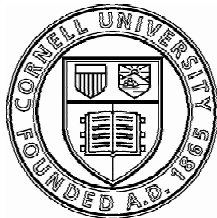




Parent Guide:

# Helping Your Child Learn to Read



Cornell University  
Cooperative Extension  
Jefferson County

New York State Parental Information & Resource Center  
Families and Communities Together with Schools  
(315) 788-8450

[www.nyspirc.org](http://www.nyspirc.org)

# Learning to Read

Learning how to read is a process that begins when a child is born and continues throughout the school years.

**To become good readers, children need many chances to:**

- Talk and listen
- Learn about print and books
- Learn about the sounds of language
- Learn about the letters of the alphabet
- Learn about new words and what they mean

**Reading to your child is one of the most important things you can do to help him learn how to read on his own.**



## Five Skill Areas for Reading

**Phonemic Awareness**—The ability to hear and name the different sounds in words we say.

**Phonics**—The connection between the sounds of spoken words and the letters in written words.

**Fluency**—The ability to read words correctly and quickly with expression and understanding.

**Vocabulary**—The words we must know in order to understand what we read.

**Comprehension**—The ability to understand what we read.

# Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic Awareness has to do with hearing the **sounds in spoken language**.

- Hearing and naming rhyming words
- Hearing separate words in sentences
- Hearing separate sounds in words
- Knowing that words like hat, help, and home all begin with the same sound
- Naming the beginning or ending sound in a word

**Try some of the following activities to help your child build phonemic awareness skills.**

- Sing or say nursery rhymes or songs
- Play word games

## Examples

- *How many words can you think of that rhyme with fox?*

- *Put your thumbs up if the words I say start with the same sound and put your thumbs down if they start with different sounds.*

- Read a story or poem and ask your child to listen for words that begin with the same sound. Have her say the words and then add another word that begins with the same sound.

**Children learn to read more easily when they have more phonemic awareness skills.**

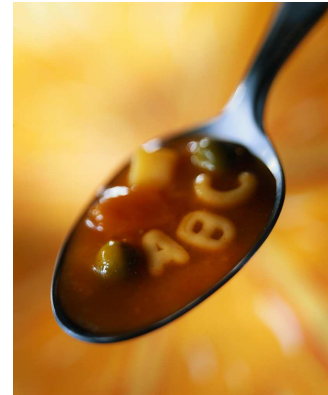
# Phonics

Learning phonics skills helps children make connections between the **sounds of spoken words and the letters of written words.**

- Knowing the sounds of the letters of the alphabet
- Naming the beginning or ending letter and sounds of a word

**Try some of the following activities to help your child build phonics skills.**

- Make an alphabet book with your child—have your child draw pictures or cut pictures from magazines that represent the sound of each letter.
- Point out words, letters, and sounds on labels, boxes, magazines, and signs.
- Do a letter hunt by finding words that start with the same letter as your child's name.
- Do a sound hunt by finding objects that start with the same sound as your child's name.



**Knowing the relationship between letters and sounds will help children recognize familiar words quickly and figure out new words.**

# Fluency

Fluency is the word for being able to **read quickly and correctly**.

- Reading sounds natural, like speech
- Fluent readers understand what they are reading and can answer questions about it

Most beginning readers do not read fluently.



**Fluent readers recognize words automatically. When fluent readers read aloud, they read smoothly and with expression in their voice.**

**Try some of the following activities to help your child with fluency.**

- **Read aloud** to your child.
- Do **shared reading**—You read first, then have your child repeat what you read.
- Read a wide **variety of materials** (stories, nonfiction, poetry, newspapers, and magazines).

**Fluency develops gradually over time and with a lot of practice. Many studies have found a strong relationship between reading ability and how much a student reads.**

# Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the name for **words** we must know in order to listen, speak, read, and write well. Vocabulary is learned in two ways:

- Indirectly—Children hear and see words as they listen, talk, and read.
- Directly—parents and teachers teach children the meanings of certain words.

**Good readers read more, become better readers, and learn more words.**

**Researchers have found strong connections between the size of children’s vocabularies, how well they understand what they read, and how well they do in school.**

**Try some of the following activities to build your child’s vocabulary.**

- Talk, talk, talk—talk as you eat together, shop for groceries, or walk to school.
- Have your child use his imagination to make up and tell you stories.



- Give your child many different experiences. Vocabulary and knowledge of the world are very closely tied together. Children who know something about the world are more able to understand what they read about in school.

# Comprehension

Comprehension means getting **meaning** from what we read.

- Using what we already know to make sense of what we read
- Making predictions
- Paying attention to the way books are set up (table of contents, titles, bold words, pictures, and headings)
- Creating pictures in our minds
- Asking questions
- Summarizing

**Comprehension is the reason for reading.**

Good readers use past knowledge and experience to help them understand what they are reading.

**Try some of the following activities to build your child's comprehension.**

**Before you read**—Look through the book, talk about the pictures, and predict what the story might be about.

**While you read**—Ask your child questions about what is happening in the book. Help your child make connections between what is happening in the book and in her own life or other books you have read together.

**After you read**—Ask your child to re-tell what the story is about in her own words.



# Reading, Writing, and Spelling

## Reading aloud helps children:

- Hear what fluent reading sounds like
- Increase their knowledge of the world
- Learn new words and build their vocabulary
- Increase knowledge of written language
- Increase interest in reading

Listen to your child read words and books aloud from school. Be patient and listen as your child practices. Let your child know you are proud of what he is learning.

## Reading, writing, and spelling skills are connected and develop together.

- Point out letters and have your child name them.
- When your child is writing, encourage him to spell words by using what he knows about sounds and letters.
- Have your child write notes, e-mails, and letters to family and friends.
- Make books with your child.
- Write a word on paper and cut the letters apart. Mix the letters and have your child spell a word by putting the letters in order.

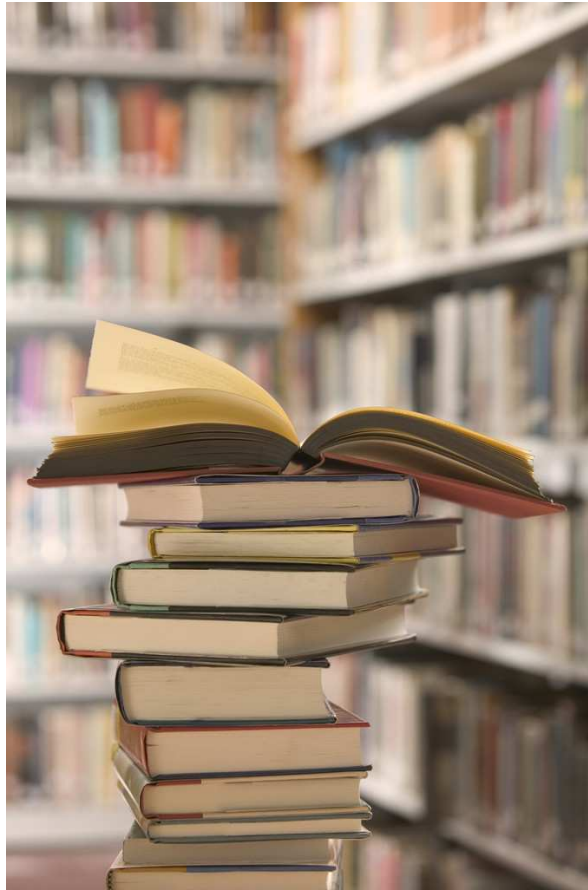


**Help your child take the first steps to school success!**

## Resources

This guide was created with information from the following resources:

- Armbruster, B., Lehr, F., Osborn, J. (2001). Put Reading First. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: RMC Research Corporation.
- Armbruster, B., Lehr, F., Osborn, J. (2003). A Child Becomes a Reader. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: RMC Research Corporation.



# New York State PIRC

## What is a PIRC?

**Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRC)** are funded by the U.S. Department of Education and are located in every state.

PIRC programs help meet the academic needs of children by helping to implement parental involvement policies, programs, and activities that:

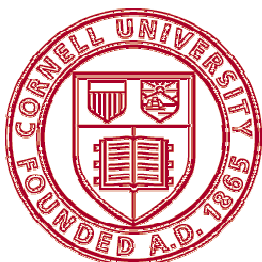
- strengthen partnerships between parents and schools.
- improve student academic achievement.
- help parents understand No Child Left Behind.

**There are two PIRC programs in New York State. For more information, contact:**

<p><b>Families and Communities Together with Schools (FACTS)</b>, sponsored by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County</p> <p><b>315-788-8450</b></p>	<p><b>Every Person Influences Children (EPIC)</b></p> <p><b>716-332-4100</b></p>
<p>Visit the New York State PIRC website at <a href="http://www.nyspirc.org">www.nyspirc.org</a></p>	

## Notes

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