

CORE SKILL: COMMUNICATE

Print Knowledge



What You Need to Know

Children need to understand that print is a symbol system (print forms, such as letters and words), governed by rules (print features, such as left to right directionality in English), that communicates (print functions, such as providing information or entertainment) in order to benefit from reading instruction. Collectively, this is print knowledge. This foundational knowledge about print provides children with a strong concept of *what print is* so they can begin to figure out *how print works* during formal reading instruction.

Things to Consider

Preschoolers will consistently and correctly notice and interpret familiar signs or product packages in their everyday environment. However, recognition of familiar print rarely reflects children’s actual reading ability. Often, a word which is very familiar to young children in context (such as the word Cheerios on a box) is typically not recognized when printed out of context (e.g., on an index card). This is ok! Young children do not need to build a base of sight words that they can read. However, these early attempts at “reading” are important. Use these opportunities to guide children’s thinking and understanding about print with your own comments as you continue to extend and reinforce what they know.

Development of Print Knowledge

Between 36 and 48 months, children may:	Between 48 and 60 months, children may:
Distinguish print from pictures and show an understanding that print is something meaningful (e.g., asking an adult “What does this say?”).	Begin to demonstrate an understanding of the connection between speech and print.
Show an awareness of alphabet letters, recognize letters from own name, or name some letters that are encountered often.	Show a growing awareness that print is a system that has rules and conventions.
	Recognize and name at least half of the letters in the alphabet, including letters in own name.
	Produce the sound of many recognized letters.

Setting the Stage

Activities and materials that support the development of print knowledge:

- ◆ Read books and explicitly point out uses of print.
- ◆ Display the alphabet, children’s names, and put labels (with included pictures) on objects around the room.
- ◆ Include print artifacts at various centers (e.g., menus, invitations, catalogues in dramatic play; charts, graph paper, and signs near blocks or science centers).
- ◆ Use name labels to support transitions or activity selections (e.g., “When you see your name, go get your mat.”).
- ◆ Use large-print displays, such as large schedules, big books, large calendars, etc.
- ◆ Alphabet Games: Letter Hunt in the sand, Letter Songs (e.g., songs like S says /s/), write letters in shaving cream, what letter am I thinking of, etc.
- ◆ Provide writing materials throughout the room to encourage name writing, pretend writing, and to add notation to their art or creations.



OBSERVE	<p>OBSERVE</p> <p>Carefully observe children’s interest in and use of print. Do children appear interested in print and do they pretend to “read” print? Do they use specific print-related vocabulary (e.g., “Here is the title,” “Let’s read,” or, “This is an uppercase letter.”)? Finally, do they know letter names, especially letters from their own name? Do they recognize some letters as having an uppercase and lowercase form?</p>
FOCUS	<p>Notice and Comment on Print</p> <p>Explicitly comment on the print within familiar signs and objects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “See the blue bin with the picture of the paint brushes? You can also see the word ‘Art’ next to it!” ◆ “Does anyone know what this sign says? Yes – ‘Stop!’ We want to stop and look before we cross the road.” ◆ “Yes, the card I am passing out has your name on it! You can use your name card to choose a station later.”
SCAFFOLD I & II	<p>Discuss Print as Useful and Important</p> <p>Discuss different types of print (e.g., books, information/manuals, menus, charts, or magazines) and why we read them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “I was not sure how much to water our new plant, so I read the plant card that came with it.” ◆ “I made this list to help me remember all the things I need to tell you this afternoon!” ◆ “I got out our big book of Dr. Seuss because his stories always make me laugh!”
SCAFFOLD I & II	<p>Label Specific Print Features</p> <p>Comment on how the print is organized.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “On the front of our plant card is the name of our plant, and on the back of the card are the directions to care for it.” ◆ “Let’s look at our calendar. The days of the week start here on the left (<i>point</i>) and go across the page (<i>sweep right</i>).” ◆ “This page is called the Table of Contents. It tells us what page to turn to for our Dr. Seuss story!”
SCAFFOLD III	<p>Teach Letter Names and Letter Sounds</p> <p>In addition to the letter games, letter puzzles, and small group letter activities you are doing, embed talk of letters and reading into everyday activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ “The <i>title</i> of this book is ‘Giggle, Giggle, Quack!’ I see two uppercase ‘G’s’ in our title. Can anyone point them out?” ◆ “‘Booooo’ says the ghost. That <i>word</i> is coming out of the ghost and going all across the page. And it has so many ‘O’ letters in it. Let’s count the O’s.” ◆ “Everyone at this snack table has a name with ‘C!’ Look at your name cards!”
KEEP IT GOING	<p>Consider what you learned from observing children on Monday as well as their reaction to your Focus and Scaffolds. Find ways to build the activities in the Setting the Stage into your regular routines.</p>