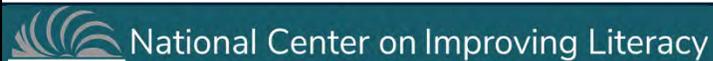


Learning about Your Child's Reading Development

Facilitator's Guide: Why Children Might Struggle to Read

For more information: <https://improvingliteracy.org/kit/learning-about-your-childs-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.



Why Children Might Struggle to Read

Continue

Note: This slide explains why the topic is important/the session big ideas.

Why your child might struggle to read. Sometimes it is just temporary, while other times it may point to a deeper learning issue.

Learning Objectives

- To learn evidence-based information on the reasons why children might struggle to read
- To improve ability to determine if children are receiving effective reading practices in school
- 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.

Why Children Might Struggle to Read



Learning to read is a complex process.



Watch
Video

Video provided by:



Understood

Watch on YouTube



Learning to read is a complex process involving many skills and your child can struggle for many reasons. Reading difficulties are most common in the earliest stages of reading, but some children continue to struggle or show new difficulties in later grades. It is important to find out early if your child is lagging behind so he doesn't miss out on the kind of early reading instruction and practice that helps him become a successful reader later. Schools can do this by screening all children's early reading skills starting in kindergarten. Click Watch Video to watch Margie Gillis discuss why learning to read is harder than learning to speak.

Video: Play Watch Video Understood (2.07)

Margie Gillis: Learning to speak and understand language is natural for most human beings. We are biologically wired to do that and it is part of our human heritage. We're born to do that and unless we have some language problem that we're born with, we acquire a language just by being exposed. By being with caregivers, parents, siblings, peers that surround us with language. And it's just magical to see it unfold. Learning to read, on the other hand, is a cultural invention. So our brains just don't come with that wiring. And it's relatively recent, five thousand years, that we've had some system that actually represents spoken language. We didn't have, you know, an alphabet. We wouldn't be able to convey our thoughts, and perpetuate, you know, ideas. So it's a wonderful thing, but it's a challenging thing. Because what we have to do, is to use areas of the brain, left hemisphere, that are really wired for humans to acquire language. And we have to build a neuro circuitry to be able to skillfully and automatically, effortlessly, pull words off the page while making meaning. And for some children, that is just a very difficult thing to do. It has nothing to do with intelligence. It has nothing to do with exposure. It has everything to do with, "I was born with this brain." And skilled reading instruction will address those neurobiological differences.

Guiding question to check for understanding: Why is learning to read harder than learning to speak?

Why Children Might Struggle to Read



/s/ /ū/ /n/

Phonemes, or sounds, are written with slashes.



Watch Video

Video provided by:



Understood

Watch on YouTube



Your child might struggle to read because she has trouble recognizing speech sounds. For example, saying the beginning sound “s” in the spoken word “sun”, blending and taking apart individual sounds in spoken words, like /s/-/u/-/n/ is sun and nest is /n/-/e/-/s/-/t/, and saying the sound parts in longer spoken words. Learning how spoken words can be broken into smaller speech sounds helps your child hear how language works so she can read and spell words later. Click Watch Video to learn about ways you can help your child with speech sounds and connecting them to letters.

Video: Play Watch Video Understood (3.00)

Elizabeth Babbin: Children with reading issues often struggle to connect letters to sounds or to rhyme words. Learning how sounds fit together to make words is a critical step toward becoming a good reader and speller. This is often a big issue for kids with dyslexia. That’s why it’s important to help your child practice these skills often and in a way that’s fun and low-stress for both of you. For example, you might see the letters “C” and “H” on the handles of a faucet while you’re helping your child wash up. You can say, “Look, this handle says ‘C’ because it’s the cold water, ccccold. Can you think of other words that start with a /c/ sound? Or at the grocery store, you can make a game out of looking for items that start with the same sound as your child’s name. Rhyming’s easy to work into everyday life, too. Just singing rhyming songs together is a terrific way to help your child have fun with rhyme. Also, if you’re out and about and your child points out, for example, a cat, you can suggest that you try to see how many words you can both think of that rhyme with cat. Take this idea one step further by helping your child break apart the sounds in words. So you can say, “Hey there’s a chair. What word would we have if you took away the /ch/ from chair?” When your child figures out that the answer is air, then ask, “What word would you make if you added a /h/ sound to the beginning of air?” You can keep going from there.

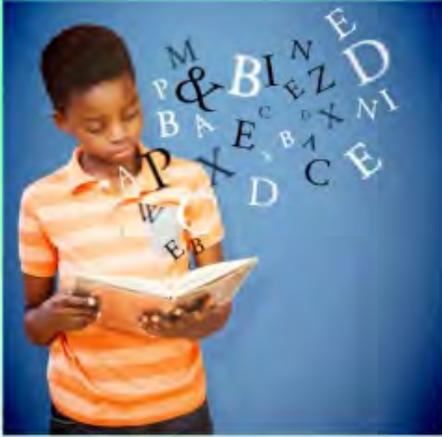
Activity: “Let’s try it out. Here’s a pen. Can you think of another word that starts with the /p/ sound?” Ask

participants to respond (e.g., paper, party, puppy). “Can you think of a word that rhymes with pen?” Ask participants to respond (e.g., ten, hen, when, glen). Note: Rhyming words are words that sound the same at the end. “What sound would we have if we took away the /p/ from pen?” Ask participants to respond (en). “What word would we make if we added a /th/ sound to the beginning of /en/” Ask participants to respond (then).

Why Children Might Struggle to Read



Trouble recognizing words.



Sub

Under or below

Your child might struggle to read because he has trouble recognizing individual words. His ability to sound out words successfully, or decode, strongly contributes to his reading success. Using word parts and their meanings when sounding out words helps your child link known words with unknown ones. For example, knowing the meaning of “sub,” which is under or below, in the word “subway” may help him understand the words “subgroup” and “subdivide.” Children with reading difficulties often struggle to recognize the meanings of word parts compared to typical readers. Phonics instruction helps develop your child’s decoding skills. Knowing and using phonics gives him a strong tool for reading words correctly and making sense of what he’s reading.

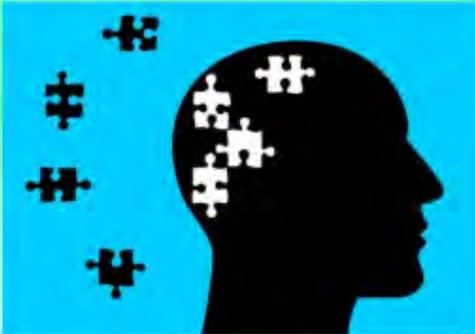
Activity: Display the following words on chart paper: play, playing, playful, replay, playhouse. Put the word play in the middle and put the other words around it. Connect the other words to play with lines. Point out the known word play (in the middle) and then underline it in all of the words to show how the words are related to one another. Discuss how the meanings of the words change based on the word parts (play + -ing = playing, meaning “to play now”; play + -ful = playful, meaning “full of play”; re- + play = replay, meaning “to play again”; play + house + playhouse, meaning “a house to play”). Point out that using word parts like base or root words, affixes, and word parts helps children to connect known words to unknown ones to decipher their pronunciations and meanings. Ask participants to think of sentences using the words play, playing, playful, replay, and

playhouse appropriately.

Why Children Might Struggle to Read



Trouble understanding what is read



[Learn More](#)
Middle & High School

[en español](#)

[Learn More](#)

[Watch Video](#)

Video provided by:



[Watch on YouTube](#)



Your child might struggle read because she has trouble understanding what she reads. Children who find reading difficult often do not read very much. So, they miss out on lots of amounts of reading practice that builds their fluency and vocabulary. Fluent readers are usually able to concentrate better on the meaning of what they are reading instead of thinking about decoding words. If your child has limited background knowledge of words and their meanings, it makes it more difficult for her to learn the meaning of new words. Over time, her limited background knowledge and vocabulary begin to gradually affect her ability to understand what she reads. Click Watch Video to hear ways you can help your child build her vocabulary. Click Learn More for tips for helping your child’s reading comprehension.

Video: Play Watch Video Understood (3.07)

Elizabeth Babbin: Explain in the Context of the Story. Let’s say you read a story together that uses the word ‘reluctant.’ Pause and explain what it means. Then describe how it’s being used within the context of that story. You might say, “In the story, Jessie was reluctant to go into the swimming pool because the water was so cold.” But don’t stop there. It’s really helpful if you can follow with your own example. “I was always reluctant to go roller skating when I was a kid because I was afraid I’d fall.” Then ask your child to come up with several of his own examples. Ask him about things that he’s reluctant to do. Maybe he’ll tell you that he’s reluctant to eat a certain food or to share his favorite gadget with his sister. It’s also good to have him make some judgments about how to use the word. For example, you might say, “If you were tired, would you be reluctant to run around the track?” Or, “If you’re thirsty, would you be reluctant to drink some water?” Do a Vocabulary Sketch. If your child enjoys drawing, he might even like to do a vocabulary sketch. For example, if he hates broccoli, he could draw himself in front of a bowl of broccoli with a speech bubble that says, “I’m reluctant to eat broccoli.” Doing these things with your child can help him understand and remember what the new word means. Use Technology. Another great way to build vocabulary is to use technology. Audiobooks and text-to-speech can be great tools for struggling readers. You can find helpful apps and other

resources like Bookshare on Understood's Tech Finder tool. Building your child's vocabulary will help him develop a greater command of language and ideas, and that can make all the difference in becoming a successful reader.

Resource: Distribute copies, review, and discuss Learn More Middle & High School documents with participants. Tell participants to scan the information in relation to their child's age and refer back to the documents later for further review.

Why Children Might Struggle to Read



Limited English language skills.



If your child has limited English language skills, he might struggle to read because he may not yet understand the English language when it is spoken. It is very difficult for your child to read a language when he does not speak and understand it when listening. If your child speaks another language well then instruction in his native language can be used to extend his native literacy skills to reading in English.

Why Children Might Struggle to Read



Limited experience with books.



Your child might struggle because she lacks experience with books and print before coming to school. Kindergartners who are underprepared in language and early literacy skills are especially in need effective reading programs and explicit instruction. They usually need extra support to address issues related to their lack of experience, like in knowing how books work or connecting speech to print. Extra support can help children overcome early reading difficulties based on inexperience. It is never too late to share book experiences with your child.

Why Children Might Struggle to Read



Mismatch between instruction and need.

Effective reading instruction in foundational reading skills includes:

- Learning the structure of language
 - speech sounds
 - alphabetic principle
- Applying these skills in books daily



Your child might struggle to read because of a mismatch between classroom instruction and her individual needs. Children with or at risk for literacy-related disabilities like dyslexia require effective and ample reading instruction in foundational reading skills. These skills include learning the structure of language, like speech sounds and the alphabetic principle, and applying these skills in books daily. Reading instruction in these skills should be explicit and systematic. Explicit instruction is teaching that is direct and step-by-step, including explaining and showing how to do something. Systematic instruction is teaching that has a carefully planned sequence, including teaching necessary skills first, building from easier to more difficult tasks, and breaking down harder skills into smaller parts. When your child still struggles even with effective instruction, interventions are needed that target the specific types of skills and knowledge that are interfering with her reading growth and have evidence of effectiveness for improving these skills and knowledge. Effective instruction is a key ingredient for helping prevent reading difficulties. You can ask your child's school:

are phonological awareness, phonics, and spelling taught explicitly and systematically?, does the phonics instruction focus on blending and segmenting sounds to read and spell words?, are there opportunities for my child to read books that have the phonics skills she's learned in them?, and when my child reads aloud, is she encouraged to look carefully at printed words and use decoding skills to read unfamiliar words? Click [Learn More](#) for information on effective reading interventions.

Resource: **Distribute copies, review, and discuss** Route to Reading: Check for Potholes with participants. Tell participants they can ask these questions when talking to their child's teacher.

Note: Click Learn More to show participants the information on effective reading interventions and encourage them to review it on their own.

Why Children Might Struggle to Read



All children with reading difficulties are not the same. Because children may struggle to read for different reasons, your child often has a specific profile of strengths and weakness in reading skills and strategies. For example, some children may read words quickly and correctly, but may have trouble understanding. Others may read words well but do so slowly. Some children might struggle with word reading but understand. While others may have difficulty in one or more of these areas. Whatever the reason, your child needs instruction that is more explicit and intensive than those who don't struggle. Click [Learn More](#) for information on how to discuss strengths and weaknesses with your child.

Note: **Click** [Learn More](#) and read the main points in bold aloud to participants. Encourage participants to review the additional information on their own.



Why Children Might Struggle to Read

[Continue to the Next Section](#)

You have now completed the section on why your child might struggle to read. Click on the bar to continue or the home icon to return to the main menu.

Note: This completes Session 3: Why Children Might Struggle 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.