



 LETS Go!

## Developing early literacy skills

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### Factors that predict reading


- Cognitive ability
- Hearing Loss
- Speech accuracy
- Phonological awareness
- Vocabulary skills
- Language

Reciprocal relationships

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### Word reading

- Develop a sight word vocabulary
  - Bank of words recognise/logographic stage
  - A huge strength for children with Down syndrome
  - Use this strategy for longer
  - Many children with Down syndrome are introduced to this approach prior to school
  - A strategy for supporting language development

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### Learning to read

- Two areas of skill are needed to enable reading for meaning
  1. Word recognition
  2. Listening comprehension
- Reading levels of children with Down syndrome are hugely variable
- Reading intervention studies show pleasing results and progress although more research is needed

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### Key areas for focus

- Word reading skills – often an area of strength
- Decoding/phonetic skills – typically develop more slowly and need more repetition and practice
- Reading comprehension – linked to listening comprehension. Children with Down syndrome perform better on reading comprehension but with similar error patterns

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### Word reading activities

- Matching-Selecting-Naming strategies
- May need to demonstrate knowledge without relying on spoken output
- Personal words
- Reading scheme words – choosing a suitable reading scheme
- A range of words to enable sentence building

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### Phonic/alphabetic reading

- Often a difficult skill for children with Down Syndrome
- Good at learning 'facts' – letter sounds
- Blending and segmenting
  - hearing, vstm, auditory processing,
  - Inaccurate phonological representations
  - Limited/delayed vocabulary
- Use sight word strengths

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### Phonic/alphabetic reading

- Take into account the limited vocabulary – choose appropriate letters/words to teach the new skill
- May need to teach required vocabulary e.g. first, beginning, last
- Use visual supports to teach new activities and skills, moving to auditory over time

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### Example activities

- Identifying initial/final/medial sounds
  - Use written words to teach
  - Sorting
  - I spy
- Blending and segmenting
  - Using letters, memory boards, physically teaching/showing the activity
  - Extra steps – blending from others, onset-rime

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### Adapting games and fun visual resources

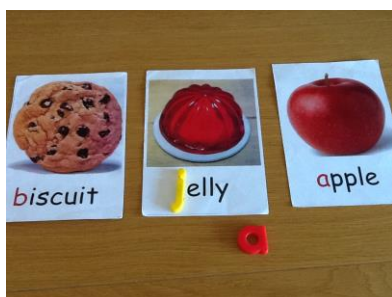


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### I-spy

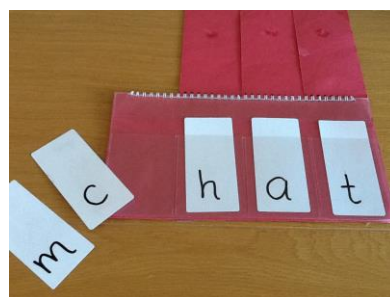


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### Onset-rime



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## Reading comprehension

- Linked to listening comprehension
- Affected by
  - Vocabulary knowledge
  - Language levels
  - working memory
- Behind word reading levels

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## Example activities

- Following instructions – lesson, games,
- Finding information – linked to lesson objectives
- Working out the missing word
- Matching sentences to the right picture/page in a book
- Acting out

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## Reading comprehension activities

Summarising/retelling

- May come much later
- Breaking into sections
- Sequencing activities
- Offering choices
- Use of pictures and puppets
- Prompts e.g. story boards, questions, cueing cards

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## Sequencing



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## Reading comprehension activities

Questioning

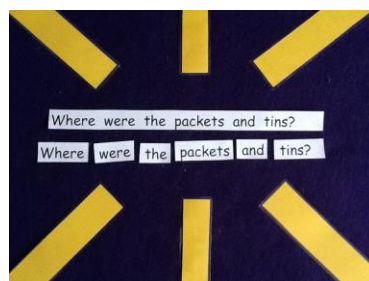
- Answering questions about the sentence/page/chapter/book
- Looking back to support recall
- Encouraging the child to ask others questions
  - may need to support initially e.g. list to choose from/cueing board
- Literal and inferring questions

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## Look back



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## Reading comprehension activities

### Summarising

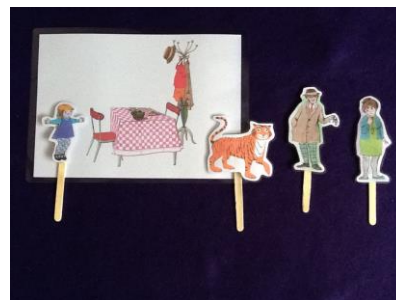
- Breaking into sections
- Offering choices
- Use of pictures and puppets
- Prompts e.g. story boards, questions, cueing cards

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## Acting out/role play



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## Reading comprehension activities

### Predicting and inferring

- Model and explain
- Use pictures/context
- Link to prior knowledge and experience
- Scaffold

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## Inferencing

My wife was a waitress. I had the idea that we should turn our house into a café.



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## Predicting

What will Baby Bear's t-shirt look like if he goes up the chimney again?



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## Developing handwriting skills

- Linked to motor delays
  - OT and/or physio involvement
  - Hand-gym, activities to develop fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination,
  - Equipment
- More practice is needed
- May need alternative ways to support recording

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## Handwriting practice

- Tracing
- Letter formation – cursive vs printing
- Modelling and instruction
- Copywriting
- Learnt words – personal and functional, high frequency words, story starters
- Spellings
- Drawing

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## Independent writing

Stages involved and ideas to support:

- Coming up with a sentence
  - Use of visual supports i.e. pictures and objects
  - Include function words and grammatical markers
- Remembering the sentence
  - Adult records, practise together, cover and check
- Decoding/recalling individual spellings
  - Use of dictionary, word card, letter strip
  - Verbally and visually support decoding

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## Activities to develop sentence formation

- Sentence matching
- Carrier phrases – memory boards
- Jumbled sentences – with and without visual supports
- Teaching 'connecting words'
- Shape coding and colourful semantics

(supporting recording)

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## Useful references and resources

- Byrne A, MacDonald J, Buckley S. Reading, language and memory skills: A comparative longitudinal study of children with Down syndrome and their mainstream peers. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*. 2002;72:513-529.
- Buckley S, Johnson-Glenberg MC. Increasing literacy learning for individuals with Down syndrome and Fragile X syndrome. In: Roberts JE, Chapman RS, Warren SF. *Speech and language development and intervention in Down syndrome and Fragile X syndrome*. Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co;2008.
- [www.dseinternational.org](http://www.dseinternational.org)
- [www.down-syndrome.org/information/reading/childhood/](http://www.down-syndrome.org/information/reading/childhood/)

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