



Many parents are excited to teach their children to read. When deciding what to teach first, I imagine that many parents start with what they know— sounding it out.

/C/ /a/ t/. Caaaat. CAT.

Sounding out words is a developmental skill. We can introduce it gently, reintroduce it later, and provide opportunities for practice when it's finally "clicked."

But did you know that kids need to know quite a few things about reading **before we should teach them to sound out words?**

1. Concepts of Print

If yours is a reading house, you may find that your children develop concepts of print without a lot of instruction from you.

- They hold books correctly and turn pages in the right direction.
- They know that each word on a page represents a spoken word.
- They understand that text is read from left to right.



LOVED BEYOND DONATION



<http://www.notimeforflashcards.com/2013/04/books-so-good-youll-break-the-binding.html>

How to develop concepts of print

- Read to your child often.
- Introduce books by their title. Sometimes, draw attention to the author and illustrator.
- Make sure some of the books you read have large bold print, and point to the words as you read.
- Point out signs in your environment (the Cheerios box, an EXIT sign, and the sign at your grocery store). Help your child see that print is all around you.

2. Language and Listening Skills

As you read to your children, they'll develop **language and listening skills** which they need before they can become readers.

- They can retell a familiar story in their own words.
- They engage with a story as you read to them — asking questions (“Why did he say that?”) and making personal connections (“I wish /could have that much ice cream!”)
- They can answer simple questions about a story.

How to build language and listening skills

- Ask open-ended questions as you read. Ask more “why” and “how” questions than “who” and “what.” ([For sample questions, download this free printable.](#))
- Explain unfamiliar words as you read.
- Encourage your children to play pretend.

Help Your Child Become a Better Reader

Read more!

- ❖ *Make reading fun!*
- ❖ *Read together every day.*
- ❖ *Tell your child, "You are a good reader!"*
- ❖ *Let your child see you reading.*

Ask questions before reading:

- ❖ *"What do you think the book will be about?"*
- ❖ *"What do you think will happen to the character on the cover?"*
- ❖ *"What does the title mean?"*
- ❖ *"Why do you think the author chose that title?"*

Ask questions while reading:

- ❖ *"Why does that boy look so sad?"*
- ❖ *"What is that mom looking for?"*
- ❖ *"What does "endangered" mean?"*
- ❖ *"Where is that dog going?"*

Make predictions:

- ❖ *"I think that she will win the race."*
- ❖ *"I think he will find the bunny."*
- ❖ *"I think that George will tell the truth."*
- ❖ *"I think they are going to get lost in there."*

Point to the words:

- ❖ *This will help your child match the words with the print.*
- ❖ *You can point, and encourage your child to point as time goes on.*
- ❖ *Use mainly on short texts with big words or you both will get tired!*

Make connections to your own lives:

- ❖ *"That cat reminds me of Jenny's cat."*
- ❖ *"This reminds me of that time when we drove to Grandma's house."*
- ❖ *"This boy looks like John"*
- ❖ *"This reminds me of dinner at our house."*

Make connections to other books:

- ❖ *"Charlotte the spider is smart and helpful but Anansi the spider is tricky."*
- ❖ *"In Goodnight Moon, I notice a picture of the bunnies from Runaway Bunny."*
- ❖ *The pigeon is funny in both Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus and The Pigeon Finds a Hot Dog.*
- ❖ *The Gingerbread Baby is kind of like the story of The Gingerbread Man because they both have to run away from the fox.*

Visualize and create sensory images:

- ❖ *Close your eyes and picture it in your head. Can you see it?*
- ❖ *Imagine it. Can you see all those beautiful colors?*
- ❖ *Can you smell that grass right after it is cut?*
- ❖ *Imagine how loud Clifford's bark is! Can you hear it?*
- ❖ *Can you feel that cool wind on your face?*

Reflect on the book:

- ❖ *Did you like it or not? What makes you say that?*
- ❖ *Retell what happened in the story.*
- ❖ *Who else might like it?*
- ❖ *Should we read more by this author?*

3. Letter Knowledge

Obviously, kids need to know their alphabet before they're ready to sound out words.

- They recognize both upper and lower case letters. Obviously if you teach your child to sound out words with capital letters, he doesn't need to know the lowercase alphabet. But since most books are written with both upper and lower case letters, it's important that your child can recognize lowercase letters as well.
- They can name each letter's sound.



<http://www.tutusteaparties.com/2014/02/top-20-fun-ways-to-learn-and-practice.html>

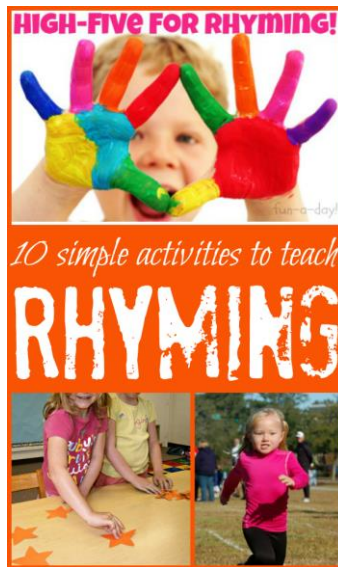
How to teach the alphabet

- At our house we start with our kids' names. (see my [Name Activities Pinterest board](#) for some great ideas.) <http://www.pinterest.com/themeasuredmom/name-activities-for-preschoolers/>
- We learn the rest of the alphabet by reading alphabet books and by playing a variety of games. (See my [Alphabet for Kids Pinterest board](#) to find activities that your child will enjoy.) <http://www.pinterest.com/themeasuredmom/alphabet-for-kids/>
- We also like to explore the alphabet letter by letter in many hands on ways. (Find links to our letter of the week activities [here](#).) <http://www.themeasuredmom.com/teaching-the-alphabet-to-preschoolers-why-and-how/>

4. Phonological and phonemic awareness

While we're learning the alphabet, we play games and do activities to lay a solid foundation of **phonological and phonemic awareness**. Sounds like teacher talk, right? Just remember that these are different from phonics because they are about LISTENING, not LOOKING. The following statements are true of children with phonological and phonemic awareness.

- They can count words.
- They can count syllables in words.
- They can rhyme.
- They can put sounds together to make a word. If you say these sounds to your child, /f/ and /ish/, can he put them together to make fish? If you stretch a word and say it like this — moooooon — does your child know the word is moon?
- They can identify the first and last sound in a word. This is not the same thing as knowing the letter. For example, if you ask your child the first sound in the word phone, she should be able to answer /f/.



<http://fun-a-day.com/rhyming-activities-for-children/>

How to promote phonological and phonemic awareness:

- Give your child a cup with counters. Say a sentence in the normal way and then recite it very slowly. ("The sky is blue.") Can your child give you a counter for each word of the sentence?

- Teach your child to count syllables by starting with his own name. Then move on to other familiar words.
- Read rhyming books. (Check out my rhyming book lists for [babies](#) here. Also visit my list of [rhyming books for toddlers and preschoolers](#).)
 - <http://www.themeasuredmom.com/rhyming-books-for-babies/>
 - <http://www.themeasuredmom.com/rhyming-books-for-toddlers-preschoolers/>
- Play rhyming games. (I've got a great collection of these [in this post](#).)
 - <http://www.themeasuredmom.com/teach-your-child-to-rhyme/>

5. An Interest in Learning to Read

If you're attempting to teach your child to sound out words and one or both of you are consistently frustrated, it will not end well. It may be that your child simply isn't ready for this skill (see the above points), or it may be that it's not on her list of priorities. If children are motivated to learn to read, you can expect the following to be true:

- They enjoy being read to.
- They frequently ask you to read aloud.
- They pretend to read.

How to help children get excited about learning to read:

- Let your child see the value of knowing how to read by reading in a variety of ways in her presence. This might mean reading a recipe, your favorite magazine, devotional material, or even your e-mail.
- Let your child choose books he loves when you read to him — but don't feel tied to books you're bored with. Pull out some winners [from my book lists](#) so that you'll both enjoy yourselves! <http://www.themeasuredmom.com/book-lists-2/>

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