

Alphabetic Principles

Highlights

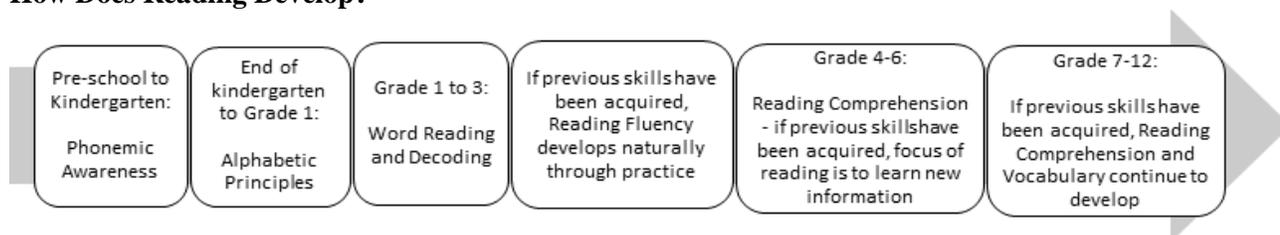
What is this reading skill? Alphabetic principles refers to the knowledge of letter names and their sounds in the English Alphabet

When should this skill be developed? End of kindergarten to Grade 1

Why is this skill important for reading? This early reading skill influences the development of later reading skills including decoding, fluency, and comprehension

How can you practice this skill with your child? Explicit instructions and practice with alphabet symbols and the sounds they represent and combining letters to make sounds

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. 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 words.

Alphabetic Principles Overview:

Around the end of kindergarten to Grade 1, children should be able to recognize letters and their corresponding sounds. Children typically start with naming letters then matching the sound to the letter name. They should then be able to use this letter-sound knowledge to sound out common words. Can your child:

- Name** all 26 letters of the Alphabet?
- Make the **sounds** of all 26 letters of the Alphabet?
- Sound out** commonly known words? (e.g., the letter “d” in “dog” makes the “D” sound; “o” makes the “AW” sound; “g” makes the “G” sound)

If your child is unable to recognize letters and know their corresponding sounds by Grade 1, then intervention should be implemented.

Core Instructional Principles:

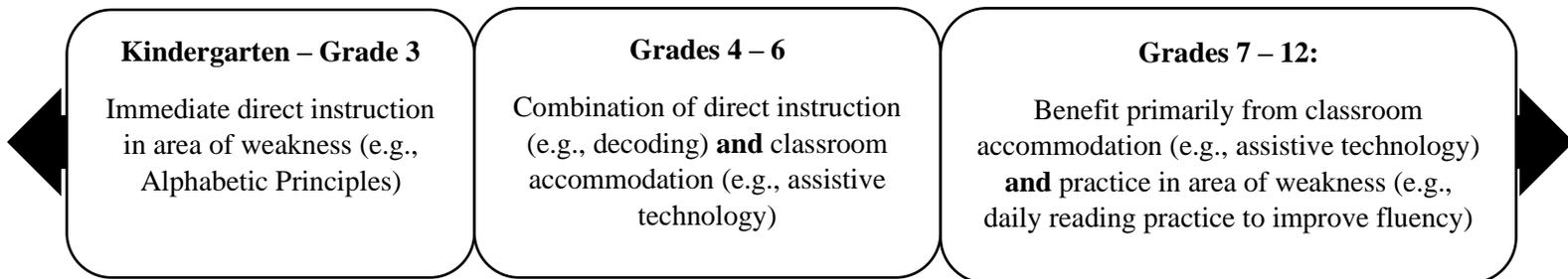
Children with weaknesses in Alphabetic Principles often struggle to learn their letter sounds and to combine them into words. Practice is important. The following activities will help your child develop alphabetic principles:

1. **Playing with Letters (K-G1):** a very simple activity to practice identifying letters and their sounds. This activity will help beginning readers make letter-sound associations and combine sounds to form words.
 - a. Students are provided with letter cutouts or magnets and are asked to pick some to play with, naming those letters and sounding them out

- b. Students are then asked to find nearby objects or name people in their life whose names start with the chosen letters
 - c. Students can then use the remaining letters to complete the words, sounding out as they go
2. Word Ladder (G1-3): a sequential activity that helps students develop their letter-sound association and common spelling patterns through a writing game. This activity will help early readers practice basic spelling skills and understand the relationships between words that sound and are spelled similarly.
- a. The teacher should prepare a sequence of words, each word differing from the last one by one letter (e.g., red, rod, road, toad), along with clues for each word
 - b. Students should write each word as they solve the clue, using the previous word as a hint.

Starting word	Long pole used for fishing...	Where cars drive...	Like a frog...
RED	ROD	ROAD	TOAD

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; provide materials electronically

External Resources for Parents, Teachers, and Schools:

- “The Alphabetic Principle” at www.readingrockets.org
- “Alphabet Matching” at www.readingrockets.org
- “Phonics and Decoding: Activities for Your (Kindergartener; First Grader, Second Grader) at www.readingrockets.org
- “Florida Center for Reading Research [Kindergarten and 1st Grade / 2nd Grade and 3rd Grade]” at www.fcrr.org (specifically the “Phonics” sections)
- “Florida Center for Reading Research Teacher Resource Guide” at www.fcrr.org