Learning to Read
Children develop reading skills in various stages.

The Emergent Stage — Before actual reading happens, toddlers and preschoolers display a variety of emerging reading tasks. Emergent readers:
- communicate through speech with a basic level of understanding
- understand letters have certain sounds
- identify most letters of the alphabet with their corresponding sounds
- begin to see words are made up of combined sounds
- understand that words are printed on a page with a combination of letters
- understand printed words have a message or story to tell
- understand pictures and words help tell a story
- play with language through rhyming games
- accept reading as another form of enjoyable daily activity
- are increasingly interested in repeated readings of the same book and new offerings each day
- imitate writing with their own scribbling

The Beginning Stage — Reading is actually taking place in small limited ways as children develop these beginning reading tasks. Beginning readers:
- can retell a very familiar story with many words from the text
- can describe the story from the illustrations
- can visually recognize some letter/sound combinations
- understand rhyming concepts and beginning sounds in words
- can sort words by sound combinations
- understand reading happens from top to bottom and left to right
- can begin to memorize and recognize some very frequently used words
- can write the alphabet and their name
The Reading Stage — Reading is more fluent, flexible, and thoughtful. Children can read at a level that is independently comfortable and perform these more advanced reading tasks. Fluent Readers:

- read a sentence or passage automatically because they recognize all the words
- break-down new and more difficult words by using letter/sound combinations
- self-correct reading errors based on context or meaning
- add new words to their bank of vocabulary more frequently
- reread or retell with ease and expression
- use certain strategies if they get stuck or if they do not understand
- make predictions about what they are going to read from the title and pictures
- develop interest in a combination of formats — stories and information books
- form questions about what they have read
- write simple sentences related to what they have read or experienced
- begin to understand punctuation marks and the use of capitalization

This stage continues to develop throughout a child’s life as they move further into more complex reading materials and develop greater comprehension skills and reading interests.

The Reading and Writing Connection - Language Experience Stories and Activities

Writing adds another venue to accomplishing reading success. A child’s personal story can also be written either by the child, parent or teacher. Children who are encouraged to write their own stories, either alone or with an adult, are more easily able to make the connection to reading. Reading their stories with their own words makes learning to read more accessible. Children learn that spoken words can be written and written words can be read.
How to Foster Literacy Development

What Parents and Caregivers Can Do

*Talk, Talk, Talk, to your baby.*  
Sing and say nursery rhymes.  
Converse with your baby; listen to his babbling and respond with words.  
Encourage your baby to repeat simple words as you describe your actions.

*Talk, Talk, Talk to your child.*  
Describe what you both see and do.  
Add to your child’s commentary, however basic it may be.  
Keep the conversation going by asking questions and eliciting answers.

*Play, Play, Play with your baby.*  
Give your baby simple objects, like a rattle, that she can hold, shake, drop, and experiment.  
Imitate your baby’s actions and facial expressions.  
Play lap-sit games like “peek-a-boo” and “row your boat”.

*Play, Play, Play with your child.*  
Encourage imaginative play with basic objects and simple toys.  
Join in and interact with your child and his playing.  
Provide puzzles and manipulative toys like blocks to encourage cognitive skills.  
Provide paper, crayons, pencils to encourage early scribbling and writing.  
Let your child be the leader, but also guide him with concrete directions.
**Read, Read, Read to your baby.**
Use simple board books with large colorful pictures.
Point and talk about what you see.
Let your baby point and turn pages when she is ready.
Build up reading time; start with 5 minutes and graduate to 20.

**Read, Read, Read with your child.**
Set up a routine time each day for reading and sharing books together.
Use your eyes for expression — happy, sad, shock, surprise.
Use your voice for contrast — loud or soft, fast or slow, high or low.
Talk about the story and pictures together.
Ask your child to predict what might happen in the story.
Retell the story together.
Read favorites each day and at least one new story each week.

**Why Reading Aloud to Children is Crucial to Achieving Reading Success:**
Internationally respected literacy expert, Mem Fox asserts “Children need to hear a thousand stories read aloud before they begin to learn to read for themselves” (Fox, p. 17).
Reading aloud:
- establishes reading as a fun and enjoyable activity
- allows children to hear language
- develops vocabulary used day-to-day as well as in story and written formats
- exposes children to new words and more complex vocabulary
- allows children to develop their listening and comprehension skills
- provides a venue for beginning art appreciation
- provides a base for imaginative and critical thinking
- provides a base for social and behavior development through thematic situations
Children’s librarians are experts in children’s literature and in promoting reading and reading development. Make a habit of visiting the library and its children’s section regularly. Get to know your librarian so that she can provide you with the appropriate service for you and your child’s reading and learning needs.

The Children’s Librarian can help with

- the selection of books from a wealth of picture books, illustrated poetry, nursery rhymes and other literature
- the discovery of new books and reading through a variety of special programming geared by age-group including:
  - story hours
  - readers theater
  - professional children’s theater
  - art and craft classes
  - music and children’s concerts
  - summer reading
  - and much more!
- learning about baby and child development with information in a Parent Resource Collection
- plenty of personal advice to increase your child’s interest in books and reading
More Than A Good Story

What is a picture book?
Leonard Marcus, noted children’s literature historian, states “A picture book is a dialogue between two worlds: the world of images and the world of words” (Marcus, p. 3). A good picture book tells a story or brings out a concept through the interconnected language of words and pictures. The visual images in the illustrations support the text, while the text alone only tells part of the story. The two, words and illustrations, merge to present a complete story, theme, or idea.

There are many different categories of picture books representing basic concepts such as the alphabet, counting, colors, shapes, sizes and realistic contemporary story situations, or imaginary scenes.

Predictable or pattern picture books like The Pout-Pout Fish provide rhythm and/or rhyme and repetition so that emerging and new readers can easily predict and join in the reading. A repeated phrase or refrain every few pages encourages eager responses from children to repeat or act out the increasingly familiar words.

Author Deborah Diesen offers two such opportunities for repetition with the refrains:

“I’m a pout-pout fish
With a pout-pout face,
So I spread the dreary-wearies
All over the place.”

“Blub Bluuub Bluuuuub”
References


Hirsh-Pasek, Kathy and Golinkoff, Roberta Michnick. Einstein Never Used Flash Cards: How our children really learn – and why they need to play more and memorize less. Rodale, 2003.


Literacy Development Resources for Parents, Caregivers, and Early Childhood Educators

Look for these books in your library’s Parent and Teacher Resource Collection.

Websites:
Every Child Ready to Read @ Your Library
A joint project of the Public Library Association and the Association of Library Service to Children
http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alsc/ecrr/index.cfm

National Association for the Education of Young Children
http://www.naeyc.org/

Zero to Three
http://www.zerotothree.org/
Extending the Themes and Concepts in The Pout-Pout Fish

The following activities concentrate on three overall themes in the story:

• Sea life and ocean knowledge
• Friendship
• Emotions or feelings

Suggestions are divided in four broad age categories that may overlap:

• Babies
• Toddlers
• Preschoolers
• Readers

It is suggested that individual parents, caregivers, librarians and educators use discretion when choosing an activity. Many of these activities may be reproduced within the context of library story times and programming.
While *The Pout-Pout Fish* is lengthy for an infant, talking through the story’s illustrations, pointing out the fish and the variety of colors, and working with the two refrains can introduce lots of theme-oriented activity with infants 3-18 months. Babies love to imitate your actions and facial expressions. Here are a few ways to play together:

**Make Fishy Faces**
Hold Baby facing you and make a fish face with your lips.

**Make Fishy Sounds**
Laugh and say “Blub, Bluuuuub, Bluuuuub.”

**Bounce to the Rhythm**
Hold Baby on your lap, bounce and recite:

“I’m a pout-pout fish
With a pout-pout face,
So I spread the dreary-wearies
All over the place.”

Alternate between these three activities for a five minute play time or however long your baby remains interested.