

What Does it Take to be a Successful Reader?

Use our [Reading Readiness assessment](#) to find out if your child is ready for reading.

PRINT AWARENESS

- Knowledge of parts of a book e.g. cover, pages
- Knowledge of where to start reading the book
- Knowledge of words such as 'word', 'letter'
- Ability to identify a word
- Ability to identify a letter
- Ability to identify the title
- Child's recognition of their own name
- Beginning to write their own name

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

- Word awareness
- Syllable segmentation (the ability to break a word down into separate syllables)
- Rhyme identification
- Rhyme production
- Blending (placing groups of sounds together to form words)
- Segmenting (pulling apart a word to identify the different sounds)
- Onset identification (recognising the first sound of a word)
- Final consonant identification
- Vowel identification
- Phonemic awareness – detecting, isolating and manipulating specific sounds within words. E.g. 'splat' without the /l/ is 'spat'. Note: This is one of the strongest predictors of reading and spelling success.

RAPID AUTOMATIC NAMING

- Naming items within categories within a given timeframe
- Naming items within more specific categories within a given timeframe

PHONOLOGICAL MEMORY / VERBAL WORKING MEMORY

- Recalling series of numbers
- Non-word repetition

ORTHOGRAPHIC KNOWLEDGE

Orthographic knowledge is the knowledge of common letter patterns and the combinations needed to quickly access a word stored in the reader's vocabulary. This is about recalling the visual pattern of a word, rather than pulling apart its individual sounds. Orthographic representations of words are built over time, with consistent practise in breaking words apart (decoding). Orthographic knowledge includes an understanding of spelling and punctuation conventions, and includes the ability to differentiate spelling *rules* vs illegal spelling patterns. Early writers initially spell words phonetically, writing letters to match the sounds that they hear. As they develop their orthographic knowledge, spelling becomes more accurate

Some possible indicators of weak orthographic knowledge include:

- Difficulty remembering frequently seen words
- Continually needing to sound-out frequently seen words
- Writing words as they are heard, without following spelling conventions
- Inconsistent spelling or reading of the same word
- Confusion over visually similar words such as no – on, for – of, of – off

Students struggling to develop orthographic knowledge require direct, intentional teaching of spelling rules.

Testing for orthographic knowledge will include:

- Alphabetic awareness
- Matching letters to sounds
- Writing letters to form sounds
- Identifying letter patterns (e.g. ck, ou, igh)
- Non-word spelling
- Non-word reading

MORPHOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

Morphemes are the smallest units of a word that carry meaning. They may be bound together such as prefixes or suffixes (endings and beginnings), or unbound, such as base words. Morphological awareness is an important factor in reading, comprehension, and developing spelling skills.

STRONG VOCABULARY

A strong, well-organised vocabulary is crucial for reading success. It supports reading comprehension and assists in developing reading fluency.

READING PRACTISE

It is important that new readers and those who struggle with readers be given the time to work on their skills with an adult. Simply 'reading more' won't necessarily build their skills if they don't already have a strong literacy foundation.

There are three goals for reading instruction:

1. Reading accuracy
2. Reading fluency
3. Reading comprehension

WHAT ABOUT SIGHT WORDS?

The term 'sight words' is used to label words that people believe children need to 'just know'. On the list of sight words are words that follow irregular spelling patterns, or words that are used frequently in written texts. We expect that children should be able to form a 'mental picture' of these words and recall them quickly each time they see them.

The concept of sight words is a bit of a misnomer, as most words on these lists are actually decodable. There are a few words that you will want to teach your child to get started (e.g. 'the'), but it is far better to focus your attention on developing appropriate decoding skills, rather than spending hours memorising sight words. Having said that, we have included a list of games and activities under our list of resources that will make memorising these words fun!

HOW CAN MY CHILD BE EXPECTED TO LEARN ALL THE 'EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE'?

You may be throwing your hands in the air wondering, *how on earth am I going to teach my child all the 'sight' words they need to know?* We have good news for you! English is far more predictable than you think.

Did you know that **50%** of the words we use can be spelled accurately based on predictable letter - sound correspondences? There will be some spelling patterns that need to be learned (e.g. 'ck' and 'th'), but when it comes to reading, most letters simply match the sounds.

Another **34%** of English words would only have **one error** if they were spelled on the basis of matching letters to sounds only e.g. **flood**.

This means that **84%** of words are mostly predictable. Many other words could be spelled correctly if information such as the meaning or origin of the word were considered.

That leaves only **4%** of words that are totally irregular, with little reason e.g. yacht.

The earlier you can provide the necessary literacy supports for your child, the better. All research indicates that early intervention is the best way to prepare a child for reading. This is one area in your child's development where you don't want to take a 'wait and see' approach. Contact us here at [Speech Online](https://www.speechonline.com.au) to find out how we can support your child's reading skills.