



Literacy Development: Ages & Stages

Source: Wilson, K. & Katz, M. (2009). *Reading, Literacy and Auditory-Verbal Practice*. Workshop presentation.*

6 - 12 months

Read Aloud

- Attends to pictures
- Recognizes familiar objects
- Turns pages with help
- Vocalizes
- Pats pictures
- Prefers pictures of faces

12 – 18 months

Read Aloud

- Carries and holds books
- Turns pages
- Points to and names objects
- Learns that words have meaning
- Correct book orientation
- ASKS for read aloud!

Expressive Vocabulary

- First words emerge (10-14 months)

18 – 24 months

Read Aloud

- Fills in words
- "Reads" aloud
- Recites familiar passages
- Learns that print is symbolic
- Attention span fluctuates

Expressive Vocabulary

- 20 -100 words at 18 months

Writing and Spelling

- Begins to scribble

24 – 36 months

Read Aloud

- Idea of plot emerges
- Learns to turn paper pages
- Searches for favorite pictures
- "Reads" to self
- Coordinates text with picture
- Protests when adult gets a word wrong
- Recites phrases & may recite stories

Expressive Vocabulary

- Approximately 300 words at 24 months

Narrative Development

- Heaps¹ emerge
- Sequences² develop

3 – 4 years

Read Aloud

- Plot becomes more important (age 4)
- Still enjoys same books repeatedly
- Listens to longer books
- Retells familiar stories
- Tracks text
- "Writes" name
- Learns letter recognition
- Turns paper pages one at a time

Expressive Vocabulary

- 900 words at 3 years

Narrative Development

- Primitive narratives emerge

Writing and Spelling

- Scribbling begins to acquire some of the characteristics of print.
- May write strings of letters

Rhyme

- Spontaneously produces rhymes

¹ *Heaps* are collections of unrelated ideas/simple declarations.

² *Sequences* include a central character, topic, or setting.



Print Awareness

- Interested in print on signs or labels and.
- May recognize several books by their covers and know their titles,
- Understands books are read from front to back, from left to right and by looking at the print rather than just the pictures.
- May understand that one can use writing for communication
- May learn to recognize some letters and numbers

4 - 5 years

Read Aloud

- Continues broadening skills acquired in the 3-4 year old stage

Print Awareness

- Continue to make progress in differentiating, identifying and reproducing letters.

Writing and Spelling

- Learn to write their own names (usually 1st word children learn to spell), type and to mix scribble, some letters, and drawing in "writing" notes and stories
- Between ages 4-7, begin trying to spell words they hear and say.

Expressive Vocabulary

- 1500 words at 4 years of age
- 2500 words at 5 years of age

Narrative Development

- Unfocused chains³ develop

Rhyme

- Identifies rhymes

Phonological/Phonemic Awareness

- Segments syllables
- Counts syllables in words

5 - 7 years

Read Aloud

- Begins to read on his own, then mastering (5-7)
- Develops motivation to read independently
- Identifies with characters
- Acquires preferred genres

Print Awareness

- Use previously mastered letter knowledge and phonological awareness skills to decipher the alphabetic principle i.e. the child can change the word "cat" to "hat", "bat" etc.
- Words that were once recognized as visual gestalts may now be "read" by attending to beginning and ending letters and knowing the sounds they represent.

Writing and Spelling

- Learning conventional spelling rules

Expressive Vocabulary

- 2500 at 5 years of age

Narrative Development

- Focused chains⁴ emerge (age 5-6)
- True narratives develop (age 6-7)

Rhyme

- Generates rhymes
- Begins to judge and categorize rhymes

Phonological/Phonemic Awareness

- Blend sounds
- Count sounds in words
- Identify beginning, middle and ending sounds
- Begin to: delete sounds, substitute sounds, spell phonetically

9 years and older

Read Aloud

- Trying to establish independence
- Learning what makes them unique
- Questioning authority
- Learning to think abstractly and understanding others' points of view

*Adapted from:

- Applebee, A. (1978). *The child's concept of a story: Ages two to seventeen*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Trelease, J. (2006). *Read Aloud Handbook*. 6th ed. New York: Penguin

³ In *unfocused chains*, there is no central character or topic. Events are linked in logical or cause-effect relationships.

⁴ In *focused chains*, there is a central character with a logical sequence of events. Chains take the form of a series of "adventures."