’t stress this enough. If reading were natural, why are there so many languages, oral language using cultures on the planet who have not yet developed a written language? And if reading were natural, why are there so many young kids from poverty who have yet not acquired the skill in some way?

**Guiding questions:** What skills are needed for your child’s sports or hobbies? In what ways do you help
them in these activities? How might this help look for supporting your child’s skills in reading?
Reading happens in the brain, but because reading is not a natural process, your child’s brain is not organized to read. Luckily, we have a strong understanding of how readers use their brains to read. The temporo-parietal region of the brain supports the integration of letter-sound patterns. The occipito-temporal region supports the rapid identification of letters and words. The inferior frontal regions have also been linked with language related skills. To read, these areas of your child’s brain must work together. This makes it a complicated process involving many learned skills.
To write and read words correctly and with understanding, your child starts developing key skills at an early age. The foundation of reading and writing is based on the interaction between spoken language and written language skills. Language can be spoken and heard or written and read. Strong language skills build a better foundation for learning to read and write.
Spoken language is understanding and using sounds, words, and ideas from speaking and listening. You can use and talk about sounds, vocabulary, and grammar with your child. Experience listening and speaking improves language skills. Limited experience, or difficulties with speech, language, and communication skills can interfere with learning to read. Click Watch Video for how to help your child develop spoken language.

Video: Play Read Charlotte (.46)
Kids can handle more than we think when it comes to vocabulary. When talking with kids, we often use words we know they’ll understand. But it’s easier than you think to teach them new words, and expanding their vocabulary is key to becoming a strong reader. Try using more descriptive words when talking with young children. When you catch yourself saying, “Please give me that.” Try saying, “Please hand the pitcher to mommy.”

Activity: Ask participants the following questions to answer: “Let’s try it out. Instead of saying,
• “Please put your clothes away, what could you say?” (Please put your clothes in the laundry basket/hamper/closet/dresser)
• “It looks like you’re feeling mad, what could you say?” (It looks like you’re feeling angry/upset/bothered/frustrated)
Written language is understanding and using sounds, words, and ideas from reading and writing. There is a clear relationship between spoken and written language. This relationship is stressed in the “simple view of reading”. Once your child can read printed words, he or she applies the same skills used to understand spoken words to understand what is being read.
One part of spoken language is phonological awareness. Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize that spoken words are made up of individual sounds parts, including individual sounds called phonemes. Phonemic awareness is the ability to identify and play with individual sounds in spoken words. To read and spell, your child must understand how language works so he can read words later. Children with reading difficulties may develop phonological awareness slower than typical readers. As your child gets older, the need for phonological awareness instruction typically lessens unless he continue to struggle with these skills. Click See It In Action for how to help your child with phonemic awareness. Click Watch Video to learn what effective phonological awareness instruction looks like. Click Learn More to see NCIL’s interactive Ask & Answer: phonological awareness.

**Video: Play** Read Charlotte (1.26)
Narrator: What is phonemic awareness? This is the key to learning to read. It is the ability to hear, identify, and play with sounds and words. When children can identify sounds, this will help them when they begin to read. Phonemic awareness is the realization that within a word are individual sounds or phonemes. Just to be clear, phonics focuses on teaching sounds-spelling relationships and is associated with print. Phonemic awareness tasks are oral. Sometimes kids leave off the ending sounds to words. Like mom, I hurt my han instead of hand. Have a pile of items like Legos and sit at a table. Each time they hear a sound in a word have them put a Lego on the table. Man: What’s the first sound you hear in the word back? Girl: /b/. Man: Good, good. Now what’s the second sound you hear in back? Girl: /a/. Man: Good job. And what is the last sound you hear in back? Girl: /ck/. Man: Great, good job. Narrator: They can go back and touch each Lego to repeat /b/-/a/-/ck/, then say back.

**Video: Play** Building RTI Capacity (1.02)
During the next few minutes we’ll take you inside these classrooms to see how teachers use systematic explicit instruction to teach the major components of reading. Let’s begin with phonemic awareness. As early readers recognize that spoken words are made up of individual sounds or phonemes, they begin to learn how to segment words into sounds and put them back together. Teacher: How many sounds did you hear in that word? Child: Three. Teacher: Good job. Now let’s blend it all back together to say the word. Children: Cake. Teacher: Good. Narrator: Teachers plan phonemic awareness activities that help students make the connection between sounds and letters. Teacher: Now let’s say the letter that says /f/. Name it. Students: F. Teacher: Place it in the bottom pocket. Narrator: As students learn to link sounds and letters they can apply this knowledge to reading and spelling.

**Guiding questions to check for understanding:** Why is phonemic awareness important for learning to read? What did the teacher do or say when working with the child? (Asked questions, told the child exactly what to do, gave feedback when child answered, told the child the answer when needed)
Note: Click Learn More to show participants the landing page for the Ask & Answer: phonological awareness module and recommend that they review it on their own.
Another part of spoken language is vocabulary. To read, your child must understand the meaning of words, phrases, and ideas and how to say and use them correctly. He learns vocabulary in two ways: indirectly, by hearing and seeing words as he listens, talks, and reads; and directly by adults teaching him the meanings of words and word parts. Before he can read, your child often learns the meaning of words, phrases, and ideas in books read aloud by listening to and talking about them. For example, understanding what the word “hot” means and that there are other words with similar meanings, such as humid, sultry, sizzling, and sweltering. Your child will also use word parts and their meanings, or morphology, to understand what words mean. For example, here is the word “friend.” When an “s” is added to the end, it makes it plural — more than one friend. If an “-ly” is added to the end of “friend,” it becomes “friendly,” and the meaning changes to acting like a friend. When “un-” is added to the beginning of “friendly,” the word changes to “unfriendly,” and so does its meaning — not friendly. Click See It In Action for how to help your child with vocabulary.

**Video: Play** Read Charlotte (1.30)

Tier one words are words that kids often show up to kindergarten already knowing like baby, father, jump, and birthday. They are words that are used in every day conversation, so the meanings of these words don’t have to be taught. Tier two words, however, need to be taught in order to strengthen a child’s comprehension skills. These are words like remorse or tend. When you come across these words in a story, think of these as teachable moments. Woman: So the rabbit felt remorse for what he had done. Do you know what the word remorse means? (child shakes her head no) Woman: He felt badly and he wished he had been nicer to the frog. Can you say the word remorse? Child: remorse. Woman: That’s good. Has there ever been a time where you felt remorse, maybe? Felt really bad or guilty for something you’ve done? Child: Yeah, when I didn’t let Jessica play with the ball. Woman: Yeah, it’s okay, though. Narrator: Instead of replacing remorse with bad so that your child understands, teach them the meaning of remorse. By doing this, you’re helping your child say the word and then use the word in their own context, so it becomes familiar to them and helps
grow their vocabulary.

**Activity:** Say to participants: “Think back to the questions we discussed before: “Please put your clothes away, what could you say?” (Please put your clothes in the laundry basket/hamper/closet/dresser). “It looks like you’re feeling mad, what could you say?” (It looks like you’re feeling angry/upset/bothered/frustrated). Let’s think of a kid-friendly way to explain some of these tier two words, like hamper. For example, “A hamper is a holder for dirty clothes.” Have participants pair up to write a kid-friendly explanation on a sticky note for one of the words shared in the earlier activity and have a couple of volunteers share out or post responses on chart paper.
The last part of spoken language in listening comprehension. Before your child can read, she often makes sense of books read aloud to her by listening to and talking about the sounds, letters, words, and ideas she hears. This is called listening comprehension, or the ability to understand what others read and say to you. Vocabulary and knowledge of the world are closely linked. When your child knows things about the world she is better able to understand what she reads.
One part of written language is print awareness. Print awareness is knowing about print and books and how they are used. Children who know about print understand that the words they see in print and the words they speak and hear are related. Alphabet knowledge is the ability to name the 26 letters in the English alphabet and know their sounds. Children who go to kindergarten knowing and writing the alphabet have an easier time learning to read. Click Watch Video to hear how to pronounce letter sounds. Click See It In Action for how to help your child with letters and sounds.

**Video: Play Watch Video** Read Charlotte (1.24)
Narrator: It’s common for adults to think saying letter sounds is easy. If you’re teaching children to read, it’s important you know the correct sounds, so you can teach them how to blend them into words. Some letters have more than one sound. We’re going to start with the sounds you should teach young readers first. /a/, /b/, /c/, /d/, (pronouncing each sound and displaying its letter in the alphabet).

**Activity:** Provide time for participants to pair up and practice making the letter sounds. Encourage participants to “clip” the consonant sounds at the end when saying them so as not to add a schwa sound (i.e., try not to add a vowel sound after). For example, the sound of b is /b/ not /buh/.

**Video: Play See It In Action** Read Charlotte (.56)
Narrator: Kids must learn the letters of the alphabet and the sounds of the letters. When they understand the connection between letter and their sounds, then they will begin to understand that letters put together form words. This is the very foundation of reading. What sound does each letter make? Point out letters when you see them at the grocery store on signs, on junk mail at home, or the letters we see in our names. What sound do you hear at the beginning of boat? /b/. Practice this each time you ride in the car together. Tell your child words, and have them make the beginning sound they hear, then tell you the matching letter.
Guiding question to check for understanding: Why is print awareness and alphabet knowledge important for learning to read?
Another part of written language is phonics. Phonics is the process of using letter sound relationships to read and spell words. Phonics instruction helps your child learn the alphabetic principle — the understanding that letters match individual sounds in words. To read and spell, your child must understand that words are made of letters, that letters represent the sounds we hear in speech, and use these letter-sound connections to sound out, or decode, words or encode, or write words. Children with reading difficulties may develop word reading skills slower than typical readers. As your child get older, the need for phonics instruction typically lessens unless she continue to struggle with these skills. Click See It In Action to watch how you can support your child in phonics. Click Watch Video to learn what effective phonics instruction looks like. Click Learn More to see NCIL’s interactive Ask & Answer: phonics module.

**Video: Play See It Action** Read Charlotte (.32)
Narrator: Learn to read short words. Grab a blank piece of paper. Write two or three letter words like hat, top, or it. Draw a line under it. Draw a dot under each letter. Then practice reading the word while sliding your finger under each letter, dot to dot. Practice reading it slowly and quickly.

**Video: Play Watch Video** Building RTI Capacity (1.20)
Narrator: Phonics and word study. Explicit systematic phonics instruction includes teaching letter-sound relations. Teacher: Name the letter. Teacher and children: V. /v/, the keyword, valentine, that sound is /v/. Narrator: This first-grade teacher shows his students how to blend sounds to read words. Teacher: We’re going to do the -ar family. I want you decode the word, blend the sounds together and then say the word, okay? Child: /b/: /ar/. Bar. /c/: /ar/. Car. Narrator: He systematically assesses each child’s progress, collecting information about the students’ skills that will help him develop further instruction to meet each child’s needs. Teacher: You’re doing great. Narrator: Students need opportunities to practice and apply what they’ve learned. So it’s essential to provide reading texts that include decodable words. Words that students can sound out and read using their phonics knowledge. Word study lessons teach students to identify spelling patterns, word parts, and other phonics elements, strengthening their ability to read and spell words. Research shows through systematic explicit phonics instruction, students improve their reading and spelling skills.
Guiding question to check for understanding: Why is phonics instruction important for learning to read?

Note: Click Learn More to show participants the landing page for the Ask & Answer: phonics module and recommend that they review it on their own.
The last part of written language is reading comprehension. As a reader, your child applies many of the same skills she uses when listening to books to make sense of ones she’s reading. This is called reading comprehension, or the ability to understand what you are reading. Your child’s reading comprehension can also improve when she writes about what she reads. Click Learn More for how to help your child with her listening and reading comprehension. Click Watch Video to learn what effective vocabulary and comprehension instruction looks like.

**Video:** Play Learn More Read Charlotte (1.17)
Narrator: We want children to be making meaning from all the books and stories they are reading. As they read more and more on their own, we want to make sure they are developing skills to deepen their comprehension. We can check this by asking some questions before, during, and after reading. Before: while reading the title and looking at the cover, ask your child, “Does this story seem to remind you of anything you’ve ever seen in your own life?” During: while reading the story, check in to see if they’re getting the gist of the text. “Can you tell me what that means?” After: when they’ve reached the end of the story, have them think back on it. “What are some interesting facts from that story? Does this remind you of another story you’ve read?” Activating kids’ thinking about a story before they read, checking in with them as they read, and reflecting back after they read is a powerful strategy to help kids build meaning from the texts they read.

**Video:** Play Watch Video Building RTI Capacity (2.37)
Comprehension instruction is more than just asking questions to assess students understanding. To be effective it takes direct teaching and modeling of procedures along with guided and independent student practice before, during, and after reading. This teacher uses comprehension question cards to demonstrate the kinds of questions student can ask themselves while they read to improve their understanding. Before reading the teacher previews the text. Teacher: What do you already know about the topic Morgan?” Child: It’s gonna be about dinosaurs. Teacher: Ok, what do you already know about dinosaurs?” Child: They became extinct. Narrator: During reading, the teacher shows how to use questions to trigger thinking that enhances comprehension. Teacher: Why wouldn’t meat-eaters have to be faster than plant eaters? Child: So they can catch their prey very fast, faster. Teacher: So we’ve answered this question, does this make sense? Narrator: Follow-up questions help the students sum up what they learned from reading and stimulate new questions that could lead to further reading and research. From teacher demonstration to independent practice, these students are learning when and how to use comprehension strategies. Teachers develop student thinking and speaking skills as they ask questions and discuss what they read. Teacher: Does this cover remind you of anything, like a place that you’ve been? Narrator: Effective comprehension instruction includes teaching students to recognize text structures, identifying the beginning, middle, and end of a story, along with the characters, setting, problem, and solution. And teachers demonstrate strategies that students can use to identify the main idea of a text and write a
summary. Teacher: If we go back to the beginning and read all of those sentences that we have made and we have gotten the gist of all the small parts of the story, we take all those main ideas and we put them all together and we have a summary of the story. You see how we have just a little bit from here and a little from there? Did we retell the whole story? No, we didn’t retell the whole story, we just got the gist. We had the most important part and this is a good way to summarize a story. Narrator: Of course understanding word meanings, vocabulary is critical to reading comprehension. Teacher: Who can tell me something about this word that has to do with a penguin?”
Child: One million penguins can live in a rectory. Teacher: Exactly, that’s a lot of what? Children: Penguins. Narrator: Teachers provide direct instruction in vocabulary along with time to read a wide range of texts to expand student’s knowledge of words.

Guiding question to check for understanding: What should effective comprehension instruction look like?
Spoken and written language interact throughout the skill of fluency. Fluency is the ability to read words and reading material correctly, with enough speed (rate) and expression. To do this, your child needs to correctly and quickly apply all of his or her spoken and written language skills. Reading connected text daily, like phrases, sentences, and passages, is important to build fluency skills. Fluent word reading is helped by your child’s knowledge of both vocabulary and grammar. Reading fluently allows time for making sense of what is being read. Often, beginning readers do not read fluently. Click Learn More for how to help your child with fluency. Click Watch Video to learn what effective fluency instruction looks like.

**Video: Play Learn More Read Charlotte (1:51)**

Narrator: Fluency is being able to read words in stories easily, quickly, and correctly. Kids who can read accurately, quickly, and with expression, will have a much easier time understanding what they’ve read because they won’t be stuck on sounding out words. There are three ways to enhance fluency skills: echo reading, partner reading, and repeated reading. Echo reading: Man: I’m going read the line first and then you’re going repeat after me, okay? The man across the way was tuning a guitar. Child: The man across the way was tuning a guitar.” Man: yes! Narrator: Partner reading: this gives parents the chance to model good fluency or smooth reading for the child. It also gives them the opportunity to listen to their child read and offer helpful feedback. Man: The library opens at nine o’clock, but Lola is ready to go long before then. Child: The librarian buzzes them through the machine. Narrator: Repeated reading, this is when a kid reads the same paragraph or page over and over again, reading more smoothly and with more expression each time. Child: Now the moment had come to launch the boat. Would it float? It did. Woman: Okay, that’s great, but let stop you for a second. When you read, you want to sound like you’re talking, like when we talk to each other, right? So, say it more like you’re talking like, “Now the moment had come to launch the boat. Would it float? It did!” You try.” Child: Now the moment had come to launch the boat. Would it float? It did! It did. Woman: Good job.

**Video: Play Watch Video Building RTI Capacity (2.19)**

Narrator: Let’s see how effective fluency instruction helps children become better readers. When children read fluently, it means they’re able to read words quickly and accurately with little effort. They are able to take what they’ve learned about letter sounds, and word parts and put it all together to automatically recognize words and phrases. Teacher: Good expression, Nathaniel. Narrator: Students develop fluency through repeated reading activities. Reading a familiar text several times. Partner reading is one research-based fluency activity. A strong reader is paired with a less able reader, and each student takes turns reading the same passage. The stronger reader begins providing a model for fluent reading. The other student helps her with a word she got wrong. Both students benefit from the extra practice with the text. With the whole class together, this teacher models fluent reading. Teacher: Boys and girls we’re going to be doing some echo reading so that we can become even better readers. More fluent readers. Once upon a time in a big
cave past the volcano on the left lived the grunt tribe. Narrator: Teachers may work with a small group of students with similar instructional needs in order to provide support and feedback. Teacher: Choose a familiar book that you’re going to read. Narrator: As with all elements of reading instruction, ongoing classroom based assessment is essential. For fluency, that includes regular assessments of students’ reading rate and accuracy. This teacher shows a student how to keep track of improvement in his reading rate as he reads a passage several times. Teachers chart a course toward reading success for their students when they plan fluency building activities that provide opportunities to read and re-read a wide variety of appropriate level text.

**Guiding question to check for understanding:** What should effective fluency instruction look like?
Here are some ways you can help set the stage for your child’s language and reading success. Click the image to read more about them. Click Watch Video to hear about the ABCs of active reading at home. When your child starts school, ask: Does the reading program include all skills of reading?, how does my child review and practice reading skills? and how does my child receive teacher feedback on his reading skills and progress?

**Video: Play Read Charlotte (3:40)**
So you care for a child, a son, daughter, maybe a sibling, our grandchild, maybe even an entire classroom of children. It’s fun, rewarding and oh my gosh, sometimes overwhelming. It’s hard to keep up with all the dos, don’ts, must-haves, and don’t even get me started on all the opinions on the Internet. We know reading is important to children’s development, so what you might not know is the difference between reading to kids and reading with them. It’s called active reading and it works with children six months to sixth grade and you can do it anywhere. Riding the bus, during snack time, or morning drop-off, waiting for food to be delivered at a restaurant, before bedtime. It only takes 15 minutes to have an impact. Here’s how it works. Just remember ABC. A: ask questions, the kind that start a conversation about the book. Questions that begin with words like: what, how, who and why. You can start before you even open the book by asking, “Look at the cover and title. What do you think the story will be about?” Or, once you’re reading say, “Tell me what’s happening on this page? What do you think will happen next?” Open-ended questions engage kids in books and gets them talking and thinking about them. Next the B of the ABCs of active reading: Build vocabulary. Learning new words help kids become stronger readers. You can help children identify new words by asking what words mean. For example, you might ask, “What’s a beverage?” You can connect words with pictures by asking questions such as, “Who is drinking the beverage?” and connect new words to those they already know by saying something like, “A beverage is a type of drink like the milk you have every morning.” You can also act out the book by using facial expressions, sounds, or movements to show them what the words mean. For example, don’t just say the word whisper, actually whisper as you say it. Finally, the C of the ABCs of active reading: Connect to kids’ worlds. Relate the book to things children already know to help them learn more about the world around them. For example, you might pick a moment in the story and say, “Tell me about your favorite thing to do in the park.” Or if you’re reading a book about the weather you might say, “It’s raining on this page. Do you remember when it was raining? What do you like to do when it’s raining? Yes, jump in puddles! Do you see anyone jumping in puddles in this picture?” That’s it, the end. A ask questions, B build vocabulary, and C connect to kids’ worlds. Active reading for just 15 minutes, just three times a week, makes a huge difference in children’s language development and reading ability. And when you make it a part of your day, it becomes a fun and rewarding habit that you and the children you care about, enjoy and look forward to. For more examples, questions and resources on active reading, visit ReadCharlotte.org. Open books, open opportunities start engaging in active reading today to give kids the tools they need to be strong readers and begin a life long love of reading.
Resource: Distribute, review, and discuss How Families Promote Early Literacy with participants. Tell participants they can refer to this infographic for ideas on how to set positive early literacy experiences for their child.

Resource: Distribute, review, and discuss Route to Reading: Map It Out with participants. Tell participants they can ask these questions when talking to their child’s teacher.
You have now completed the section on the skills your child needs to learn to read. For more information on these skills, see NCIL’s Learning Literacy Glossary. For more tips and activities for supporting your child in these skills at home, see NCIL’s tutorial on Supporting Your Child’s Literacy Development at Home. Click on the bar to continue or the home icon to return to the main menu.

Note: This completes Session 1: Skills Needed to Learn to Read.
Questions?

Slide to use for soliciting questions from participants and discussing answers on session content and related information at the end of the workshop. Review the big ideas from all three sessions and clarify as needed.
Thank You!

• [insert contact information]

Slide for inserting contact information so participants can communicate with you after the workshop.