

Phonics

Reading is dependent on an understanding of the alphabetic principle — the idea that letters and letter patterns represent the sounds of spoken language that are blended together to make words. Children learn letter sounds and apply these predictable relationships between sounds and letters to read words that are both familiar and unfamiliar; they then build their skills to use knowledge of word parts including prefixes and suffixes like re/–ness/–ing, and syllables to decode words. Phonics activities provide practice in letter–sound correspondence, blending, and reading words with various letter–sound patterns and word parts. Students must learn to both accurately and fluently decode words so that they can read words automatically and focus on reading for understanding.

Use these activities to reinforce and practice phonics skills with your child.

Title	Suggested Grade(s)	Target Skill(s)	Activity
Beginning Sounds	K–2	Beginning Sound Isolation, Individual Letter Sounds	Say, “Let’s think of some words that start with the same sound. I’ll say the first ones and we’ll see if you can think of a color word that starts with the same sound.” Say, “ <i>Pig, penguin, porcupine...</i> ” Ask your child to repeat your words before supplying another one. Then ask, “What sound do these words start with?” (Your child should say the sound <i>p</i> .) You may have to exaggerate the beginning sounds until your child gets the idea. Then ask, “What is a color word that begins with the same sound?” (<i>pink, purple</i>) Repeat with other beginning sounds.
Blend Words	K–2	Blending Onset–Rime	Gather several small objects from around the house. Say, “Let’s see if you can guess what I am hiding behind my back. I will say parts of the word and, if you put these parts together, you will be able to guess what I have behind my back.” Pronounce the first sound and ending rhyme separately. For example, <i>p–en</i> . If your child is able to blend the parts and come up with the word, show him or her the pen and repeat with another object or toy. If your child is not able to blend the first sound and ending rhyme, model the process. For example, <i>b–at, bat</i> . Repeat this practice, blending parts of words into whole words.

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Label Your Home	K–2	Decoding Words, Letter Combinations	Use masking tape and a permanent marker to label names of objects in your home, such as <i>bed</i> , <i>doll</i> , <i>table</i> , and <i>chair</i> . This helps your child recognize letters and the names of everyday objects.
Grocery List	K–2	Decoding Words, Writing Words	Give your child a sheet of paper and dictate the items you need to buy. If your child requests the correct spelling, write the words for your child to copy, or spell the words as he or she writes them. You can also allow your child to use inventive spelling for items on the list and locate the correct spelling at the grocery store.
Letters to Friends	K–2	Decoding Words, Writing Words	Encourage your child to write notes and letters to relatives and friends. Ask the people who receive the notes to respond with notes and letters of their own.
Magnetic Words	K–2	Decoding Words, Writing Words	Help your child practice reading and writing letters and words. Help your child form words using magnetic letters.
Words in the World	K–2	Individual Letter Sounds	Point out the letter/sound relationships your child is learning on food labels, boxes, newspapers, magazines, and signs. For instance, ask your child, “What sound does this letter make?” Practice writing and reading letters and words.
Shopping For Syllables	K–2	Segmenting Syllables, Counting Syllables	Help your child take words apart. As you and your child shop, clap the number of syllables in the name of each item as you put it in your shopping basket.
Personal Dictionary	K–2	Word Categories, Sight Word Reading	Help your child create a personal word dictionary. This is a long-term project that’s fun for rainy or snowy days. Help your child write a letter of the alphabet at the top of every page in a notebook or on separate sheets of paper. Ask your child to write down recently learned words on the page with the corresponding first letter.
Match Pictures With Words	K–2	Words In Context	As you read a book with your child, point to an object in an illustration and help your child find the word in the text that matches that object.

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Household Message Board	2	Decoding Words, Reading Multisyllabic Words	Use a chalkboard, pinboard, or a large piece of paper as a family message board. This is as an exciting way to involve children in reading with a purpose. Leave written notes to your child on the message board.
Start a Journal	2	Decoding Words, Writing Words	Explain what a journal is and give examples of what types of things your child might write about, such as making a new friend, going someplace special, or experiencing something exciting at school. Provide an example by writing about your day. Ask your child to write about his or her day on the next page.
Note Time	2	Decoding Words, Writing Words, Words in Context	Choose 10 minutes of a day to be note time. Communicate with your child during that time by passing written notes. Try to use words your child is learning in school. Share a spirit of secrets and fun. A note could just say, "Hello." If your child needs help reading the notes, help him or her read them aloud.