

CHAPTER 10 – Teaching Reading

Teaching activities

Classroom Activity: Emergent concepts of print in reading and writing

Children develop many of their emerging concepts of print through the experience of hearing books being read aloud. The idea that the print carries the message can be further developed through writing and activities with magnetic letters. In these beginning stages, it is always a good idea to build on the familiar. Some beginning teaching activities include starting with:

- the child's name
- reading familiar books
- language experience stories
- the words the child can write
- reading aloud
- making books
- sentence stems
- sentence making
- making words.

The child's name

Ask the child to write their name and provide support if necessary. As they write, talk about the idea that words have letter-sounds. Point out that a name is a word and that there are letters in a word.



Reading familiar books

Reading familiar books aloud provides a chance to discuss concepts such as the cover and the title page. All the emerging concepts of print can be discussed during or after the reading. It is important not to discuss too many concepts at once and to keep the story flowing so that enjoyment of the book is not lost.

Language experience stories

Children like to draw and then write about events that have happened to them. Sometimes children are content to just draw, but it is important to encourage them to write about their illustrations. Even a few letters can be used as a starting point. Many teachers like to write out the full story sentence the child has articulated under the illustration. Then it is possible to read the sentence through together, making the point that words tell a story and that the story remains the same every time it is read. Word-by-word matching and terminology such as *left to right*, *top*, *bottom*, *first*, *middle* and *last* can be used while reading texts that are familiar in content.

The words the child can write

The words the child can write are a starting point for identifying the concepts of word, letter and sound, and one-to-one matching of voice and print when reading.

Reading aloud

Select a picture book or big book to read, and discuss concepts such as the cover, title page, author and illustrator. As you read the book aloud to the children, hold it for them to see what you're reading. As you read, sweep your finger under the text word by word or use a pointer for the same purpose. Repeat the same procedure every time you read aloud.

Making books

Have the children make their own books by assembling some pages they have written or illustrated. Help them to create cover pages, and remind them to include title pages with their names as the authors and illustrators.

Sentence stems

Activities that encourage children to read and write high-frequency words help to build their reading and writing fluency. Provide sentence stems for children to complete, such as:

I like ...
Here is a ...
This is a ...
I can ...
We are going to the ...
I went to the ...

Sentence making

In order to demonstrate the concept of the sentence, first define what a sentence is (e.g. a sentence is a complete thought). Once children can make their own sentences orally, start showing them sentences in printed or written form. You could use sentence strips or big books. Use plenty of examples of complete sentences. Make sure to include activities that deal with comparisons of different sentence lengths, and evaluate children's understanding of this concept. Also, have the children show where a sentence begins and ends.

Figure 10.3 The child dictates a sentence from their own experience. The teacher writes the sentence and the child, familiar with the content, can read it back to the teacher.

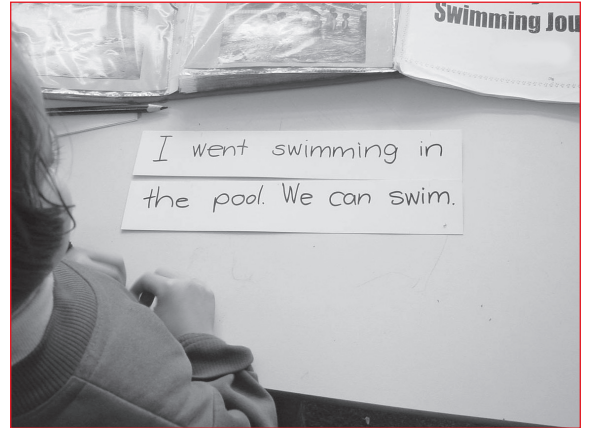
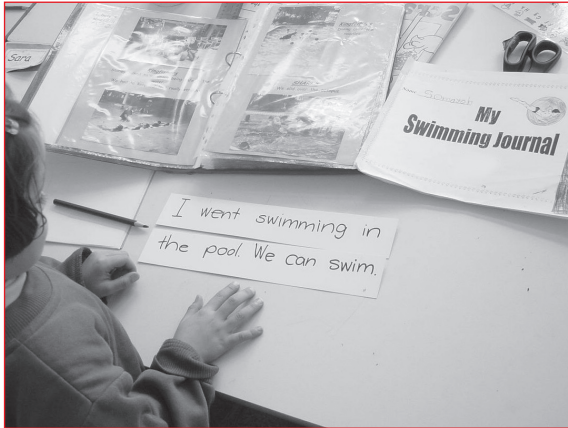
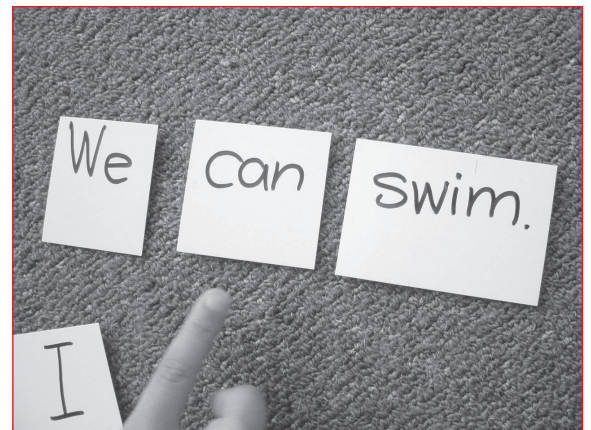
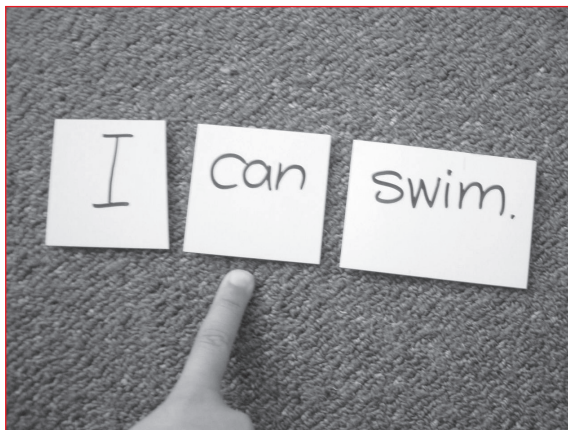
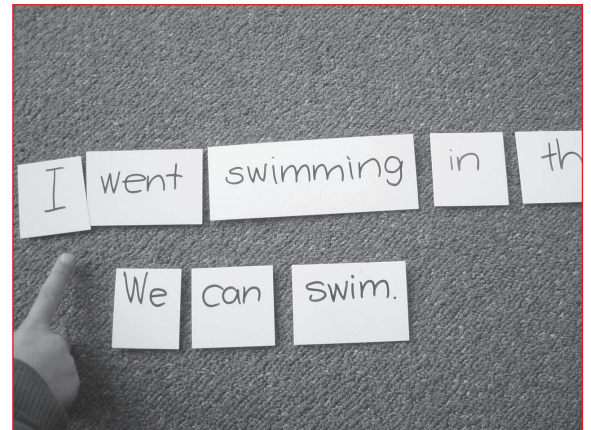
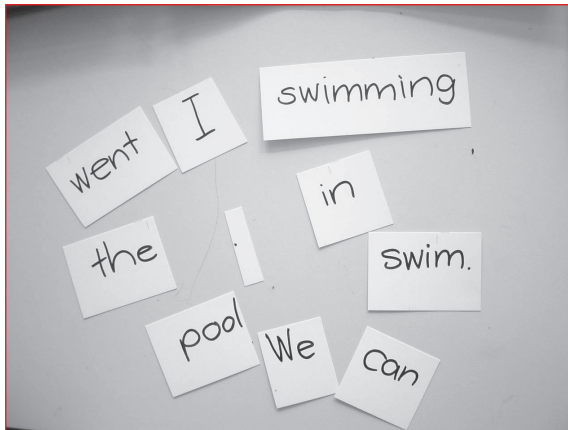
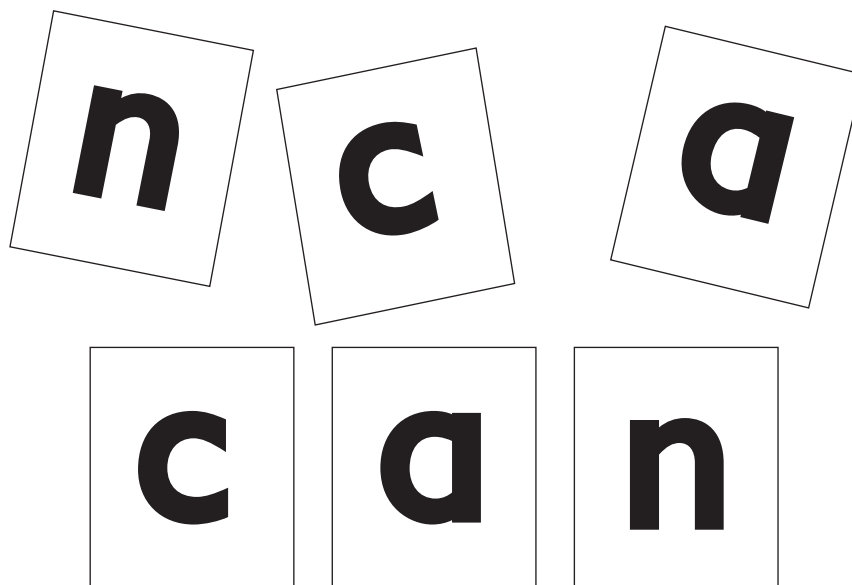


Figure 10.4 The sentences can then be cut up into separate words that are rearranged to make new sentences. (The punctuation is also cut up separately.)



Making words

Take the word *can*. Cut the word into letters 'c' 'a' 'n' for children to blend and segment.



Teaching and learning activities

Activities based on the four roles of a reader help children learn to solve problems as they read a text. Although the following activities are divided into code breaker, meaning maker, text critic and text user, in reality these roles overlap. Most of the activities are suitable for small groups and learning centres.

Code breaker

In code-breaking activities the focus is on decoding the alphabetic code, learning high-frequency words and word building. Words from the books children are reading can be used in games and activities. Many teachers have children play card games such as Concentration where children turn over cards and match them. Other card games include Dominoes, where two different words are placed on each card, and Snap or Word Families, which can be played with duplicate sets of word cards.

The following activities are for very beginning work with decoding or cracking the code and can be adapted to suit many different words that the children need to practise. (See Chapter 13 for more suggestions.)

Word wheel

Word wheel is an activity for building words from the same word family. This activity should be used after the children have sorted pictures from different word families and have also looked through their word banks for words from the word family. To make a word wheel, follow these steps.

- 1 Cut two 15 cm circles from cardboard. Cut a wedge from one circle at the 9 o'clock spot, and write the vowel and ending consonants of your chosen word family (e.g. '-op') to the right of it. Make a round hole in the middle.
- 2 On the second circle write beginning sounds that form words with that family evenly around the outside edge so that only one at a time will show through the window wedge. For example, the '-op' family can be formed with 'b', 'c', 'h', 'm', 'p', 't'. Cut a small slit in the middle of the circle.
- 3 Put the circle with the wedge on top of the other circle. Push a brass fastener through the round hole and the slit. Flatten the fastener, making sure the top circle can turn.



Children operate the word wheel by turning the bottom circle and reading the words they have made. CVC words are the easiest to use with the word wheel.

Figure 10.5 Word families to use for word wheels

-ad	-om	-it	-ud
-am	-od	-ig	-um
-ag	-ot	-ip	-atch
-al	-op	-ib	-ant
-ap	-ob	-in	-and
-ab	-on	-ish	-ang
-an	-osh	-ill	-ank
-ash	-ox	-ich	-anch
-ax	-oss	-ix	
-ath	-im	-up	
-og	-id	-ut	

Variations:

- Children can draw pictures of the words they make.
- Children can make their own flip books.

Final consonant substitutions

Prepare cards or collect magnetic letters with beginning letter pairs such as 'sa', 'ra', 'le', 'si', 'pi', 'ho', 'cu', 'fa' and all the consonants (you could use a different colour). Children assemble the letter pairs and consonants to form words. Encourage children to use all the consonants, in order to play with the language. Tell them that some words will be real words and others will not, and that they should let you know which are which. Some possible real-word combinations are as follows:

sa (t), (d), (g), (m), (p)	ra (g), (m), (n), (p), (t)
le (d), (g), (t)	si (p), (r), (t), (x)
pi (g), (n), (t)	ho (g), (p), (t)
cu (p), (t)	fa (t), (d), (n), (r)

Detecting medial sounds with word building

Determine ahead of time which words you plan to have the children build and provide each child with a set of the letters needed to build these words. Then have children sit in a small group around you and demonstrate, for example, how to build the word *hit*, and then how to change *hit* to *hot*. Make one sound change at a time. You can use some nonsense words. Children can then build words using the other frames, such as *s__t*, *b__t*, *d__g*, *p__t* or *n__t*.

Figure 10.6 Examples of word sets

pet	pit	put	pot
bit	bet	bat	but
fit	fat	fan	fun
sit	sat	set	sut
pep	pip	pap	pup
tin	tan	ton	ten
lip	lep	lup	lap

Blending words

The goal of this activity is for children to segment each sound they hear in a printed word and then to blend these sounds into a word. Start with two-sound words to be sure they understand the concept, and then go to three-sound words. After they have mastered three sounds, go to four-sound words.

Make one line per sound on the whiteboard or interactive whiteboard and then get magnetic or cardboard letters that make up your chosen word (e.g. *cat*) and place them below the lines. Say, '*What is the first sound you hear in cat?*' Place your finger under the lines as you say the word. When the child tells you the sound, they move the letter that represents that sound up onto the line.

Say, '*What's the second sound you hear in the word cat?*' Place your finger under the lines as you say the word. When the child tells you the second sound, they move the letter that represents that sound onto the line.

Say, '*What is the last sound you hear in the word cat?*' Again, place your finger under the lines as you say the word. When the child tells you the last sound, they move the letter that represents that sound onto the line and complete the activity by blending the sounds to make the word.

Building words

Word building is a good activity to reinforce decoding and word recognition. The following is an example of a word building lesson, with the teacher modelling.

- 1 Put the word *fan* in a pocket chart or on a whiteboard with magnetic letters.
- 2 Say, *'This is the word fan. Read this word with me [fan]. I can change one letter of the word to make a new word.'*
- 3 Change the 'n' to 't' and have children say the new word [*fat*].
- 4 Direct children to build the word *fat*, one letter at a time, and then to say the word.

Continue by having children change one letter at a time and then read the word. For example: *'Put the letter 's' between 'a' and 't'. What word did you make?' [fast]*

Say-it-move-it using letters

Say a word aloud and ask the child to repeat it. Then ask the child to say each phoneme of the word separately, while you or the child moves a letter representing that sound to lines or boxes drawn on paper or the whiteboard (see example below). Start with two- and three-phoneme words. Then mix in words with two, three or four phonemes. (This activity is extended in Chapter 13.)

c	a		
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Meaning maker

Meaning maker activities encourage children to comprehend what is read. There are activities that suit before, during and after reading. The idea before reading is to connect the reading to the children's prior knowledge, and using semantic webs or KWL is effective for this. These two activities work during reading as children search for information, and after reading they can check their findings against the questions they posed initially (see Chapter 11 for more meaning maker activities).

Semantic webs

Semantic webs are a way of organising information into categories. For example, if children are reading a book on sharks, begin by writing the word *sharks* on a whiteboard or chart and then have children brainstorm words associated with sharks. Work with the children to categorise the words into subtopics such as appearance, behaviour, young and habitat, and to then add more words to each subtopic. As the children read, they find out more information to add to the semantic web.

KWL

‘K—what do I know?’, ‘W—what do I want to learn?’ and ‘L—what have I learnt?’ Write these letters on a whiteboard or chart. Begin by asking children what they already know about a topic, such as sharks, or, with a fiction book such as the folktale ‘The Little Red Hen’, what they know about the tale, and list their responses under ‘K’. Then ask them to pose questions about what they want to learn or find out as they read, and list these under ‘W’. Point out that as they read, they can think about their questions and try to find answers. After reading, guide them to write the answers to their questions under ‘L’. (There is more on KWL in Chapter 11.)

Text user

Text user activities encourage children to explore the text type or genre and understand the purpose of the text and how to engage with it. Many teachers help children understand the type of text before they read. Obviously, children will read an information book differently from a fiction book. Fiction books are read differently as well; for example, a play is read differently from a poem or rhyme. A procedure text such as a recipe for making biscuits will be read differently from a scientific report on sharks. Posing questions about different texts will help children understand how the type of text affects how it is read. Questions could include:

- *‘What kind of book is this?’*
- *‘How is it organised?’*
- *‘Has it got chapters?’*
- *‘Has it got a glossary or an index?’*
- *‘How will we read this text?’*

See Chapter 17 for more ideas for text user activities.

Text critic

In text critic activities, the author’s intention is explored and also the way the book works on the reader. Some teachers begin with exploring catalogues and advertising leaflets to explore how words and pictures are used to create meanings and influence the reader. Some texts leave out information or tell half of the story. Some texts deliberately ignore, or forget to include, people such as children who are from different cultural groups, or of different gender or age. Examining books for fairness and equity is important for children to develop awareness of what information to trust. A little mistrust about what we read is healthy, but if too much distrust and over-analysis develops, children may have difficulty enjoying reading. Developing as a healthy reader involves being more trustful than distrustful.