

## LITERACY SKILLS

Many parents wonder if their child's reading skills are developing at the normal rate. While there are individual differences, there is a general progression of skill development. During years 3 - 6 children should be able to read and write at length and with relative ease. Children should be able to read silently rather than aloud and to write independently. The content of reading material becomes much more complex and the focus of reading shifts to developing comprehension skills. 8 - 11 year olds use their knowledge of text structures, vocabulary and the world to understand what they read and communicate their ideas with others.

### During years 3 - 6, children should be able to...

- Read fluently for meaning and pleasure, selecting text based on personal preference, topic or author.
- Demonstrate phonemic awareness (they are able to identify and manipulate sounds) and use these skills to sound out unknown words when reading and spell unfamiliar words in writing.
- Read a large number of sight words (i.e. without sounding out) including words from specific topics such as science.
- Demonstrate comprehension of what they read by answering questions, retelling, predicting and forming conclusions.
- Create stories and reports which include more detail and are increasingly persuasive, informative and entertaining.
- Print and write cursive legibly and with appropriate margins and spacing.
- Use standard spelling more consistently.
- Use a dictionary or thesaurus to find correct spellings or words with similar meaning.
- Write sophisticated stories with increased detail and a fully developed plot.
- Organise information and write reports with appropriate structure (i.e. topic introduction, supporting facts and details and conclusion).

### Causes for Concerns

- Your child needs assistance with written tasks (i.e. Generating ideas, structuring ideas and elaborating upon ideas to form paragraphs).
- Your child cannot read fluently.
- Your child finds it difficult to answer questions or discuss what they have read.
- Child becomes anxious when presented with a written task.
- Your child doesn't complete work within assigned time frames.
- Your child doesn't participate and hold focus within class based discussions/lessons.
- Your child is not acquiring curriculum concepts along with their age matched peers.



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## Years 3 to 6

*Middle to Upper Primary,  
8 to 11 year olds*

### Language & Literacy Milestones



Students in middle to upper primary should be independent and creative problem solvers. As students reach the middle primary, developed language skills are critical for gaining academic understanding of content and information. By 8 and 9 years of age students should be able to use language in an adult form. In addition students demonstrate extensive abstract word knowledge and should be able to efficiently organise and elaborate upon their thoughts. This ability then provides the springboard into writing. At this stage oral reading becomes less important and comprehension of the material becomes more significant. During these years a child's language and literacy skills form the foundations for academic achievement and learning progress.

### How to Use...

This booklet has been designed to give an overview of the language and literacy milestones to be expected in a child of middle to upper primary (years 3 - 6) of approximately 8 - 11 years of age. Please keep in mind however, that every child's development is unique and complex and a child may not follow these developmental milestones exactly. Although each child may develop skills at different rates, there is a predictable sequence of development. It is therefore important to consider the individual child when using these milestones.

**Use these milestones and the associated tips and activity ideas to:**

1. Gain a sense of your child's strengths and areas requiring development.
2. Get tips for helping your child to develop strong language and literacy skills.

**REMEMBER: Always join in activities with your child. It is more fun to play together plus your child will learn so much more!**

### A Note on Screen Time...

Technology is a big part of our world today, however it is very important for a child's language, literacy and physical development that screen time is limited and children are encouraged to engage in a variety of activities. Overuse of technology limits a child's imagination and creativity and can lead to delays in attaining developmental milestones in the areas of language, literacy and motor skills.

### If You Have Concerns...

It is recommended that if your child has not attained the skills outlined for his/her age, that a school-based meeting be scheduled. If you have concerns regarding oral language or literacy skills, consult a Speech Pathologist. If you have concerns regarding motor skills, consult an Occupational Therapist. Research clearly states that the earlier intervention commences the better the outcomes for the child.



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# ORAL LANGUAGE SKILLS

## Speaking

By 8 years, children should demonstrate adult like oral language skills. 8 year olds should be able to...

- Speak clearly and without errors, to be easily understood by everyone.
- Use over 3000 different words with the ability to learn about 20 new words each day.
- Use sentences of more than 8 words.
- Use a range of vocabulary specific to different topics and use very little non specific language e.g. thing; that one; the 'you know...".
- Use joining words (so, if) to connect ideas and phrases.
- Independently discuss ideas, events and learning in a way that others can understand what they mean.

### RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Choose longer stories with complex themes, minimal repetition and a full story structure.

	BOOK TITLE	AUTHOR
Ideal for Narrative Retell Tasks	An Ordinary Day	Libby Gleeson
	Bunyips Don't	Sally Odgers
	Clancy the Courageous Cow	Lachie Hume
	Dr Dog	Babette Cole
	Feathers and Fools	Mem Fox
	Grandad's Teeth	Rod Clements
	Herbert and Harry	Pamela Allen
	In Flanders Fields	N. Jorgensen
	Irving the Magician	Tohby Riddle
	John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat	Jenny Wagner
	Knuffle Bunny	Mo Willems
	Louisa May Pickett's Best Show and Tell Ever	Rod Clement
	Pete the Sheep	Jackie French
	Pog	Lyn Lee
	Princess Smarty pants	Babette Cole
	Prince Cinders	
	The Enormous Crocodile	
	The Fisherman and the Theefyspray	Paul Jennings
	The Island	John Heffernan
	The Piggybook	Anthony Brown
	The Rabbits	John Marsden
	The Singing Hat	Tohby Riddle
	The Very Best of Friends	Margaret Wild
	Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge	Mem Fox
	A Particular Cow	

## Causes for Concerns

- Your child is not using complex sentences containing complex vocabulary.
- Your child has difficulties pronouncing some sounds or words.
- After reading a story, your child finds it hard to remember what they have read.
- Your child finds it hard to remember instructions.
- When talking with adults or unfamiliar children, your child finds it difficult to have a conversation, express themselves or to keep pace with the pace of the conversation.
- Your child appears 'shy' when talking to others and you have to prompt them to engage in conversation or 'talk for them'.
- Grammatical errors frequently occur in your child's language, e.g. "I gotted this from Grandma"; "She gaved it to me".

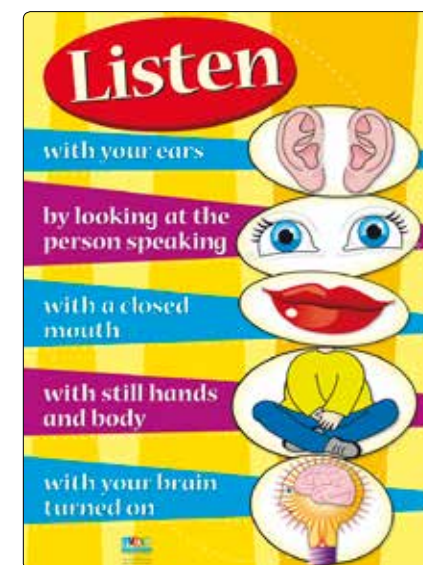
# ORAL LANGUAGE SKILLS

## Understanding / Listening

By 8 years, children should have a receptive vocabulary (understanding) of over 25,000 words and by 12 years of age a receptive vocabulary of over 50,000 words.

### 8-11 year olds should be able to...

- Remember and follow lengthy instructions or information given to them.
- Recognise when they don't know a word and ask what it means.
- Sit still and listen to a range of classroom activities, such as other children's news, a teacher explaining an activity, a story being read without picture support (e.g. a chapter book).
- Maintain focus and work independently on school-based tasks.
- Actively participate in class discussions.
- Show interest and focus when peers are talking and show empathy for other children's situations and emotions.
- Demonstrated well developed concepts of time and number.
- Understand verbal humour, irony and riddles.
- Understand more abstract meanings of words and make more specific associations between words.
- Answer questions that challenge the child to think about, evaluate, make inferences and project their experiences and ideas onto other characters and settings.



For more information about comprehension development and tips for helping a child to understand and answer questions, refer to the PLD sheet <http://pld-literacy.org/product/comprehension-development-fact-sheet/>

EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS	SUPPORTING THE UNDERSTANDING OF QUESTIONS
Why do you like that one the best?	If a child has difficulty understanding a question: 1. Repeat the question using visual cues to support (e.g. pictures and gestures). 2. Rephrase the question or ask it in a different way. 3. Give two alternatives for the child to choose between. 4. Model the correct answer.
How do you think the girl would feel?	
Why do you think...?	
What made the boy say that?	
What should the men have done?	
If you were the Mum, what would you have done?	

## Tips for Home

- Try to ensure that your child has a chance to contribute to the conversation at meal times and that they are choosing topics and language appropriate to the company they have.

## Encourage your child to:

- Tell you about events that happened during the day at school. If you ask open ended questions such as 'Tell me about your art lesson today', you might have a better response than if you ask 'Did you have a good day?'
- Phone family members, (e.g. grandparents, aunts/uncles) to tell them about events that have occurred.
- Play games such as 'making up stories' or 'can you guess what I am thinking of?' These can be played in the car or if they have a younger sibling, your child could make up a story for their younger sibling.