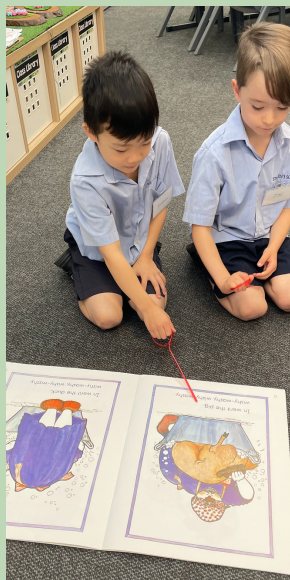


Ways you can support young readers:

- **READ together** - the number one thing we can do to help young readers grow! Read with children and also show them how you use reading in your life everyday.
- **Join your local library** - as well as having an array of books and more to borrow, they offer fabulous Story Time and holiday programmes (for free!)
- **Provide drawing and writing materials.** Reading and writing go hand-in-hand.
- **Sing songs and rhymes together.** Have fun with the traditional rhymes you remember from your childhood and learn new ones together. If your first language is other than English - sing and play rhymes in this language too. It all helps build phonological awareness.
- Before they are decoding words, encourage young readers to **read the pictures**, creating approximated meaning from the visual text.
- When children are decoding, ask them to also say something about the pictures. Picture books are made for the illustrations and words to be read together. This builds **comprehension**.



website:

<http://lisaburman.com.au>

Online Professional Learning:
<http://lisaburman.thinkific.com>

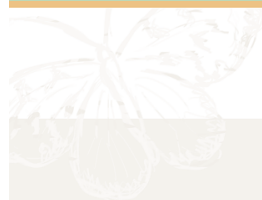
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Learning to Read

HELPING YOUNG CHILDREN SEE
THEMSELVES AS READERS

Lisa Burman
Education Consultant



consulting in pedagogical growth



LISA BURMAN

The Building Blocks of Reading

Learning to read begins long before learning the alphabet. From birth, the child's brain is 'wiring up' to be ready to read print. The essential building blocks for reading are:

Language - a child's oral language development is considered one of the most important indicators of later reading success. This is more than having a wide vocabulary. It includes linking words together into meaningful strings and the ability to participate in conversations with others.

Pretend play - when your child pretends their fork is an aeroplane or a stick is a laser, their brain is wiring up for reading! This kind of play is also called symbolic play. It's how we learn the concept of symbol - that something can represent something else (the stick represents the laser, the fork stands in for the aeroplane.) This helps the brain be ready to later understand that each of the squiggly lines on this page represent a letter with name, and each letter then represents a variety of sounds - and that the lines together can represent a word, like my name. It is essential for literacy and numeracy development.



Phonological Awareness - this is the ability to distinguish sounds. It begins in infancy, when children learn to distinguish the sound of their father's voice, or the birds in the trees. As children reach four and five, they learn to hear rhyme and syllables. These are all building blocks to later being able to isolate individual phonemes (sounds) in words (the word 'book' has 3 phonemes - b/oo/k). Phonological Awareness is not about writing or reading letters (phonics) - it focusses on *hearing sounds* in spoken words.

Concepts about Print - this refers to a group of understandings that support children to read print (particularly in book form). It's really about awareness and confidence in handling books and experimenting with print. It includes knowing how to hold a book, to start reading at the front cover, turning one page at a time. As children's knowledge of print grows, it includes left to right directionality (in English) and knowing the difference between a word, letter and sentence. The Concepts about Print develop through meaningful and enjoyable experiences with books.

Physical Development - learning to read is a whole body experience. It is essential for early childhood to be filled with movement. This is how the body readies itself for the more abstract and later academic learning. Things like a strong core, upper body and hand strength support children to confidently read books independently. Eye muscles need to develop to support the near-vision task of reading as well as refocussing between objects like the book and your face as you read with your child. The vestibular system develops through movement and supports the development of attention, eye control and the ability to be still when it is helpful to learning.

What about learning the alphabet?

The **alphabetic principle** (knowing that letters can make different sounds) is an important part of reading. If your child has watched you write a shopping list, or a reminder note, they will want to do the same and often incorporate writing into their play. Make sure you verbalise what you are writing so your child can see that writing is thought or speech put on paper.

Many young children first show an interest in the alphabet because they want to learn to write their name. Follow your three or four year old's lead here and show them how to form lower case letters to write their name (with a capital for the first letter of course!). But understand that their letter formation will be approximate - their fine motor control is still developing.

Using the alphabet to write (spelling) progresses differently for each child, but there are some general phases we can observe and encourage:

- Zig-zag or 'loop-de-loop' writing - children know that writing looks different to drawing.
- Letter like shapes
- Strings of letters (often the letters in their name repeated)
- Beginning phonetic spelling - first letter/sound is represented (this is most common once children are in primary school as it shows their growing alphabet knowledge).