
THE LINK BETWEEN ORAL LANGUAGE AND READING



ORAL LANGUAGE...THE BASIS OF READING

Beginning readers use the language knowledge they have acquired through speaking and listening, and apply it to the written word. Research has shown that students with competence in oral language are at an advantage in learning to read. Therefore, children should have a good knowledge of oral language skills, such as:

- **Vocabulary.** To recognize and understand the words they read.
- **Grammar and sentence structure.** This is important for understanding what is read as well as the ability to write cohesive, meaningful sentences. It may also help students predict unfamiliar words in a sentence (e.g., A student can predict that a noun will follow in the sentence, "Sally went to the store to buy m____." 'milk', 'meat' etc.).
- **Story Structure.** The ability to establish patterns to the story and (e.g., beginning, middle, end) provides a framework on which to base the material they read.
- **Language Insight.** The student thinks constructively while he/she reads (e.g., identifies the main idea in a story, predicts what will come next, and makes inferences etc.).
- **Phonological Awareness.** Phonological awareness is a conscious awareness of the sounds of language. It is the ability to reflect on the sounds in words, and manipulate parts of the spoken word. Phonological awareness is important for decoding and spelling.



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WAYS TO PROMOTE ORAL LANGUAGE THROUGH READING:

- Talk to the students about things that interest him/her. By talking about his/her ideas, observations, and feelings, you prepare him/her for reading and writing about the world.
- Talk with students about the stories that are read in class. Ask them:
 - about their favourite parts of the book
 - about the characters in the stories and the things that they do
 - wh-questions (e.g., "When did the story take place?", "How did the character feel?")
- As you read aloud from the book, have the students point to individual words and then count the number of words on a page.
- Read the story aloud, omitting words. Have the students fill in the missing words.
- Read a sentence aloud without the text visible. Have the students repeat the sentence and count the number of words. Moving blocks or beads on a string can help them visualize the concept.
- Read a short sentence, or present the written words, with the words out of order. Have students rearrange the words to make a sentence that makes sense (e.g., the word list: 'under', 'ran', 'the', 'chair', 'the', and 'mouse' becomes, 'The mouse ran under the chair.').
- After reading a book with the students, work on sound/word awareness through playing 'sounds and words games' using the words from the book:
 - Play 'rhyming games'. Point out when spoken words rhyme (e.g., 'cat' and 'hat'). Rhymes help students notice similar sounds in words.
 - Clap syllable beats in spoken words to teach them about word structure (e.g., 'elephant' has 3 beats but 'cow' has 1 beat).
 - Practice talking about letters and sounds that go together (e.g., the word 'snake' starts with the letter 's' and the letter 's' makes a "ssss" sound).
 - Play 'initial sound' games (e.g., "The word 'house' begins with /h/. Let's make up silly words that begin with the 'h' sound.", "Say your name beginning with /h/." and "Name five things in the classroom. Begin each one with the 'h' sound.").
 - Blending syllables (e.g., "Listen to these syllables. Tell me what word I'm saying: 'snow' • 'ball' and 'slow' • 'ly'.').

Adapted from Sounds Abound Storybook Activities by Sandy Lachance.

