



## Stages of Development

### The Pre-Reader: 1-4 Years



Children will arrive at the pre-reading stage when adults begin to read stories to them and they begin to listen. The pre-reading stage can actually begin in infancy and will last until a child begins to actively learn to read, usually for the first four years of their lives. The emerging reader phase therefore encompasses years of language experience and cognitive, social and emotional development.

#### Focus of the Pre-Reading Stage

As a child progresses through the pre-reading stage, adults supporting the child can focus on the following goals for the child's reading development:

- Understanding that printed words carry meaning and messages
- Grasping direction in reading: left to right, top to bottom, page turn
- Learning to match voice to print; 'one to one' matching by using their finger to 'track' the words across the page as they are read
- Becoming familiar with and being capable of recognising and reproducing all the letters of the alphabet
- Starting to notice and use beginning sounds of words and some ending sounds
- Recognising sight words

#### Texts for Pre-Readers

When reading with pre-readers, the following type of texts work best:

- Large print which is easy to see, with space between words
- Text which is consistently placed on the page; a familiar pattern is easier to follow, for example having one or two lines of print per page, with a variety of punctuation
- Repeated patterns, phrases and conventions
- Texts that introduce many common words that the child is going to encounter on a regular basis
- Predictable stories to engage the child's attention: a simple story line or single idea, with direct correspondence between texts and pictures
- Books which focus on familiar topics and stimulate the child to use their prior knowledge
- Compelling and colourful illustrations will support the child's engagement in the story and help imprint it on their memory



## Stages of Development Younger Readers: 4-5 Years



Once a child begins the process of learning to read, they will move into the younger reader stage. The child will be learning to understand printed words and the meaning of those words. They will also be figuring out the combinations of letters as symbols used to represent speech and learning to understand the relationships between written letters, symbols and spoken words.

### Focus of the Younger Reading Stage

In this stage the literacy skills nurtured in the pre-reader stage will be strengthened and used as a foundation to build on the child's reading skills.

- Teach the child to recognise and reproduce all capital and lower case letters of the alphabet
- Focus on word recognition
- Encourage the child to practice reading simple text fluently
- Encourage them to use other words in the sentence that they already know and pictures to help decode words as they are reading

### Texts for Younger Readers

When choosing texts for reading sessions with younger readers, it will be helpful to bear the following points in mind to ensure that the type of book or story chosen matches and challenges the child's growing ability.

- Longer sentences with more lines of text on the page
- Stories that feature changes in sentence patterns and punctuation
- Some repetition but with the introduction of new types of sentence structure
- A larger range of words which occur frequently to support the child increasing their vocabulary including compound and multi-syllable words
- While pictures should still play a key role in the story, the text should be given more prominence
- Continue to choose stories that explore familiar topics but in a variety of ways to offer the child new perspectives and introduce new, more abstract ideas
- Introduce texts which feature changes of tense in sentences



## Stages of Development Developing Readers: 5-6 Years



The transition into the developing or decoding stage is often marked by the absence of awkward pronunciations. The former hesitancy of a beginning reader being replaced by the sounds of a more confident reader.

In this stage of learning to read, the process itself does not stop once a child learns how to decode words. The child will add at least 3,000 words to the store of words they can decode. They will be learning the variations of the vowel-based rhymes and vowel pairs.

If the child is going to develop as an increasingly successful reader in this stage, they need to build up a repertoire of the letter-patterns and vowel-pairs that help to make up words that go beyond the basic level of earlier stages. For example, the faster the child can see that the word “fantastic” is really “fan-tas-tic”, the faster their fluency will develop.

### **Focus for the Developing Reader**

At this stage, a great deal of a child’s reading life will be centred on school and the language knowledge they are gaining there. It is important to enhance what they are learning in school by maintaining their reading outside of school.

- In school, the child will be studying short-vowel word families and learning to recognise and use word families in reading and writing
- They should be developing a wider vocabulary, recognising 100 or more sight words
- With the support of an adult, they will start using self-correction and re-reading as a reading strategy
- Both in school and at home, they will be reading more complex text
- Their fluency will be developing (10-30 correct words per minute)
- They will be developing comprehension strategies (self-monitoring, predicting, retelling, sequencing etc.)

## **Texts for Developing Readers**

It is important to choose books that will challenge the developing reader but not overwhelm them.

- Medium to small size print and a variety of fonts
- Books that feature more complete stories
- Pictures should still be present and be part of any discussion about the story
- Choose stories that contain a problem and a solution
- Stories that feature descriptive language, more complex sentences and dialogue and a wide range of word tenses
- Books that are longer than previous levels, with more lines of text on each page
- Sentences which carry over several pages, with more complex punctuation
- Stories which feature language changes on each page, rather than repeating in patterns
- Stories which offer challenges in ideas and vocabulary, with some introduction to technical language
- Stories which use a variety of print styles and text layout to focus the child's attention
- Informational books will present more complex ideas for the child.



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### Transitional Readers: 6-7 Years



Now the child will be building their fluency and will recognise many words automatically. They will be able to read passages that are several sentences long without making many errors. They will be able to self-correct if they do make a mistake.

Their comprehension skills and levels of understanding will also be improving as they gain more reading experience and practice. Their reading will become more rapid and accurate during this stage. They will also be sensitive to tone and may have developed a sense of performance while reading.

Although they will still rely on their teacher in the classroom and on parents at home, they are working towards reading independently and need guidance and support more than ever. They will have developed a significant foundation of automatically recognisable words and will be adding to this store daily.

The child will begin to be more strategic in tackling unknown words, using the tools their teacher will have given them to break down unfamiliar words in order to decode them. They will use their knowledge of letter and sound relationships, meaning and structure of language to help them during the reading process.

#### **Focus for Transitional Readers**

Supporting adults can help children get the most out of this crucial stage by keeping them motivated and giving them unlimited access to interesting and stimulating books and stories. Children can also be helped in consolidating the skills they are learning and practising in school.

- Help them focus on vowel patterns in words, for example, one-syllable vowel patterns (short, long, etc.)
- Support their developing fluency (30-60 correct words per minute, using expression, attending to punctuation, tone, voice and appropriate phrasing)
- Monitor their use of word patterns in reading and writing
- Encourage them to be strategic about using decoding and comprehension strategies

## **Texts for Transitional Readers**

- Descriptive and literary language
- Stories and fact books that use technical vocabulary when dealing with new concepts
- Longer and more complex stories with more developed episodes or events
- Books that place an emphasis on character development
- Books that use first and third person narration
- Pictures offer little support but still augment the text
- Encourage them to engage in word analysis
- Books which use a wide range of punctuation, dialogue, word and tenses and a wide range of sentence patterns



## Stages of Development Independent Readers: 7-8 Years



At this stage, the child will no longer be learning to read, rather they will be reading to learn. The child will begin to build up more background knowledge of spelling. During this stage it is important that supporting adults do not confuse a child's reading fluency with their comprehension ability. Children should still be encouraged to discuss the books they are reading in order to nurture their level of understanding and interaction with books.

As the contents of the books the child is reading becomes more demanding, good readers will further develop their ability to understand the meaning of what they are reading beyond the written word on the page.

### **Focus for Independent Readers**

- Help the child to continue to develop and apply as many comprehension strategies as they feel comfortable using
- Encourage them to use complex word patterns in their sentences
- Expose them to a variety of texts and help them gain greater fluency
- Encourage them to respond to the texts they read

### **Texts for Independent Readers**

- Books with smaller print sizes and narrower spacing
- Introduce chapter books and novels
- Ensure the books chosen hold a high interest level for the child and span a variety of genres
- Choose books with complex language patterns, more difficult vocabulary and challenging high frequency words
- Choose books that feature greater character development and more detailed plots



## Stages of Development Confident Readers: 8-10 Years



Children will now be efficient in understanding text and will be reading widely for a variety of different purposes: pleasure, education, knowledge, etc. As they continue to evolve into confident, capable readers, they will begin to take more risks in their reading practices; attempting more difficult books and choosing to read books in a new area of interest.

### Focus for Confident Readers

- Help the child to learn and experiment with strategies to use before, during and after reading which help them to understand the content more effectively
- Encourage them to practice their recognition of new and recently learned words
- Work with them on using expression when reading.

### Texts for Confident Readers

- Print size is still decreasing
- Expand their range of chapter books, novels and introduce trilogies and series books
- Remind them of the strategies they have been equipped with to deal with trick words and difficult meanings
- Choose books that present the child with more sophisticated and complex plots and characters
- Choose books which will encourage them to use interpretation and to think about different meanings
- The child will need books which feature more sophisticated themes and complex sentence structures
- Informational texts can include history and geography which will help the child learn how to gain information from a wide variety of sources
- Chapter books will begin to explore issues relevant to the child's age and interests.





## Stages of Development

### Advanced Readers: 10-14+ Years



As the child matures, their own experiences will shape their reading comprehension. Their ongoing cognitive development will deepen and enrich their reading and will inspire them to continue to maintain a reading life for themselves.

#### Focus for Advanced Readers

- Help the child maintain and nurture their desire to read by keeping them motivated and interested and by giving them access to a wide variety of books they enjoy
- Encourage them to practice their fluency
- Support them in asking and responding to questions about the text, before, during and after reading
- Have discussions with them about the stories; this will help them to form their own opinions and develop critical thinking
- Encourage them to use information to draw conclusions from the texts they are reading
- Provide them with opportunities to compare and contrast different elements of different texts including topics and themes, and treatment of problems and solutions
- Encourage them to read non-fiction and informational books in areas that interest them which will widen their technical vocabulary
- Encourage them to question why a text has been written in a specific manner or style.

#### Texts for Advanced Readers

- Include more complex novels, detailed reference material, magazines, newspapers and poetry
- At this stage the child will need challenging content requiring a response to more difficult topics such as death, racism, social injustice, etc
- They will need texts that are rich in complex vocabulary and provide a variety of language elements, styles and structures
- The relationship between illustrations and text in graphic novels will offer opportunities for exploration and discussion
- Chapter books and series books for advanced readers will begin to explore issues of early adolescence.