

## Stage 3 (c age 6-7)

### ENGLISH

#### Reading

#### READING LEVEL 5

##### **Aim 1: To teach next sets of graphemes**

Use exactly the same methods you've used before (see English age 5-6, Stage 3).

It's quite likely that your child will actually be reading quite well by now. In this case, working on GPC's may seem less useful/more of a chore. If this is the case, you have two choices: you can either leave off the phonics work for a while and just let him/her focus on reading, pointing out new letter combinations as they occur or cause difficulties (i.e. skip to Level 6).

In fact, you could make this your new method for teaching the GPC's: each time your child comes across a new one (such as ea, oa, igh etc.) write them on a card or in a book or on a wall chart – any way you like to make sure your child is aware of the new spelling and can refer to it when he/she needs to. Or, you can just carry on with the GPC's as a basis for his later spelling programme. Bear in mind that he's going to revisit all these letter combinations from seven onwards so there's no strict need to cover them now.

If your child has not quite 'got' reading at this point, just be careful that you are not focussing on phonics work at the expense of real reading. If he is really struggling with learning the GPC's, or is getting bored and losing sight of the main aim, then take a break and focus for a while on reading easy books, pointing out the words he *can* read – the simple phonic words, magic e words, words with the first set of digraphs (oo, ee, th, ch, sh, and ar). Build up his confidence by focussing on what he can already read. Perhaps try a new approach with the phonics by using materials from the websites mentioned earlier (see English ages 5-6).

As to the order in which you introduce GPC's, it doesn't really matter, except that it makes sense to cover the most common earlier and leave things like 'ci, ti, si, augh and ough' to the end. Also, bear in mind that some digraphs and trigraphs have more than one possible sound, which makes them trickier to learn (think of 'ow', 'ea', 'ie' and so on).

You might want to follow Mona McNee's scheme on her site 'catphonics'.

I tend to use the following groups, but it is not set in stone. It is highly unlikely that you would need to teach all of these before your child could read. Once your child can read easily, I'd be tempted to leave the rest until next year, as suggested above. I include them here just for completeness' sake.

Group 1: oo, ee, th, ch, sh, ar

Group 2: or, er, ir, ur, oa, ea

Group 3: ai, ay, oi, oy, ou, ow

Group 4: au, aw, igh, wh, ph, ew

Group 5: gn, kn, dge, gu, wr, wor

Group 6: ie, ei, are, ear, oar, ture

Group 7: ui, ed, ti, ci, si

Group 8: wa, ey, ough, augh

## READING LEVEL 6

### **Aim: to read simple texts, move onto easy reading books.**

At this point, as I said, you will probably find that your child can read most of what you give him. If he needs extra help, you can often pick up very simple books from various reading schemes in your local library. You are not using these books to teach reading, so you don't need to buy a whole set, but they can be handy simply for practice.

Once you've got to this point, at whatever age (be it four, five, seven or even later) congratulate your child and yourself – you've done it! He won't just be able to read a school 'reader': he'll be able to read pretty much anything he wants to.

## Writing

### **Aim 1: to practice simple print**

If you haven't started copying actual letters yet, now is the time to do it. Just use the same techniques you used for pre-writing patterns.

What about using lines? I would wait until your child is really confident with forming letters by copying or drawing over them before introducing lines as it is just one more thing to worry about, and at this point you want him to focus on formation.

When your child is quite confident, introduce placing letters on lines correctly. For this, you can use pre-cut cardboard letters and simply draw well-spaced lines on a sheet of paper. Show how the letters form groups: most sit right between the two lines but some have ascenders and descenders – or chimneys and tails as my old teacher used to call them!

When he's used to this, start off with quite wide handwriting lines (i.e. with two bold lines for the central body of the letter and dotted lines for ascenders and descenders). You may need to print these off as most bought books have very narrow lines. You can get any size lines you want from this [Donna Young](#) website.

Most children will write p, y, j, g etc. with the bottom of the 'tail' on the line rather than the central body of the letter, and will probably need lots of practice to write these in the correct place.

### **Aim 2: To learn four rules for making a sentence (capital letter; ending punctuation mark; expresses complete thought; has a doing or being word)**

This is really optional and depends on how your child is progressing with reading and writing. If he's not reading easily, and he's nowhere near being interested in writing writing sentences, there's

not much point in teaching how they are formed.

If he *is* ready, study several simple sentences and point out each of the four characteristics. When he seems clear about these, give some more sentences and have him identify the characteristics. Next, give him a few sentences with either the capital letter or the full stop missing and see if he can correct them.

When he can do this, give him several groups of words, some of which are sentences, others which are just phrases. Have him identify which are which, and explain why.

Try playing the Sentence Games in English 7-8 (it is possible to play these without requiring much writing, if any, so long as your child can read reasonably well - or you are prepared to do the reading for him).

If his reading and writing is really good, you could go straight onto the Sentence Exercises for English age 8-9

#### **Aim 4: construct simple sentences**

This just follows on from the last exercise. Once your child has grasped what makes a sentence a sentence and not just a group of words (a phrase), encourage him to compose his own simple sentences.

If your child can construct grammatically correct sentences (or write from dictation if that's something you want him to do) by the age of seven, he'll be in an excellent position to move onto a more formal level of learning. Having said that, I'm often surprised at how long it takes for a child to remember to consistently apply these rules. It isn't usually learned overnight.

**Note:** At this point you don't need to teach the names of the parts of speech (nouns, verb, pronoun etc.). There are books such as Jolly Grammar which you can use to teach these from age 5 onwards, but in my own experience, being able to name the parts of speech is not as important as being able to use them correctly in a sentence; even more-so, knowing the parts of speech will not improve a young child's writing anywhere near as much as will teaching him to use punctuation correctly. That's why I start with teaching sentence construction, then move onto punctuation, and finally onto teaching parts of speech.

## Using language

#### **Aim 1: To put letters then words in alphabetical order**

You might wish to leave it until later if your child is not very keen on reading or writing as it is only really needed to help him use a dictionary and index.

**Step 1:** Check your child's knowledge of the alphabetical order of the letters. You could give him five alphabet cards at a time and have him sequence them.

When he is sure of this, give him four or five words all starting with different letters and have him order them alphabetically (e.g. bird, ant, cat, dog, horse)

**Step 2:** When he can do this easily, give him four words, two of which start with the same letter (e.g.

apple, banana, plum, pear). Show him that he needs to look at the second letter in these two words and put *those* in alphabetical order too.

**Step 3:** When this is mastered, give him four words all starting with the same letter but with different second letters (e.g. hat, head, hit, home). Show him how to order the second letters.

**Step 4:** Give four words with the same first and second letter (e.g. pot, pond, pop, port) and see if he works out how to do it before you tell him that he needs to order the third letters in the words.

At this point you can simply take four words in sequence from any child's dictionary, mix them up and have him order them. When he's done, and they are correct, show him the page in the dictionary and he will see that he has put them in 'dictionary order'. Encourage him to use the dictionary for words he doesn't know. Show him, also, how he can use this technique to look up words in 'fact' books he uses, such as atlases.

## **Aim 2: Continue to memorise poems**

Use the same methods as before, but obviously you can use increasingly complex poems, and your child's illustrations/colouring ability will have improved. Also, he may be happy to copy sections of poems or even whole poems to show off his newly acquired hand-writing skills. In fact, poetry copy-work is one of the best ways to encourage children to write. With their own writing and pictures, the poetry book they create will be something very special for them to keep.

Here are some more suggestions for poetry books: [The Children's Classic Poetry Collection](#) (famous poems which may be too 'old' for your 6/7 year old to memorise but are still worth having to enjoy now and learn at a later date!) and [Classic Poems for Children](#) are both good anthologies with an emphasis on traditional rather than modern poems.

For poems by individual poets, try James Reeves' ['Complete Poems for Children](#), and Walter de La Mare's [Peacock Pie: a book of rhymes](#)'.