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Description automatically generated with medium confidenceSix Stages of Reading Development: A Skills Checklist

**Checklist**



**What to do:** Use this checklist to assess students’ current stage of reading development.

**Why it matters:** Knowing a student’s current stage of reading development can help you provide reading activities and materials that are challenging but accessible. Meeting students “where they are” and building on current knowledge and skills builds their confidence and helps them advance to the next stage.

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| **Student’s Name:** | | **Skill Check Date:** |
| **Stage 1:** **Visual Cue Word Recognition**  Children play with oral language, learn about the world around them, and develop skills they’ll later apply when learning to read. | | |
|  | Pretends to read books | |
|  | Labels objects in books | |
|  | Comments on characters in books | |
|  | Listens to stories | |
|  | Recognizes print in the environment (for example, company logos) | |
|  | Knows that it’s the print that is read in stories, not the pictures | |
|  | Understands and follows oral directions | |
|  | Notices some sequences of events in stories | |
|  | May begin to attend to rhyming words | |
|  | May identify a few letters, especially those from their own name | |
|  | May begin to attend to beginning sounds of words | |
| **Stage 2: Phonetic Cue Word Recognition**  Children generate rhyming words and sentences with alliteration, separate the beginning sound of a small word from the rest of the word, and use letter and sound relationships to recognize words. | | |
|  | Knows the parts of a book and their functions | |
|  | Begins to track print when listening to text being read | |
|  | Recognizes and can name all uppercase and lowercase letters | |
|  | Understands the relationship between the sounds in a spoken word and the sequence of letters in the word when it’s written down | |
|  | Learns most one-to-one letter-sound correspondences | |
|  | Recognizes some words by sight, especially very common ones  (e.g., a, the, I, my, you, is, are) | |
|  | Notices when simple sentences fail to make sense | |
|  | Makes predictions based on illustrations | |
|  | Can hear a word and separate it into its distinct sounds (mat = /m/-/a/-/t/) | |
|  | Given spoken sets like “dan, dan, den” can identify the first two as being the same and the third as being different | |
|  | Given spoken sets like “dak, pat, sen” can identify the first two as sharing the same middle sound | |
|  | Can merge spoken word parts into whole words (cow + boy = cowboy) | |
|  | Given a spoken word, can produce a rhyming word | |
| **Stage 3: Controlled Word Recognition**  Children acquire accurate word-recognition skills, which means they’re able to make use of all the letter information in a word. | | |
|  | Reads aloud with accuracy and comprehension any grade-appropriate text | |
|  | Uses letter-sound correspondence knowledge to sound out unknown words when reading text | |
|  | Recognizes common sight words (e.g., have, said, where, two) | |
|  | Monitors own reading and self-corrects when an incorrectly identified word doesn’t fit with the surrounding words | |
|  | Reads and comprehends both fiction and nonfiction that’s grade appropriate | |
|  | Discusses similarities in characters and events across grade-appropriate stories | |
|  | Reads and understands simple written instructions | |
|  | Predicts and justifies what will happen next in stories | |
|  | Discusses prior knowledge of topics in texts designed to inform or instruct the reader | |
|  | Describes new information gained from texts in their own words | |

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| **Stage 4: Automatic Word Recognition**  Children can recognize words accurately and with relatively little effort. This stage of reading development is all about the reader gaining control of reading processes. | |
|  | Reads aloud with fluency any grade-appropriate text |
|  | Reads and comprehends both fiction and nonfiction text that’s grade appropriate |
|  | Uses letter-sound correspondence knowledge and structural analysis to decode unknown words |
|  | Reads longer selections and beginning chapter books independently |
|  | Can point to or clearly identify specific words or wordings that are causing comprehension difficulties |
|  | Summarizes major points from text |
|  | Distinguishes between cause and effect, fact and opinion, and main idea and supporting details |
|  | Asks how, why, and what-if questions in interpreting nonfiction texts |
|  | Uses prior knowledge and context clues to aid comprehension |
|  | Begins to learn from independent reading |
|  | May exhibit stronger listening comprehension than reading comprehension |
|  | Recognizes most words that are in their personal spoken vocabularies |
| **Stage 5: Strategic Reading**  Word recognition skills are automatic, and children routinely use reading comprehension strategies, including basic “fix-up” strategies when they fail to understand something they read. | |
|  | Demonstrates automatic word recognition and fluent reading |
|  | Reads aloud with fluency any text that’s grade appropriate |
|  | Regularly uses strategies to aid comprehension |
|  | Selects the appropriate strategy to fit the need |
|  | Responds to increased demands of text |
|  | May demonstrate better reading comprehension than listening comprehension |
|  | Reads a wide variety of texts |
|  | Understands more than one point of view |
|  | Deals with more than one set of facts and theories, though integration may still be at a beginning level |
| **Stage 6: Proficient Adult Reading**  The defining feature of this stage of reading development is highly developed comprehension abilities, which depend on highly skilled word recognition. Proficient readers are insightful, analytical, and reflective. | |
|  | Is highly skilled at word recognition |
|  | Demonstrates highly developed reading comprehension (may be domain- or subject-specific) |
|  | Can make higher-order connections within and across texts |
|  | Integrates knowledge from a wide variety of sources |
|  | Selects text to match need |
|  | Constructs new ideas and knowledge from reading |
|  | Grapples successfully with difficult text |
|  | Handles increasingly complex vocabulary |
| **Comments:** | |

*Oh, magic hour, when a child first knows she can read printed words!*

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Description automatically generated*—* Betty Smith, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*

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