

# Reading Readiness at Bright Horizons

Periodically parents have questions about how we get children ready to be readers. Our philosophy is to immerse children in a literacy-rich environment throughout each day and seize opportunities to reinforce letter names and sounds in a meaningful way.

Here is a summary of our reading readiness approach:

- The best way to prepare children to be readers is to read aloud to them on a regular basis. Reading aloud is an important part of our reading readiness program. “Big Books” may be used to help children make the connection between the spoken and written word. This is called “shared reading”. Some of the techniques teachers may use during shared reading include:
  - Pointing to words as they are read
  - Discussing the book before and afterwards
  - Asking questions which will aid children in comprehension and guiding them to use picture cues to decode the text
  - Pausing for the children to complete or join in on repeated phrases
  - Repeated readings of the big book at subsequent opportunities
- Big books typically are especially selected or written for their ability to assist children in acquiring reading skills. Many big books, for instance, include lots of repetition of words and patterns, a limited amount of enlarged text, extra spacing between words, a lot of predictability about what will come next in the storyline, and picture cues as to what is in the text.
- We teach letter names and sounds in a meaningful context. There is much more to pre-reading than just learning letter names and sounds. Here are a few examples:
  - Before a child is able to write her own name, teachers write her name for her and say each letter as they write it
  - Teachers use other natural opportunities to introduce letter names and sounds. For example, if your child’s classroom contributes to “Weekend News” on a Monday, as a teacher takes dictation from children and records it on chart paper, she says “Weekend. What letter does that start with? And what sound does “w” make?”
  - Providing a print rich environment is another way for children to learn letter names and sounds in context. For example, “That label says “Table”. Table starts with a “t” and makes a “ttt” sound.” Pointing out environmental print (like “STOP” on a stop sign or “Whole Foods” above the store) is another good practice.
- Use children’s names - The first word most children recognize is their own name. Teachers include name games in daily routines. For example, a teacher might hold up individual signs with each child’s name to let a child know it is his turn to transition to going outside. They might also have children

first find their names to “sign-in” to their classroom and later write their own names.

- Through hands-on activities – Teachers offer sand-paper or rubber letters for children to touch, copy, build words with, etc. They name the letters and accompanying sounds as children manipulate the letters.
- Through phonological awareness activities, teachers point out rhyming words and have children identify words that rhyme.

Occasionally we get questions about “Letter of the Week” programs. Typically Letter of the Week programs start with “A” and go to “Z” and yet not all letters are used equally, nor is alphabetical order the best way to teach letter names and sounds. This also means that letters are taught in isolation and opportunities are missed to compare similarly shaped letters like “R” and “P.” Some children will pick up quickly on the connection between a specific letter and that letter’s name and a week per letter will be too long. For other children, a week may not be enough time.

Your child’s teacher will be able to give you more specific examples of how children are prepared to be readers in your child’s classroom. But remember, being read aloud to is the best activity you or your child’s teacher can do for reading readiness.

