

NSW Department of Education

# Effective reading

## Kindergarten to Year 2

A guide to support conversations about  
evidence-based practice in reading

Literacy and numeracy  
2024 update



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This document is designed for online use.

For support in defining the terminology used in this document refer to the [Literacy definition of terms](#).

# Purpose of the resource

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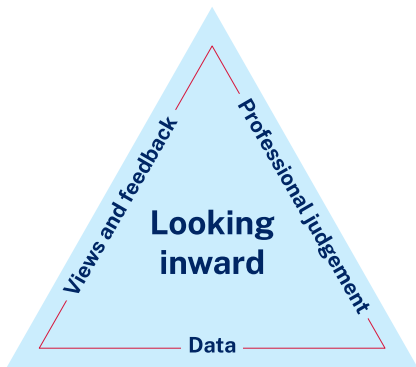
The purpose of this guide is to support directors, educational leadership, principals, school leadership teams and teachers to have informed conversations about evidence-based reading instruction in all key learning areas across the K-2 school context. It is critical in the first three years of schooling that students develop the foundational skills in reading.

This guide can:

- assist with an analysis of current practices
- help to inform planning for school improvement in reading
- suggest ways to build capacity and understanding of effective reading with explicit classroom practices and professional learning resources.

## Situational analysis

This guide can be used as part of the situational analysis in the following ways:



**Looking inward** includes analysis of data, such as evidence of staff knowledge and perceptions around reading, and evidence of students' current skills in reading.

The guide should be used in conjunction with a thorough analysis of internal and external measures such as:

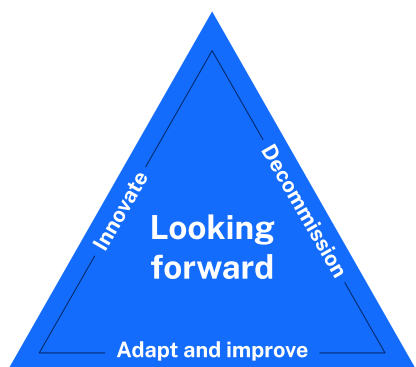
- Best Start Kindergarten Assessment
- Phonological Awareness Diagnostic Assessment
- Year 1 Phonics Screening Check
- school-based data
- National Literacy Learning Progression
- EAL/D Learning Progression.



**Looking outward** includes comparing the school's approach to the teaching of reading with the research on effective reading instruction.

This guide:

- explains the components of reading instruction
- describes evidence-based practices for reading instruction
- describes the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders.



**Looking forward** includes making decisions in response to information gained in the **Looking inward** and **Looking outward** phases.

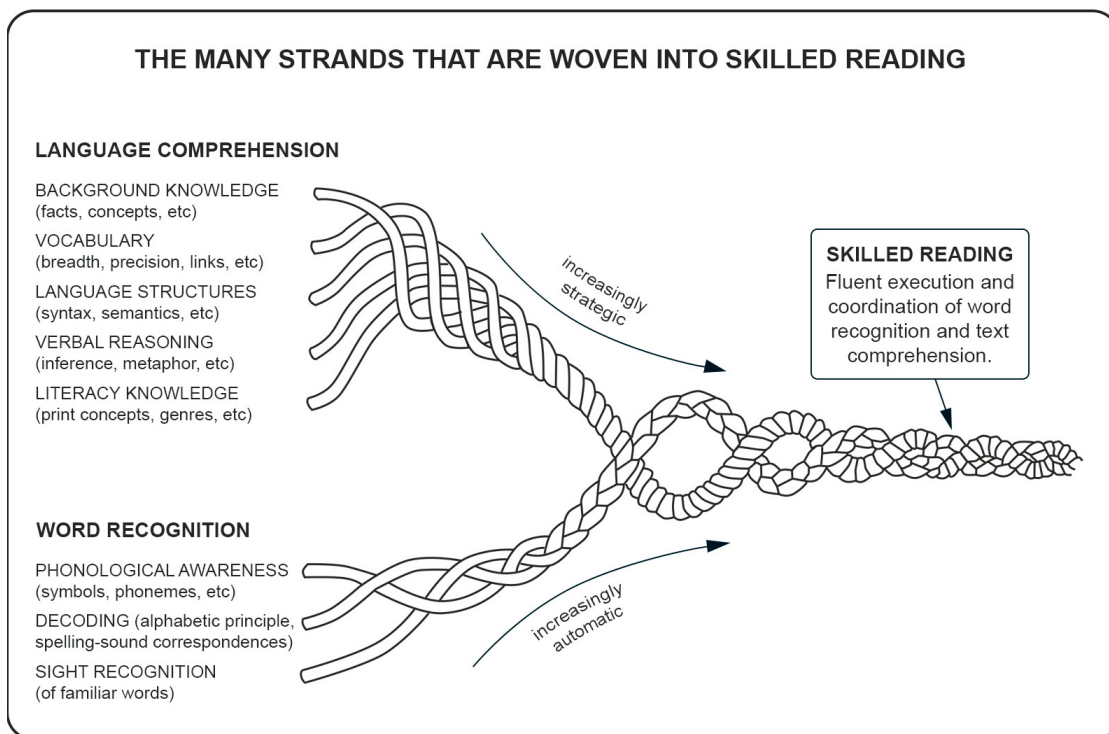
This guide makes suggestions for ways to adapt and improve reading instruction across Kindergarten to Year 2.

# Reading comprehension evidence base

Reading is a complex cognitive process. It requires our brains to make new connections between the parts that were designed to enable us to develop oral language and process visual information. Learning to read requires explicit teaching in order for our brains to make those new connections.

The Simple View of Reading (Gough and Tunmer, 1986) suggests that reading comprehension is the product of two sets of skills: decoding and linguistic comprehension. Since Gough and Tunmer's original paper, many researchers have provided evidence that 'measures of decoding and linguistic comprehension each predict reading comprehension and its development, and together the two components account for almost all variance in this ability' (Castles, Rastle and Nation, 2018 p.27).

The work of Hollis Scarborough (2001) further developed the Simple View of Reading through the use of a rope metaphor with strands of the rope representing the various interconnected components of skilled reading (refer to image below). This framework expands linguistic/language comprehension to include background knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, language structures, verbal reasoning and literacy knowledge. Scarborough also expanded the decoding/word recognition component of the Simple View of Reading to highlight the importance of phonological awareness, decoding and sight recognition.



Scarborough, H.S. (2001). Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory and practice. In S. Neuman and D. Dickson (Eds.), Handbook for research in early literacy (pp.97-110). New York, NY: Guilford Press.



Reading researchers (as summarised in National Reading Panel, 2000, Rose, 2006 and Rowe, 2005) agree that well-developed skills in both word recognition and language comprehension are critical for skilled reading comprehension. Strength in one area cannot compensate for a deficit in the other area. Scarborough suggests that skilled reading involves the ‘fluent execution and coordination of word recognition and text comprehension’ (Scarborough, 2001).

All teachers need a thorough understanding of how the complex cognitive process of reading develops, and how the many components work together as students read increasingly complex texts skilfully, strategically and critically. This understanding of the science of reading will inform the pedagogies used to explicitly teach reading, and the strategies used to assess students’ reading behaviours. Reading is required for success in every subject area and so every teacher has a responsibility to develop the general and subject, or discipline-specific, reading skills of their students.

## Assessment of reading

Skilled reading requires a series of complex cognitive processes to come together with automaticity. Due to the complexity of these processes, strategies for assessment of reading need to be targeted and diagnostic in order to form an accurate picture of a student’s reading behaviours and ability. Students with disability require a diverse range of assessment approaches and appropriate adjustments to demonstrate their understanding.

Assessments and tools such as running records or benchmarking kits have often been used to provide an instructional and independent level for reading. However, opportunities to diagnose reading behaviours accurately can be overlooked when relying on these assessment tools.

This document outlines evidence-based assessment strategies for each component of reading. Teachers should seek to assess and diagnose the component of reading they are focusing on at a point in time in order to inform differentiated instruction.

Teachers are able to focus on particular components of reading in relation to the National Literacy Learning Progression sub-elements using PLAN2. Teachers can set up and use Areas of focus in PLAN2 before, during and after reading instruction, to monitor reading development, evaluate the impact of their instruction and demonstrate growth. Assessing a student’s English language proficiency on the EAL/D Learning Progression and triangulating this information with other assessments of reading may also be needed for some learners. The Assessment of reading advice guide provides more information on reading assessment.

## Text selection

In the early years, students need to develop their word recognition skills: phonological awareness, sight recognition and decoding, to a point of automaticity. Once a student can decode the alphabetic code skilfully and automatically, significant cognitive load is freed up to understand the texts that they read.

The most effective tools for supporting the development of a student's decoding skills are decodable texts. They are specifically written for beginning readers who are developing their knowledge of the alphabetic code and blending and segmenting skills. The primary purpose of decodable texts is to provide students with the opportunity to practise what has been taught during explicit, systematic phonics instruction while reading continuous, meaningful text.

Decodable texts do not replace rich, quality texts. While decodable texts might be the primary text being used for guided and independent reading during the beginning phase of learning to read, teachers should expose students to a range of texts daily. This is because rich texts, read aloud by a proficient reader, provide opportunities to develop, discuss and explicitly teach language comprehension skills, such as vocabulary, literacy knowledge and verbal reasoning and is especially important for EAL/D learners developing English language proficiency.

Students should work from basic to more complex decodable texts and then onto a wider range of texts as quickly as they can, but as slowly as they need. Teachers should select texts which are the most powerful example of what they are teaching at that point in time.

# Leading to improve reading

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Principals and leadership teams have a pivotal role in driving reading improvement in schools. This guide was developed to support conversations about reading improvement in the context of school strategic planning.

## Principal

### To drive improvement in reading, a principal:

- ensures all staff have a consistent understanding of evidence-based instruction and assessment of reading
- promotes reading improvement as the shared responsibility of all staff in all key learning areas
- leads a consistent whole school understanding of reading development using the syllabus outcomes and the [National Literacy Learning Progression](#) indicators
- facilitates collaboration and collegial approaches to whole school reading improvement, including through professional learning and strategies such as classroom walk-throughs, collaborative planning and co-teaching
- ensures strategies and tools used for the assessment of reading and the collection of student data are aligned to the evidence base
- ensures a consistent approach to data analysis and student progress monitoring in order to measure impact
- budgets for professional learning, the purchase of resources and intervention programs for students who need further support with reading
- recognises the cultural diversity of school communities, facilitates staff to understand and respond to the literacy learning needs of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students and EAL/D learners
- ensures literacy and language learning is properly supported and emphasised, recognising that these are fundamental to the development of student literacy.

## Leadership team

### To drive improvement in reading, a leadership team:

- engages with ongoing research and evidence on the complex cognitive process of reading
- has a robust understanding of the components of reading and how they work together to achieve the ultimate goal of understanding texts
- reviews current literacy practices, teacher understanding and beliefs about reading and resources; this could include an evaluation of existing literacy classroom practice and the roles of the literacy coordinator and teams
- develops a shared responsibility and consistent use of language when discussing reading across the school
- establishes a consistent approach to the explicit and systematic teaching of reading in all subject areas

- provides opportunities for differentiated professional learning to strengthen teacher expertise in the explicit teaching of reading
- develops a consistent school understanding of reading development using the syllabus outcomes and the National Literacy Learning Progression
- establishes systems and structures to:
  - ensure consistent, ongoing and evidence-based assessment reading across the K-2 context
  - use data to make informed decisions about targeted interventions and differentiated reading instruction
  - support collaborative strategies such as classroom observations, classroom walk-throughs and the analysis of work samples
  - collaboratively plan for the explicit teaching of the components of reading through explicit practices such as modelled reading
  - provide in-class support for explicit teaching of reading including co-teaching, observation of best practice and opportunities for feedback, reflection and collaboration
  - engage in reflective and evaluative conversations with colleagues
  - support teachers to implement targeted interventions for students with identified reading concerns
  - ensure teachers are making adjustments and differentiating learning to cater for the needs of all learners including EAL/D learners, students with disability and additional learning and support needs, and high potential and gifted learners.



# Phonological awareness

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Phonological awareness refers to oral language and is the understanding of the different ways that language can be broken down into smaller parts. Phonological awareness is a critical skill for all students' literacy development and a predictor of later reading and spelling success. This is because a student's ability to isolate and manipulate sounds in a spoken word, will affect their ability to assign graphemes to phonemes (phonics) and to blend them together to read written text.

Phonological awareness development progresses from an understanding of the larger units of sound, beginning with the subskills of word, syllable and onset/rime awareness, moving to the more complex subskills of basic and advanced phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is the most important phonological awareness skill and a prerequisite for learning the alphabetic or phonic code. When a student can hear and say the separate phonemes in spoken words, they can then relate the phonemes to the graphemes that are used to represent them in text. Some EAL/D learners may need support in hearing and saying these phonemes in Standard Australian English.

## What does phonological awareness look like in a K-2 classroom?

### Students

- use the language of phonological awareness – word, syllables, rhyming, onset/rime, phonemes, blending, segmenting, first, middle, last as they practise learnt oral phonological awareness skills
- use learnt oral phonological and phonemic awareness skills alongside taught phonic knowledge to decode unfamiliar words when reading.

### Teacher

- understands the importance of phonological and phonemic awareness as a foundational skill for all literacy learning
- explicitly teaches and uses the language of phonological awareness – word, syllables, rhyming, onset/rime, phonemes, blending, segmenting, first, middle, last
- understands that phonological and phonemic awareness is a precursor to learning the phonic or alphabetic code
- uses Best Start Kindergarten Assessment analysis to find out what phonological awareness skills students have on entry to school
- plans and implements targeted explicit and systematic teaching and learning of phonological awareness skills as the focus for Terms 1 and 2 of Kindergarten
- explicitly teaches phonological and phonemic awareness skills using the gradual release of responsibility model (I do, we do, you do) so that students view modelled instruction and participate in shared, guided, collaborative and independent practice of the oral skills

- scaffolds and supports learning for students using hand and body gestures, physical movements, pictures and props, boxes and markers and Elkonin boxes to represent blending, segmenting and manipulating units of sound
- uses formative assessment information to inform differentiated instruction for all students
- identifies students who need intensive targeted support using the [Phonological awareness diagnostic assessment](#)
- supports the planning and implementation of intensive targeted teaching for students who need further instruction in phonological awareness
- collaborates with literacy experts to refine practices in using evidence-based strategies, to analyse data, and to plan for student improvement.

## Assessment of phonological awareness

The National Literacy Learning Progression supports teachers to understand the typical pathways of phonological awareness development, and this understanding should be applied to the observation and assessment of this foundational literacy skill.

The [Phonological awareness diagnostic assessment](#) can be used to support targeted teaching of phonological awareness. This tool is a short on-demand assessment that tells teachers how students are progressing in phonological awareness. It allows students to demonstrate what they know and can do and clarifies for teachers a student's skill level for the subskills of: **word awareness, syllable awareness, onset/rime awareness, basic and advanced phonemic awareness.**

Teachers are able to use the assessment flexibly, by choosing which subskills they will assess, to suit the needs of individual students. The assessment can be used for students from Kindergarten onwards. Teachers can access the assessment tool at any time via ALAN. Student responses are mapped to indicators from the National Literacy Learning Progression with information automatically recorded in PLAN2.

## Syllabus links

Reading should be explicitly taught in all subject areas. Teachers should identify opportunities for explicit reading instruction in all [K-10 syllabuses](#).

The [English](#) learning area has a particular role in developing literacy because of its inherent focus on language and meaning.

Early Stage 1: ENE-PHOAW-01

[Many connections](#) exist between Phonological awareness and other focus areas in English including Phonic knowledge and Spelling.

## National Literacy Learning Progression links

The Phonological awareness sub-element of the National Literacy Learning Progression supports teachers to understand the development of students' phonological awareness as it pertains to achieving syllabus outcomes.

### Further support

Professional learning available	Assessment tools and resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Effective reading: Phonological Awareness eLearning</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Best Start Kindergarten Assessment</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Phonological awareness diagnostic assessment</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">PLAN2 (via ALAN)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Phonological awareness resources</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Phonological awareness lesson advice guide</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Phonological awareness resources on the Universal Resources Hub</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: A speech pathologist's view on oral language, phonological awareness and phonics (Part 1 and Part 2)</a></li> </ul>

# Phonics

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Phonics is the relationship between printed letters and the sounds they represent and is a vital component of learning to read. Phonics relies on phonemic awareness. The reader must understand that words are made up of phonemes or units of sound. Phonics instruction connects these phonemes with written letters so that the reader can transfer knowledge of sounds to the printed word. Students need to learn to blend together phonemes to read words. The goal of phonics instruction is to help readers quickly determine the sounds in unfamiliar written words. When readers encounter new words in texts, they use the elements of phonics to decode and understand.

## What does phonics look like in a K-2 classroom?

### Students

- use phonic knowledge to decode unfamiliar words when reading
- participate in shared, guided, collaborative and independent practice of using phonic knowledge to decode and encode
- use knowledge of phonemes to orally blend
- practise their phonics skills by reading decodable texts that match the phonic code they have been taught
- apply their phonic knowledge by writing words and sentences that match the phonic code they have been taught.

### Teacher

- understands that phonic knowledge relies on phonemic awareness and makes clear to students how phonemic awareness is connected to word reading and spelling
- uses formative assessment information to inform differentiated instruction for all students
- plans for and explicitly teaches phonics skills using the gradual release of responsibility model (I do, we do, you do) so that students view modelled instruction and participate in shared, guided, collaborative and independent practice of the skills
- scaffolds and supports learning for students using phonic skills for decoding words by:
  - looking at grapheme/s from left to right within a word
  - saying the phoneme/s
  - blending phonemes to model pronunciation
  - mapping phonemes back to the graphemes
  - reading the word
  - linking the word to meaning

- explicitly teaches the reciprocal relationship between decoding and encoding (spelling) to support writing development
- continues teaching the basic and advanced skills of phonemic awareness alongside the teaching of phonics to develop skilled and strong readers
- selects decodable texts that closely match the teaching sequence of letter-sound relationships that have been taught, and the individual needs of their students
- uses materials to support, scaffold and practise learning such as Elkonin boxes and decodable texts
- uses formative assessment information to inform differentiated instruction for all students
- identifies any students who need intensive targeted support using [phonics assessment tools](#)
- supports the planning and implementation of intensive targeted teaching for students who need further instruction in phonics, to support automatic word recognition and spelling automaticity
- collaborates with literacy experts to refine practices in using evidence-based strategies, to analyse data and to plan for student improvement.

## Assessment of phonics

The National Literacy Learning Progression supports teachers to understand the typical pathways for the development of phonic knowledge and word recognition. Teachers should observe a student's understanding and application of grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) during both reading and writing tasks. When reading teachers should observe students applying their knowledge of GPCs to blend phonemes (decoding) to read unknown words in continuous text. When creating written texts teachers can observe students using their phonic knowledge to segment and spell words (encoding).

If a student is having difficulty segmenting words into their individual phonemes, further investigation into their phonological and phonemic awareness may be required.

The [Phonics diagnostic assessment](#) can be used to support targeted, systematic and explicit phonics instruction. The tool supports teachers to identify and monitor student progress in phonics, and to plan their teaching to meet student needs.

Students can be reassessed at any time to check or monitor progress. Teachers can access the assessment tool via ALAN. Student responses are mapped to indicators from the National Literacy Learning Progression with information automatically recorded in PLAN2.

The [Year 1 Phonics Screening Check](#) is a mandatory assessment for Year 1 students. It is designed to be administered towards the end of Year 1, after students have had time to develop sufficient phonic knowledge, but with enough time to make sure interventions and targeted teaching can still make a difference.

## Syllabus links

Reading should be explicitly taught in all subject areas. Teachers should identify opportunities for explicit reading instruction in all [K-10 syllabuses](#).

The [English](#) learning area has a particular role in developing literacy because of its inherent focus on language and meaning.

Early Stage 1: ENE-PHOKW-01

Stage 1: EN1-PHOKW-01

Many [connections](#) exist between Phonic knowledge and other focus areas in English including Phonological awareness and Spelling.

## National Literacy Learning Progression links

The Phonic knowledge and word recognition and Spelling sub-elements of the National Literacy Learning Progression supports teachers to understand the development of students' phonic knowledge as it pertains to achieving syllabus outcomes.

## Further support

Professional learning available	Assessment tools and resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Effective reading: Phonics</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Lead Learner suite</a>:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Word recognition</li> <li>◦ Decodable texts</li> <li>◦ Assessment of reading</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <a href="#">Implementing the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Year 1 Phonics Screening Check</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Phonics diagnostic assessment</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">PLAN2 (via ALAN)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Phonics – sample sequence</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Phonics resources</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Decodable text resources</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Phonic knowledge lesson advice guide</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Decodable texts lesson advice guide</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Assessment of reading advice guide</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Phonics resources on the Universal Resources Hub</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: In conversation with Anne Castles: systematic and explicit phonics instruction</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Assessment of reading</a></li> </ul>



# Fluency

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Reading fluency refers to the reader's ability to read texts accurately, at an appropriate pace and with appropriate expression. Fluent reading acts as a bridge between automatic word reading and comprehension.

Fluency consists of the skills of accuracy, automaticity and prosody. Accuracy involves reading words correctly. Automaticity allows a reader to recognise words quickly when reading. Achieving automaticity in reading is essential to becoming effective readers. When reading skills have developed to a point of automaticity, students no longer need to use most of their working memory to decode, so greater cognitive energy can then be used for comprehension. Prosody completes the link between fluency and comprehension. Prosodic reading includes the use of intonation, phrasing and expression.

Fluency is achieved by developing accuracy, automaticity and prosody through wide and deep reading. Modelling and explicit teaching of all aspects of fluency from the beginning of kindergarten is essential to develop effective readers.

## What does fluency look like in a K-2 classroom?

### Students

- participate in singing, reciting poetry, choral reading, performing reader's theatre and paired reading
- read often, widely and deeply, including information books, poetry and plays
- use expression (prosody, tone, stress and intonation) appropriate to the text
- repeatedly read a text to improve rhythm and phrasing
- read familiar texts smoothly and with natural expression
- recognise examples and non-examples of fluent reading
- reflect on their own reading and ask questions to ensure they are reading in a fluent way, to reflect the meaning of the text
- use the vocabulary of fluency such as 'expression', 'smooth,' 'pace,' and 'volume'
- read texts in which they have an interest and prior knowledge of the vocabulary and content.

### Teacher

- understands that fluency is the essential link between decoding and comprehension
- knows that fluent readers read words with accuracy and automaticity, allowing them to focus their attention on the meaning of text
- plans for and implements targeted explicit teaching and learning of the components of fluency
- frequently reads quality texts aloud to model and discuss what fluent reading sounds like
- reads in phrases, demonstrating that words can be read or grouped together to make meaning reflective of the author's intent or message

- provides ample opportunities for students to practise decoding and word recognition using decodable texts
- uses examples and non-examples of fluent reading to assist students to articulate the components of fluent reading
- co-constructs and uses retrieval or anchor charts that outline what reading fluency sounds like
- uses supportive or assisted reading where students practise reading fluently; this can be done where a student reads a passage whilst being read to by a fluent reader, reading chorally in a group, reading to a more fluent partner and reading independently
- provides authentic opportunities for repeated reading of a text – students may use this as a rehearsal or performance whereby they may deliver a presentation, share their reading with a partner, group or class, give a speech, recite a poem or perform in a play
- assesses and monitors the three dimensions of reading fluency
- recognises dysfluent readers and implements targeted explicit teaching and intervention
- collaborates with literacy experts to refine practices in using evidence-based strategies, to analyse data and to plan for student improvement.

## Assessment of fluency

The National Literacy Learning Progression supports teachers to understand the typical pathways for the development of fluency. When assessing students' reading, it is important that teachers observe each of the dimensions of fluency; accuracy, automaticity and prosody:

- accuracy and automaticity can be measured by tracking the errors and the count of words read by the student. This can be timed to calculate the word count per minute or the WCPM (Rasinski, 2014; Hudson, Lane and Pullen, 2005)
- prosody can be assessed by teachers listening to students read and assessing elements such as expression, inflection, volume and pace (Hudson, Lane and Pullen 2005).

The [Fluency assessment tool](#) supports teachers to assess student oral reading fluency; their ability to read with appropriate expression and volume, rhythm and phrasing, accuracy and smoothness, and automaticity and pace. It supports teachers to diagnose where students are in their oral reading fluency development, enabling them to plan future explicit teaching that targets the learning needs of individual students.

The Fluency assessment tool has two parts. The first part is an oral reading fluency scale that rates student expression and volume, rhythm and phrasing, accuracy, and automaticity when reading aloud. The optional second part of the assessment supports teachers to calculate the accuracy and pace (words correct per minute) of student reading.

The Fluency assessment tool is a resource that can be adapted for use in Early Stage 1 to Stage 3 classrooms. It is mapped to English syllabus outcomes and the National Literacy Learning Progression.

## Syllabus links

Reading should be explicitly taught in all subject areas. Teachers should identify opportunities for explicit reading instruction in all K-10 syllabuses.

The English learning area has a particular role in developing literacy because of its inherent focus on language and meaning.

Early Stage 1: ENE-REFLU-01

Stage 1: EN1-REFLU-01

Many connections exist between Reading fluency and other focus areas in English including Phonic knowledge, Vocabulary and Reading comprehension.

## National Literacy Learning Progression links

The Fluency and Understanding texts sub-elements of the National Literacy Learning Progression supports teachers to understand the development of students' reading fluency as it pertains to achieving syllabus outcomes.

## Further support

Professional learning available	Assessment tools and resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Fluency on Teams blended learning</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Lead Learner suite</a>:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Assessment of reading</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">PLAN2 (via ALAN)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Fluency assessment tool</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Fluency resources</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Fluency lesson advice guide</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Assessment of reading advice guide</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Fluency resources on the Universal Resources Hub</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Developing fluency video</a></li> </ul>

# Vocabulary

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Vocabulary refers to the words we know, understand and use to communicate effectively. It is critical for skilled reading comprehension and also plays an important role in word recognition.

Beginning readers use knowledge of words from their oral vocabulary to recognise words that they encounter in print. When students ‘sound out’ a word, their brain connects the pronunciation of a sequence of sounds to a word in their vocabulary. If they find a match between the word on the page and a word they have learned through listening and speaking, and it makes sense to them, they will keep reading. If a match is not created, because the word they are reading is not found in their vocabulary, then comprehension is interrupted. This will be the case even if they are able to produce the correct pronunciation through the decoding process.

It is also critical to develop and deepen the oral vocabulary of beginning readers so that, as they encounter increasingly complex texts, they have a robust vocabulary store to strategically apply for comprehension.

Key to making decisions about vocabulary instruction is an understanding of the three tiers (Beck, McKeown and Kucan, 2013):

**Tier 1:** Basic words used in everyday conversation that do not usually require explicit instruction, for example: ‘think’, ‘around’, ‘eat’, ‘clock’, ‘orange’. The exception is for some EAL/D learners and learners with a disability where Tier 1 words need to be taught in context.

**Tier 2:** Words that are used more frequently in texts than in spoken language and that usually require explicit teaching. Tier 2 word learning is essential for building formal academic language within all subject areas as they add precision and detail, for example: ‘switch’, ‘struggle’, ‘interesting’, ‘unsure’.

**Tier 3:** Words with low frequency of use that is often limited to specific topics and domains. These words usually require explicit teaching within subject areas. Tier 3 words might be content words from science, geography, mathematics or history, for example: ‘circumference’, ‘isosceles’ and ‘integer’.

The development of a rich oral vocabulary for EAL/D learners is especially important in helping these students to learn to read.

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## What does vocabulary look like in a K-2 classroom?

### Students

- begin to apply word-learning strategies, such as using context clues and morphology, as part of their everyday reading practice
- draw on home language and literacy experiences when reading
- become 'word conscious' whereby they notice words and enjoy learning and talking about them
- incorporate words that have been explicitly taught in their verbal and written work
- listen to and reflect on teacher and peer 'think alouds' of the vocabulary in texts. A 'think aloud' strategy involves a skilled reader thinking aloud as they read so that others can eavesdrop on their thought processes as they approach unfamiliar vocabulary and comprehend a text.

### Teacher

- understands the importance of vocabulary for both learning to read and reading to learn
- understands the importance of selecting Tier 2 vocabulary for explicit instruction. These are words that appear more frequently in text than within oral language, so students are less likely to learn them without instruction
- understands that teaching morphology is a critical component of vocabulary instruction
- considers home language and literacy experiences of all students, including Aboriginal students and those from language backgrounds other than English and EAL/D learners
- assesses and monitors vocabulary progress through pre- and post-assessment opportunities such as having the students self-assess their understanding of a word or monitoring student use of words in speaking
- plans and implements targeted explicit teaching and learning of vocabulary using Tier 2 words from quality texts such as picture books, poems and information texts
- implements targeted explicit teaching and learning of Tier 2 vocabulary using strategies such as the SEEC model (Quigley, 2018, p.139):
  - **Select:** Select words with consideration for difficulty, importance to topic, prior knowledge of students, frequency of appearance in text, interrelationship between words and if academic (Tier 2) or subject specific (Tier 3) vocabulary
  - **Explain:** Say the word, write the word, define the word (using a student-friendly definition), give multiple meanings, examples and non-examples and clarify any misunderstandings
  - **Explore:** Explore the etymology and morphology of the word, including common word parts, word families, synonyms, antonyms, different meanings and the word in use in various contexts. Teachers might use word clines, word webs and the Frayer model as strategies to explore words

- **Consolidate:** Engage in multiple and frequent opportunities for students to consolidate their understanding of taught vocabulary through activities such as cloze passages, short answer questions, using the word in real contexts and targeted research.
- regularly and repeatedly exposes students to new vocabulary by building vocabulary instruction into everyday routines, using learning activities that promote the use of new vocabulary, and reading aloud from texts, including fiction, non-fiction and poetry
- promotes ‘word consciousness’ (Quigley, 2018) as part of everyday practice. Word consciousness is where words are noticed, and interest and curiosity are piqued to learn about them
- explicitly teaches word-learning strategies, such as how to use context clues and morphology, to assist with determining the meaning of unknown words
- collaborates with literacy experts to refine practices in using evidence-based strategies, to analyse data, and to plan for student improvement.

## Assessment of vocabulary

The challenge in assessing a student’s vocabulary knowledge lies in the nature of vocabulary itself. We can have a surface level understanding of what a word means, but not know a word deeply enough to support inference, reasoning and reading comprehension, or use it with precision when writing. Also, we each acquire vocabulary through contexts that we’re exposed to and experience, and these experiences may be different from one person to the next. Therefore, the assessment strategy used will depend on what it is that the teacher needs to focus on:

- breadth – the number of words an individual knows the meaning of
- depth – being able to define words, provide attributes of the word (for example, morphological, etymological and grammatical features), supply examples of synonyms and antonyms, and explain the precise use of a word within a range of contexts (for example, the word ‘volume’ and be used differently depending on context. It can mean a measure of sound, a measure of space a substance occupies or a measure of quantity).

The National Literacy Learning Progression supports teachers to understand the typical pathways for the development of vocabulary. Due to the reciprocal nature of vocabulary, it features in all three elements of the progression: Speaking and listening, Reading and viewing, and Writing. Teachers can use the behaviours described by the progression to support their observation and assessment of students’ vocabulary knowledge.

The Vocabulary knowledge scale for assessment gives students an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of vocabulary. Students use the scale to demonstrate the breadth (number of words) and depth (level of knowing) of their vocabulary knowledge. The Vocabulary sort assessment tool and the Vocabulary recognition tool for assessment give students opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge of vocabulary in relation to a specific topic or unit of learning. All three assessment tools can be used as a pre and post-assessment, to inform teachers of student vocabulary development before and after explicit teaching instruction.



## Syllabus links

Reading should be explicitly taught in all subject areas. Teachers should identify opportunities for explicit reading instruction in all [K-10 syllabuses](#).

The [English](#) learning area has a particular role in developing literacy because of its inherent focus on language and meaning.

Early Stage 1: ENE-VOCAB-01

Stage 1: EN1-VOCAB-01

[Many connections](#) exist between Vocabulary and other focus areas in English including Phonic knowledge, Spelling and Reading comprehension.

## National Literacy Learning Progression links

The National Literacy Learning Progression supports teachers to understand the development of students' vocabulary as it pertains to achieving syllabus outcomes. Vocabulary is evidenced with its own subheading in sub-elements Speaking, Understanding texts and Creating texts.

## Further support

Professional learning available	Assessment tools and resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Focus on vocabulary – Blended learning</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Improving reading and numeracy suite</a>:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Vocabulary (primary)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <a href="#">Lead learner suite</a>:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Vocabulary</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PLAN2 (via <a href="#">ALAN</a>)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Vocabulary assessment tools</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Assessment of reading advice guide</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Vocabulary resources</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Vocabulary resources on the Universal Resources Hub</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Vocabulary lesson advice guide</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Podcast: Dr Danielle Colenbrander chats about vocabulary for reading instruction</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Writing guide K-2</a></li> </ul>

# Reading comprehension

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Comprehension is an active process that involves the reader understanding and interpreting what is read. It is heavily dependent on a student's oral language comprehension and their ability to apply their background knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, knowledge about texts, understanding of language structures and reasoning skills to a text. To be able to accurately understand written material, students need to be able to first decode what they read and then apply their language comprehension to make connections between what they read and what they already know.

## What does reading comprehension look like in a K-2 classroom?

### Students

- engage with a range of texts, both fiction and nonfiction, for enjoyment and to build background knowledge
- listen to and reflect on teacher 'think alouds' of texts. A 'think aloud' strategy involves a skilled reader thinking aloud as they read so that others can eavesdrop on their thought processes as they approach and comprehend a text
- engage in high quality conversations about texts
- monitor their understanding as they read or listen to texts and notice and repair any misunderstanding
- begin to identify and explain the structural elements of a range of texts from a variety of genres
- begin to use background knowledge, vocabulary and knowledge of language and text structure to make inferences when being read to or when reading independently
- begin to recognise when writers leave out information and what readers do to make connections and inferences
- identify connectives and cohesive devices, such as pronouns, to track ideas and characters
- construct meaning from texts by thinking logically about what they have read
- discuss the author, audience and purpose of texts.

### Teacher

- understands that reading comprehension is dependent on a student's language comprehension skills and fluent decoding and automatic word recognition
- knows that comprehension is dependent on having a high level of background knowledge about the content of the text and so builds background knowledge for students where necessary

- plans for and implements targeted explicit teaching using the gradual release of responsibility model (I do, we do, you do). While students are learning the phonic code, comprehension instruction should be targeted during modelled instruction and shared practice. Explicit teaching practices could include:
  - using a 'think aloud' to show how readers question as they read in order to anticipate text development, monitor understanding, apply background and vocabulary knowledge and infer meaning
  - repeatedly reading quality texts so that students have deep comprehension and are supported to engage in high quality conversations
  - asking literal and inferential questions about texts, including prompting students to support responses with evidence from the text or to justify their thinking with background knowledge
  - modelling how to pay attention to text structure and features, such as headings, sub-headings and diagrams, and how these are used by a composer to shape meaning for a particular purpose
  - using graphic and semantic organisers to categorise and organise information and ideas
  - noticing connectives and cohesive devices, including pronouns and pronoun referencing, in order to track ideas and characters
  - modelling how to summarise a text by recognising what information is a supporting fact and what is the main idea
  - drawing attention to words or phrases in a text that provide information about who, what, where, when and why, in order to build deep comprehension
- uses formative assessment information to monitor student progress and differentiate learning
- collaborates with literacy experts to refine practices in using evidence-based strategies, to analyse data and to plan for student improvement.

## Assessment of reading comprehension

Having a discussion with a student can be a useful strategy for assessing reading comprehension rather than giving students a written task to complete. A discussion enables teachers to investigate student understanding as a student's ability to demonstrate their reading comprehension in a written task may be hampered, especially in the early years and students with disability, by their capacity to express themselves in writing.

Questioning is an effective way to assess a student's understanding of the texts they read. Asking open-ended questions is the most sensitive way of assessing comprehension, since it allows opportunities for the teacher to pose follow-up questions to dig deeper into the level of a student's understanding.

This is in contrast to closed-questioning which does not allow for a broad range of responses. Students might be able to infer the correct answer to a closed, multiple choice or true/false question by listening to the question or the tone in our voice as it is being asked.

Teachers should seek to assess each of the component parts of reading comprehension, as reflected by Scarborough's Reading Rope. The National Literacy Learning Progression supports teachers to observe their students' application of the processes required for reading comprehension. Teachers can monitor student progress and impact of their teaching of reading comprehension through the use of Areas of focus in PLAN2.

## Syllabus links

Reading should be explicitly taught in all subject areas. Teachers should identify opportunities for explicit reading instruction in all [K-10 syllabuses](#).

The [English](#) learning area has a particular role in developing literacy because of its inherent focus on language and meaning.

Early Stage 1: ENE-RECOM-01

Stage 1: EN1-RECOM-01

[Many connections](#) exist between Reading comprehension and other focus areas in English including Fluency, Vocabulary and Understanding and responding to literature.

## National Literacy Learning Progression links

The Understanding texts sub-element of the National Literacy Learning Progression supports teachers to understand the development of students' reading comprehension as it pertains to achieving syllabus outcomes.

## Further support

Professional learning available	Assessment tools and resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Focus on understanding texts: The components of reading – blended learning</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Improving reading and numeracy suite</a>:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Comprehension (primary)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <a href="#">Lead Learner suite</a>:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Comprehension instruction</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PLAN2 (via <a href="#">ALAN</a>)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Assessment of reading advice guide</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Reading comprehension lesson advice guide</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Comprehension resources on the Universal Resources Hub</a></li> </ul>

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