

## Vocabulary

### Highlights

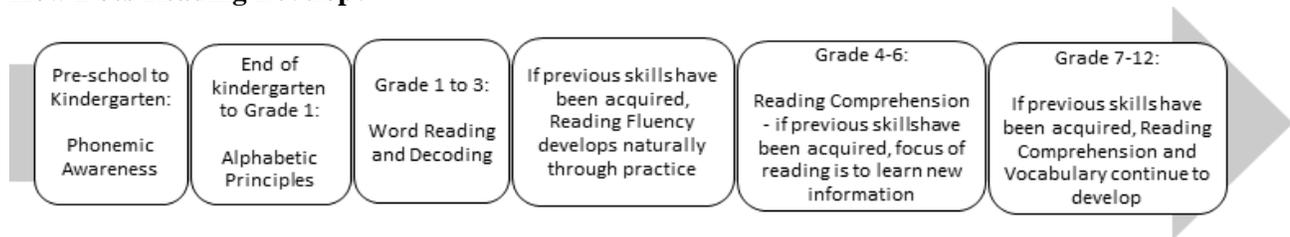
**What is this reading skill?** Vocabulary refers to the amount of words that a child knows and can interpret when reading.

**When should this skill be developed?** Early pre-school and onward

**Why is this skill important for reading?** Having a wide vocabulary is essential in order for the child to understand the words they are reading, so that the meaning of what is being read is understood.

**How can you practice this skill with your child?** Writing activities that explore the meanings of unfamiliar words and encourage the practice using them.

### How Does Reading Develop?



Reading develops in a step-by-step fashion. It begins with Phonemic Awareness, which is the understanding and manipulation of the sounds of the English language (for example, knowing that “dog” has three sounds: ‘d’, ‘o’, ‘g’). The next stage of reading development is Alphabetic Principles (knowing what sound(s) each letter makes). Once a child has a good understanding of sounds and letters, they start to decode unfamiliar words (Decoding refers to the ability to sound out words or non-words) and then recognize familiar words (Word Reading). Reading Fluency is the ability to read passages quickly and accurately, and Reading Comprehension is the ability to understand and remember what has been read. Vocabulary develops naturally as children are exposed to language and reading but can also be explicitly taught if students are falling behind. With the exception of Vocabulary, development of each skill is dependent on the child’s prior skills; for example, a child who does not have a strong understanding of Alphabetic Principles will struggle to decode until earlier skills have fully developed.

### Vocabulary Overview

Having a wide vocabulary is important for reading comprehension. Starting in early pre-school, vocabulary is a skill that never stops developing, since we always encounter new unfamiliar words. However, at every stage of reading development, children should have a sufficient vocabulary to understand grade-level texts. Unlike other reading skills such as decoding, which depend on prior skills as well as some cognitive abilities, vocabulary development relies heavily on exposure to language, both oral and written. Can your child:

- Tell you the meaning of frequently encountered developmentally appropriate words? (i.e., water, door)
- Use the word in a sentence that makes sense? (i.e., I opened the door to let out the dog)
- Draw a picture of the word (for younger children)?

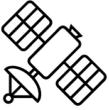
If a child has difficulties developing vocabulary, they may often run into words in reading passages that they do not understand. Thus, it will be harder for the child to understand the entire meaning of the passage. In turn, children will face difficulties with both reading fluency and comprehension.

### Core Instructional Principles:

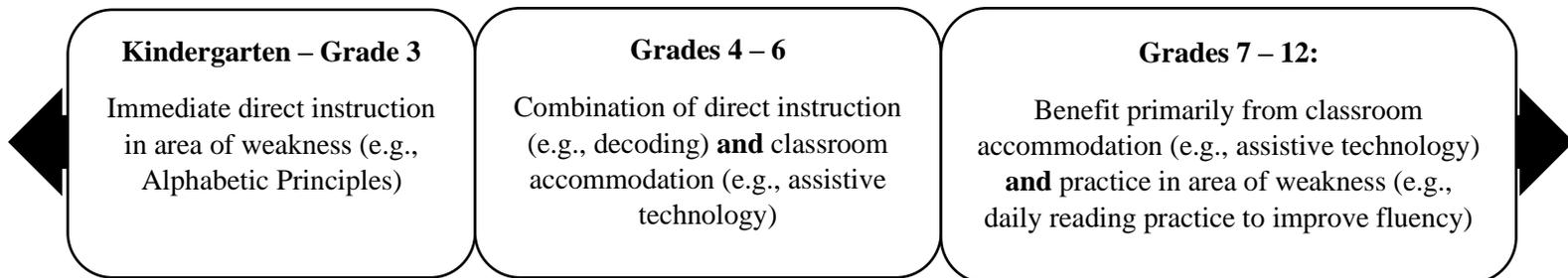
Children with weaknesses in Vocabulary often struggle to understand the meaning of words. Consistently practicing learning new words is an effective way to increase a child’s vocabulary. The following activity will help your child develop a greater vocabulary range:

1. **Vocabulary Four-Square:** A multi-modal strategy through which children can develop their vocabulary knowledge and reinforce the degree to which they remember a word and can later use it. This strategy is not restricted to any grade level.

- a. Draw one large square, and divide this large square into four smaller squares
- b. Ask your child to write a word in the top-left corner square
- c. Ask your child to write the definition of this word in the top-right square
- d. Ask your child to use the word in a sentence in the bottom-left square
- e. Ask your child to sketch a rough picture of the word in the bottom-right square
- f. If your child is unable to complete any of the above tasks, assist them by providing them with the correct spelling, meaning, sentence usage, or picture
- g. Consider this example:

Satellite  Word	An artificial body placed in orbit around the earth or moon or another planet in order to collect information or for communication.  Meaning
The satellite circled the earth every 24 hours, sending pictures back to earth.  Sentence	  Picture

**Intervention Timeline:** Younger students (K-3) are often able to make significant gains in areas of weakness if direct instruction is provided. As students get older, it becomes more difficult to learn key skills, so a combination of instruction and classroom accommodations is important. As students transition to middle and high school, accommodations become essential. However, accommodations are a **supplement** to remediation, not a replacement. Accommodations are used to bypass word-level reading issues; they will not “fix” the problem or make students better at reading, but additional supports will allow them to be more **independent** in reading activities.



**Classroom Accommodations:**

- Assistive Technology: text-to-speech software
- Instruction: Peer or adult can read text out loud as a model; materials presented electronically

**External Resources for Parents, Teachers, and Schools**

- “Vocabulary Development with English Language Learners” at [www.readingrockets.org](http://www.readingrockets.org)
- “Vocabulary Development” at <https://www.time4learning.com/>
- “Vocabulary” at <https://www.readnaturally.com/>