



THE
WILLOW
SCHOOL

**Early Literacy
Development**

What can you do to foster reading at home?

Use this quick reference guide to help your child develop seven foundational literacy skills and encourage a love of reading.

Oral Language Skills

Vocabulary, narrative skills, syntactic awareness

- Have conversations before, during, and after reading stories.
- Ask your child to retell stories in sequential order.
- Don't oversimplify words.
- Explain new words in context, or say a word and then rephrase it in simpler terms so that your child can hear both the word and the meaning.
- Ask open-ended questions. Avoid yes or no answers, and don't speak for your child or put words in his mouth.
- Read wordless books and encourage your child to narrate these stories using his or her own words.
- Have children use various methods to tell stories, such as put on a show, paint a picture and tell its story, etc.
- Sing! Repetition of songs can help with learning new vocabulary words. It can also boost narrative skills, as some songs tell a story.

Phonological Awareness

Playing with sound

- Play games "taking apart" or segmenting words into smaller and smaller units of sounds. (For example, sounding out c/a/t for cat.)
- Clap, jump, or stomp words into syllables.
- Sing songs with onset and rime word families (cat, hat, bat, mat).
- Sing nursery rhymes.
- Read rhyming books and books with a lot of alliteration.
- Play "I-spy" using beginning or ending sounds.
- Play clapping games ("Miss Mary Mack").
- Give your child words that are separated, and ask him or her to put it together again. (ex. If I have "p" and "ig," what word does that make?)





Print Concepts

Understanding letters, words, punctuation, directionality

- To motivate children to love books and language, **HAVE FUN** reading!
- Read varied books that contain beautiful illustrations and sentence structure.
- Let your child handle the book to learn how to turn pages and determine which direction a book goes.
- Have letters in view (magnets, etc.).
- Sing alphabet songs so your child hears the names of the letters.
- Recite alphabet poems. Read ABC books.
- Demonstrate tracking print from left to right with fingers and eyes.
- Distinguish between letters and words.
- Have your child draw lines, curves, and shapes to get ready to write letters.
- Explore shapes and letter forms through puzzles, play dough, and sensory tables.
- Notice and talk about print in your surroundings (ex. stop signs, signs in stores). Teach your child that signs convey meaning.

Phonics

Relationship between sounds and written symbols

- Play games matching initial sounds to pictures or games targeting phonics.
- Have your child practice writing (lists, stories, etc.). Don't worry about correct spelling. Focus more on your child hearing sounds.
- Identify familiar objects. Have your child create labels or try to spell the objects in your house.
- When decoding books, have your child blend sounds to form words.

Word Recognition

Ability to recognize written words correctly and effortlessly

- Label objects around the house so that your child starts to recognize the word by sight.
- Use word flashcards.
- Enjoy word hunts in books and magazines, or around town.
- Have your child reread familiar texts. This will allow him or her to see words repeated in order to begin committing them to memory.

Fluency

Ability to read with speed, accuracy, and expression

- Have your child reread familiar texts, emphasizing reading with expression, stopping at punctuation, and reading full sentences without having to sound out words.
- Listen to books on tapes and read higher level books to your child to allow him or her to hear stories read fluently.

Comprehension

Ability to understand, relate to, and enjoy reading

- Read books aloud to your child, even as they get older.
- Participate in “parallel” reading, where your child “reads” one page of a familiar book (tells the story while looking at the words and pictures) and you read the next page.
- Read the same book that your child is reading so you can have conversations about the book. Share your favorite part. Talk about a character you love or don’t love. Talk about how something you read reminded you of something that happened in your life or in another book. Talk about something you visualized as if you were watching a movie rather than reading. Discuss a part where you became confused. See if you can figure out what happened together. Talk about any predictions you may have about the book.
- Have your child show his or her thoughts and feelings about a story through writing, drawing, clay, painting, or drama.
- Help your child find “just right books.” Ask your child’s teacher for your child’s Guided Reading or DRA level. Find books for your child that are at this level at the-best-childrens-books.org/guided-reading-levels.html.

See how The Willow School encourages early literacy development and a life-long love of reading. Take a tour of Willow today!

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