

# PHONICS & READING FLUENCY

## An Activities Guide for Families

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### At Home Activities

#### Word Hunt High Five

Before you read a story, pick a Target Word (for example, "and").  
Parent: "Every time you hear me say 'and' or see the word on the page, give me a high five!"  
Read the book normally. It keeps the child focused on the text.

#### Echo Read

Read a book together. Adult reads one sentence at a time with *extreme* emotion. Child "echoes" the sentence back with the same emotion while swiping their finger under the words they're reading.

#### Finger Tracking

While you read, slide your finger under the words. Then, let your child have a turn.  
Parent: "Grab your magic reading finger! I want you to follow the words while I read them. Make sure your finger matches my voice."

#### Word Chains

Write the word cat.  
Parent: "Read this word."  
Child: "Cat."  
Parent changes the C to a V: "What is it now?"  
Child: "Vat"  
Continue to vet, wet, web, wed, red, rod, rot, rat, mat, map...  
Pro tip: Search "CVC word chains" online for more like this.

#### The Silent Master

The adult is the "Silent Master" and cannot speak. Using paper or even a phone, write a simple command. The child reads the command and does what it says.

Example commands:

|            |                    |
|------------|--------------------|
| Hug mom    | Hug dad            |
| Pat dog    | Nod yes            |
| Sit on rug | Get a cup          |
| Jump       | Pet the cat        |
| Spin       | Jog                |
| Tap leg    | Be a bat           |
| Run        | Buzz               |
| Hop        | High five (harder) |

#### Cereal Box Detective

Using a cereal box (or anything at home that has written text on it: soup can, hanging decorations), have your child find letters and words.  
Parent: "Find the word 'pop'."  
Child: Searches on the household item and points out the word.  
Parent: "Find a word that starts with a capital 'T'."  
Continue to search for words, letters, and sounds.

### Did You Know?

-  Reading 20 minutes a day = 1,800,000 words per year
-  Reading 5 minutes a day = 282,000 words per year
-  Reading 1 minute a day = 8,000 words per year

Small moments add up to big results!



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# 1

## At Home Activities

### Nature Walk Hunt

Write a simple scavenger hunt list with words like twig, rock, mud, and bug. Go on a walk. Your child reads the list while you find the items together.

### Password

Write 5–10 sight words (ask your child's teacher for a list) on scraps of paper or sticky notes. Tape them to doorways. To enter the room, your child has to read the password on the paper.

### Recorded "Audiobook"

Use a voice memo or voice recording app on your phone. Have your child record themselves reading a page. Play it back for them. When they hear themselves stumble, they usually want to "re-record" it to make it sound better. This self-correction is a massive fluency booster.

### Silly Voice Challenge

Have your child read a short paragraph or a few sentences three times. The first time, they read it in a ghost voice; the second time, in a robot voice; the third time, in their best "grown-up" voice. Rereading the same text builds speed, and the voices keep it from feeling like a chore. Change up the voices each time you play.

### Character Theater

Pick a book with dialogue. You read the "narrator" parts (the plain text) and your child reads what the characters say in the quotation marks.

### Flashlight Reading

Turn off the lights and give your child a flashlight (could be the flashlight on your phone). While reading a book, your child "points" the beam of light at each word as they read it.

## Did You Know?

There is no single part of the human brain designed for reading. Unlike speaking, which comes naturally, reading requires your child to build brand new bridges between the 'vision' part of their brain and the 'language' part.



### At Home Activities

#### The Radio Play

Find a short story and assign parts. Instead of just reading, you both "perform" it. If a character is described as "whispering," your child must whisper that line. If the character is "grumpy," they must read with a growl. This deepens comprehension while building speed.

#### License Plate "Chunking"

Look at the letters on a license plate. Challenge your child to use those letters as the "middle" or "end" of a word. If the plate has "RNT," they might come up with parent or rent. If it's "SPL," they could say splash or split.

#### Road Sign Fluency

As you drive, have your child try to read every word on a billboard or road sign before you pass it. If the text is too long, have them just focus on the "bold" words.

#### 1-Minute "Cold vs. Hot" Read

Have your child read a new page for one minute (the "Cold Read"). Count the words. Then, have them practice that same page three times. Finally, time them for one more minute (the "Hot Read"). Seeing the jump in their "Words Per Minute" score is a massive confidence booster.

#### Phonics Pattern Finger Touch

Choose a phonics pattern (ask your child's teacher for a list). As you read, your child keeps their index finger "on guard." Every time they see that phonics pattern, they "tap" and read the word.

#### Error Detection

Read a page aloud while your child follows along. Occasionally, purposely misread a word or ignore a punctuation mark (e.g., read "The cat sat" as "The car sat"). Your child has to yell "BEEP!" or "STOP!" to catch your mistake. To do this, they have to be tracking the text very closely.

### Did You Know?

100 simple words (the, and, is) make up about 50% of everything we read in English. By turning these common words into games, you help your child recognize them instantly, freeing up their brain power to tackle the harder words in a story.



### At Home Activities

#### The Karate Chop

Open a book to a random page and spot a big word (e.g., unfortunate, pessimistic, calculation). Your child has to use their hand like a karate chopper to physically "slice" the word between its syllables or prefixes/suffixes while making a dramatic kung-fu sound. Once chopped, they read each chunk aloud individually before blending the whole word back together. (e.g., un- | for- | tu- | nate).

#### The Radio DJ

Have your child pretend they are a famous radio DJ broadcasting live to millions of listeners. They must choose a paragraph from a book and read it into an imaginary microphone. To be a good DJ, they can't sound like a robot. They have to pause naturally at commas and periods, and change their tone to match the mood of the sentence.

#### The Voice Lottery

Before reading a page of a book, call out a silly persona or mood (sleepy sloth, sneaky spy, army general, hyper game-show host). Your child has to read the entire next paragraph in that exact voice.

#### Echo Reading

Pick a slightly challenging paragraph. You read one sentence first, using great dramatic expression, proper emphasis on keywords, and a steady pace. Your child must immediately "echoes" you, repeating the exact same sentence while trying to perfectly mimic your tone, speed, and inflections.

#### Goldilocks Reading

Have your child read a single paragraph three times in a row, but you control their speed.

- Read 1 - Super Fast! They must read it like a racecar.
- Read 2 - Super Slow! They must read it like a turtle.
- Read 3 - Just Right. They must read it at a conversational, normal pace.

#### Pass the Sentence

Read a paragraph together, but alternate word-by-word or phrase-by-phrase without a single pause in the rhythm.

- Adult: "The boy..."
- Child: "...jumped over..."
- Adult: "...the puddle..."
- Child: "...and laughed."

This requires intense tracking. Your child has to read ahead silently to ensure that when it is their turn, they drop their words into the sentence seamlessly without breaking the flow.

### Did You Know?

Reading aloud to your child—even after they already know how to read on their own—is one of the best ways to continue to build their vocabulary and comprehension.



### At Home Activities

#### Punctuation Power

Pick a sentence (like "You are going to the store") and challenge your child to read it as if it had different punctuation marks.

- Period: A flat, matter-of-fact statement.
- Question Mark: Voice pitches up at the end.
- Exclamation Point: High energy, excited, or panicked.

#### The Dialogue Read

Pick a scene in the story that has heavy back-and-forth dialogue between two characters. You read all the narrative text (the descriptions), and your child reads all the dialogue for the characters.

#### Sprint Read

Time your child reading for exactly 30 seconds. Count how many words they read. Have them read the exact same text again for 30 seconds and see how many more words they can read the second time.

#### Emotion Switch

Right before your child reads a sentence, say an emotion (e.g., angry, scared). They must read the sentence with the emotion.

#### The Audiobook Director

Have your child read a paragraph of a story. You act as the demanding Audiobook Director. After their first read, tell them the hidden mood of the scene, and they must immediately reread the exact same paragraph to match that emotional energy.

- Director Prompt: "That was good, but the main character is secretly terrified right now. Read it again, but make your voice sound slightly breathless and faster."
- Director Prompt: "Excellent. Now, the character is feeling incredibly defeated. Read it slower, dropping your pitch at the end of every sentence."

#### The Punctuation "Drummer"

Sit at a table while your child reads a paragraph out loud. They must use their non-dominant hand to tap the table lightly like a drumbeat to keep their pace, but they must use specific physical beats for punctuation marks to force a rhythmic pause.

- Commas: One light tap on the table (a brief rest).
- Periods/Semicolons: Two firm taps on the table (a full stop to breathe).
- Paragraph breaks: A gentle clap.

### Did You Know?

Children encounter thousands of new, complex words a year, making it vital for them to know how to break words down by prefixes, suffixes, and root words like un-predict-able.



### At Home Activities

#### The Perspective Pivot

Have your child read a paragraph of dialogue. Right in the middle, snap your fingers and call out a different attitude (e.g., sarcastic, defensive, terrified). They must instantly shift their vocal pitch, speed, and tone to match that new mindset without pausing the text.

#### The "Ghost Writer" Emphasis

Have your child read a sentence three times. Each time, they must place the emphasis on a different word, changing the sentence's implied meaning. Discuss how the meaning of the sentence changes based on the emphasized word.

- I didn't say he stole it.
- I didn't say *he* stole it.
- I didn't say he *stole* it.

#### The Tone Change

Have your child read a paragraph of text. Then, tell them the narrator is secretly a liar or a villain trying to trick the reader. They must reread the paragraph using a smooth, overly sweet, or suspicious tone that lets the listener know the text shouldn't be trusted.

#### The Foot-Tap Metronome

To master pacing through long, dense sentences, have your child tap their foot at a steady, rhythmic pace while reading. Their mouth must match the steady rhythm of their foot, forcing them to group words into clean, rhythmic phrases.

#### Volume Control

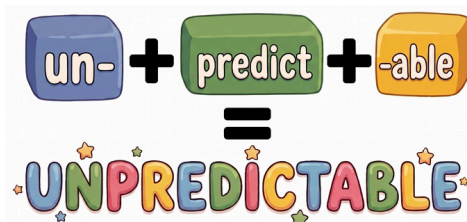
Have your child read an action-packed or intense scene aloud. They must use their voice like a movie soundtrack—gradually increasing their reading speed and volume as the text's tension rises, then dropping it to a slow, quiet whisper when the conflict resolves.

#### The Audiobook "Voice-Over"

Have your child read a page of descriptive text that contains no dialogue. They must act like a professional movie trailer narrator, matching their reading pace, dramatic pauses, and vocal deepness to the atmosphere of the scene (e.g., suspenseful, majestic, or somber).

### Did You Know?

5th grade vocabulary relies heavily on Greek and Latin roots (like bio, geo, or graph); knowing these roots allows students to instantly unlock the meaning of thousands of advanced scientific and historical words.



### At Home Activities

#### The "Teleprompter Glitch"

Your child reads a paragraph aloud, pretending to be a professional news anchor reading a live teleprompter. You act as the glitching tech. At random intervals, call out prompts like:

- "Double Time!" Your child must read at twice the speed with flawless clarity.
- "Buffer!" They must hold a dramatic pause on a punctuation mark without breaking character.
- "Live Feed Clear!" They return to a perfect, expressive conversational pace.

#### The "True Meaning" Game

Have your child read a line of dialogue from the text with a highly stylized vocal delivery (e.g., sarcasm, anxiety). Immediately after, say "Translation" and have your child summarize the character's real internal motivation in the exact same voice.

#### Choral Read

You and your child read the exact same sentence. Try to stay together and finish at the same time.

#### The Navigation System

Your child closes their eyes. You read a sentence from the book out loud, but suddenly stop right in the middle. On the count of three, they open their eyes, locate the exact spot where you stopped on the dense page, and finish reading the sentence aloud with uninterrupted fluency as if they never closed their eyes.

#### Reading Points

Your child reads the text. They get 1 point for a standard or basic word, 5 points if they read a more complex word, and 10 points if they read and explain the definition of a complex word. Have them keep track of how many points they earn.

#### Reading Obstacle Course

Assign a physical action to punctuation marks. Your child reads a text aloud while walking across the room. When they encounter a comma, they must take a giant sidestep while pausing their voice. When they hit a semicolon, they must spin around 180 degrees and continue reading in a lower vocal pitch. When they hit a period, they must stop, take a full breath, and pivot to a new direction.

### Did You Know?

Despite their growing independence, 6th graders still benefit immensely when parents ask them to explain the "big ideas" of what they are reading, which helps cement their abstract reasoning skills.

