

# *Evidence on Tips for Supporting Reading Skills at Home*

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- Have conversations before, during, and after reading together
- Help children learn how to break sentences into words and words into syllables
- Help children sound out words smoothly
- Model reading fluently by practicing reading aloud with your child

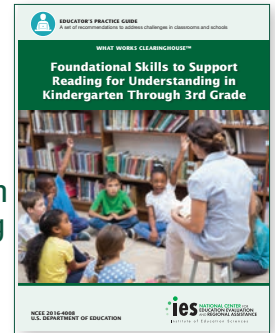
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## About the Evidence

The evidence supporting each of the four is drawn from research that meets rigorous standards established by the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC).

This document summarizes the evidence from studies conducted in classroom settings that included the practice described in the tips for supporting reading skills at home. For each tip, it provides the number of studies that included the practice and how many of those studies found positive effects. For studies that found positive effects, it provides additional details about how school staff implemented the practice. Although the practices described in the tips might be effective in home settings, no studies assessed these practices involving parents or caregivers at home.

To learn more about the research evidence and see the full reference list, read the practice guide, ***Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade***.



### Summary of Evidence

## Have conversations before, during, and after reading together

This practice is described in Recommendation 1 of the *Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade* practice guide. Four studies that meet rigorous standards established by the WWC tested school-based interventions for kindergarten and grade 1 students that, among other things, asked students to answer questions about the books they were reading aloud.<sup>1</sup> Two of the studies found positive impacts on vocabulary skills among kindergarten and grade 1 students.<sup>2</sup> The other two studies found no effect.<sup>3</sup> This summary focuses on the two studies with positive impacts.

- In one study, teachers provided explicit whole-class instruction that focused on vocabulary, grammar, and prompting discussions during read-alouds of books.<sup>4</sup>
- In the other study, teachers introduced the whole classroom to academic and content-specific vocabulary and then engaged students in extended conversations that modeled complex language structure and introduced taught words.<sup>5</sup>

### Summary of Evidence

## Help children learn how to break sentences into words and words into syllables

This practice is described in Recommendation 2 of the *Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade* practice guide. The panel of experts for the practice guide believes that teaching children to break sentences into words and compound words into their component parts is important in building early readers' skills. However, no study directly tested the effectiveness of these practices. Two studies that meet rigorous standards established by the WWC tested school-based interventions for kindergartners that, among other things, demonstrated how words may be broken into syllables.<sup>6</sup> These two studies found positive impacts among kindergarten students on phonology (the ability to articulate the sounds of language) and/or letter names and sounds.

- In one study, teachers provided an intervention to a small group of students that involved the identification of the initial units of sound by asking students to identify the pictures of words that had the same first sound as a word spoken aloud by the class.<sup>7</sup>
  - In the other study, tutors led one-on-one activities with students that included blending and segmenting units of sound, identifying specific units of sound in words, and teaching letter identification.<sup>8</sup>
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## Help children sound out words smoothly

This practice is described in Recommendation 3 of the *Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade* practice guide. Fifteen studies that meet rigorous standards established by the WWC examined school-based interventions related to combining letter-sounds.<sup>9</sup> Eleven of these studies examined interventions that included instruction on letter-sound correspondence and found positive impacts on the word-reading and/or spelling skills among kindergarten through grade 3 students.<sup>10</sup> The other four studies found no impacts on relevant reading skills.<sup>11</sup> Of these 11 studies that found positive impacts, 2 studies examined at least one other relevant reading skill but found no impacts on those skills.<sup>12</sup> This summary focuses on the 11 studies with positive impacts.

- Two studies examined interventions that taught students to blend letter-sounds and sound-spelling patterns from left to right within words; recognize common sound-spelling patterns; recognize common word parts and read **decodable words**; recognize regular and **irregular high-frequency words**; and learn nondecodable words as whole words.<sup>13</sup> The interventions were implemented either one-on-one or with small groups of students.
- One study focused on an intervention that used one-on-one instruction in blending sounds, recognizing common sound-spelling patterns and common word parts, reading decodable words, and identifying high-frequency words.<sup>14</sup> The intervention also included oral reading practice by using repeated reading instruction.
- Two studies involved interventions that focused on blending sounds, recognizing common sound-spelling patterns, reading decodable words, recognizing high-frequency words, and learning nondecodable words.<sup>15</sup> One of the studies provided remedial instruction to small groups of students by focusing on reading, **phonemic awareness**, and writing.<sup>16</sup> The other study included **decoding** practice and story reading, focusing on vocabulary, **phonological awareness**, and understanding of the alphabet among small groups of students.<sup>17</sup>
- Three studies examined interventions that taught common sound-spelling patterns and provided practice in reading decodable words.<sup>18</sup> For example, students in one intervention quickly and accurately read words in isolation; then, as their word-reading skills improved, they read words within text passages.<sup>19</sup> In addition, two of the studies taught students to recognize common word parts such as suffixes and prefixes and addressed phonemic awareness.<sup>20</sup> Two interventions were implemented among small groups of students,<sup>21</sup> and one was implemented with the full class.<sup>22</sup>

**Decoding** is the ability to translate a word from print to speech; also the act of deciphering a new word by sounding it out.

**Decodable words** follow expected sound-spelling patterns and are typically easier for early readers to sound out.

**High-frequency words** are words that appear frequently in all types of text.

**Irregular words** do not follow the typical sound-spelling patterns and are not easy for early readers to decode; children typically have to learn these words as whole words rather than by sounding them out. Examples of irregular high-frequency words are “said,” “was,” and “there.”

**Phonemic awareness** is the ability to understand that sounds in spoken language work together to make words.

**Phonological awareness** is the ability to recognize that words are made up of individual sound units.

- One study examined an intervention that taught lessons on letter-sound rules to small groups of students,<sup>23</sup> and another study examined one-on-one instruction in sound decoding, irregular words, and oral reading.<sup>24</sup> A third study examined small groups of students as they practiced the blending of units of sound into words.<sup>25</sup>

Summary  
of  
Evidence

## Model reading fluently by practicing reading aloud with your child

This practice is described in Recommendation 4 of the *Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade* practice guide. Sixteen studies that meet rigorous standards established by the WWC examined school-based interventions related to reading aloud with children and providing feedback.<sup>26</sup> Fourteen of these studies found positive impacts on at least one relevant reading skill for students in grades 1 through 3.<sup>27</sup> One study found no impacts,<sup>28</sup> and one study found a negative impact on word-reading skills.<sup>29</sup> In addition, of these 14 studies with positive impacts, 7 studies examined at least one other relevant reading skill but had no impacts on those skills.<sup>30</sup> This summary focuses on the 14 studies with positive impacts.

- In eight studies, students read books and received support or feedback from a more able reader, focusing on **oral reading fluency**.<sup>31</sup> In addition, teachers dedicated instructional time to sound-spelling patterns, word parts, or **sight-word** recognition before reading. The study interventions also provided students with instruction in how to monitor their own reading; students who made word-reading errors were prompted to reread the word and consider whether it made sense in the sentence. Students were also encouraged to pay attention to the meaning of what they were reading. All eight interventions were implemented with small groups of students or one-on-one between an adult and student.
- Two studies examined a fluency program implemented with pairs of students, with feedback to promote accurate word reading and text-reading practice in order to develop oral reading fluency.<sup>32</sup>
- In one study, tutors provided one-on-one sessions with students in which the student read a passage three times and orally recounted what happened in the passage.<sup>33</sup> The tutors provided students with cues to read with fluency and comprehension.
- Two studies tested the impact of feedback and practice in reading familiar books.<sup>34</sup> In one study, tutors led individual students to read the same text three times during the same session.<sup>35</sup> In the other study, the whole class read a book aloud together, and then the students read the book again with a partner.
- One study examined an intervention in which small groups of students used a computer software program that focused on repeated reading, vocabulary, comprehension questions, and monitoring progress while providing feedback.<sup>36</sup>

**Oral reading fluency** refers to the ability to read a passage of text aloud accurately, at an appropriate rate, and with expression (including appropriate pauses at the end of sentences and oral interpretation of the text).

**Sight words** are typically short words that are very common, such as “the.” Sight words are a type of high-frequency word.

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To see the full reference list, read the practice guide, *Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade*.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Apthorp et al. (2012); Baker et al. (2013); Goodson et al. (2010); Williams et al. (2009).
- <sup>2</sup> Baker et al. (2013); Goodson et al. (2010).
- <sup>3</sup> Apthorp et al. (2012); Williams et al. (2009).
- <sup>4</sup> Baker et al. (2013).
- <sup>5</sup> Goodson et al. (2010).
- <sup>6</sup> Nelson, Benner, and Gonzales (2005); Ouellette and Senechal (2008).
- <sup>7</sup> Ouellette and Senechal (2008).
- <sup>8</sup> Nelson, Benner, and Gonzales (2005).
- <sup>9</sup> Blachman et al. (2004); Frechtling, Zhang, and Silverstein (2006); Fuchs et al. (2001); Graham, Harris, and Chorzempa (2002); Gunn, Smolkowski, and Vardasy (2011); Hecht (2003); Jenkins et al. (2004); Johnston and Watson (2004); Savage et al. (2009); Scanlon et al. (2005); Torgesen et al. (2006); Torgesen et al. (2010); Tse and Nicholson (2014); Vadasy and Sanders (2011); Vadasy, Sanders, and Tudor (2007).
- <sup>10</sup> Blachman et al. (2004); Frechtling, Zhang, and Silverstein (2006); Graham, Harris, and Chorzempa (2002); Gunn, Smolkowski, and Vardasy (2011); Jenkins et al. (2004); Johnston and Watson (2004); Scanlon et al. (2005); Torgesen et al. (2010); Tse and Nicholson (2014); Vadasy and Sanders (2011); Vadasy, Sanders, and Tudor (2007).
- <sup>11</sup> Fuchs et al. (2001); Hecht (2003); Savage et al. (2009); Torgesen et al. (2006).
- <sup>12</sup> Tse and Nicholson (2014); Vadasy, Sanders, and Tudor (2007).
- <sup>13</sup> Blachman et al. (2004); Jenkins et al. (2004).
- <sup>14</sup> Vadasy, Sanders, and Tudor (2007).
- <sup>15</sup> Gunn, Smolkowski, and Vadasy (2011); Scanlon et al. (2005).
- <sup>16</sup> Scanlon et al. (2005).
- <sup>17</sup> Gunn, Smolkowski, and Vadasy (2011).
- <sup>18</sup> Frechtling, Zhang, and Silverstein (2006); Graham, Harris, and Chorzempa (2002); Torgesen et al. (2010).
- <sup>19</sup> Frechtling, Zhang, and Silverstein (2006).
- <sup>20</sup> Frechtling, Zhang, and Silverstein (2006); Graham, Harris, and Chorzempa (2002).
- <sup>21</sup> Graham, Harris, and Chorzempa (2002); Torgesen et al. (2010).
- <sup>22</sup> Frechtling, Zhang, and Silverstein (2006).
- <sup>23</sup> Tse and Nicholson (2014).
- <sup>24</sup> Vadasy and Sanders (2011).
- <sup>25</sup> Johnston and Watson (2004).
- <sup>26</sup> Begeny et al. (2010); Burroughs-Lange and Douetil (2007); Case et al. (2010); Case et al. (2014); Christ and Davie (2009); Denton et al. (2010); Denton et al. (2013); Lane et al. (2009); Martens et al. (2007); Mathes et al. (2005); May et al. (2013); O'Connor, White, and Swanson (2007); Reutzel, Fawson, and Smith (2008); Schwartz (2005); Vadasy and Sanders (2008); Vadasy and Sanders (2009).
- <sup>27</sup> Begeny et al. (2010); Burroughs-Lange and Douetil (2007); Case et al. (2010); Case et al. (2014); Christ and Davie (2009); Denton et al. (2010); Denton et al. (2013); Lane et al. (2009); May et al. (2013); O'Connor, White, and Swanson (2007); Reutzel, Fawson, and Smith (2008); Schwartz (2005); Vadasy and Sanders (2008); Vadasy and Sanders (2009).
- <sup>28</sup> Martens et al. (2007).
- <sup>29</sup> Mathes et al. (2005).
- <sup>30</sup> Case et al. (2014); Christ and Davie (2009); Denton et al. (2013); Reutzel, Fawson, and Smith (2008); Schwartz (2005); Vadasy and Sanders (2008); Vadasy and Sanders (2009).
- <sup>31</sup> Burroughs-Lange and Douetil (2007); Case et al. (2010); Case et al. (2014); Denton et al. (2010); Denton et al. (2013); Lane et al. (2009); May et al. (2013); Schwartz (2005).
- <sup>32</sup> Vadasy and Sanders (2008); Vadasy and Sanders (2009).
- <sup>33</sup> Begeny et al. (2010).
- <sup>34</sup> O'Connor, White, and Swanson (2007); Reutzel, Fawson, and Smith (2008).
- <sup>35</sup> O'Connor, White, and Swanson (2007).
- <sup>36</sup> Christ and Davie (2009).