

Through these demonstrations by others, children learn the pleasures and purposes of print. They also learn to read and write their names and the names of family members. In addition, they learn vocabulary typical of written language, such as how different types of texts such as

grocery lists, personal letters, and fairy tales are structured. They also learn basic concepts of print such as the message of print in books continues across pages. The more children interact with spoken and written language, the better readers they become.⁸

As children learn to read continuous text, they use their intuitive knowledge of spoken language and their knowledge of the topic to figure out print words in text.⁹ For example, if a more experienced reader reads *Catch me, catch me, if you can.* to young children while pointing to the print, children use their memory of what was read to them to help them to figure out which words in the sentence represent *catch* and *me*.

As children learn to read new text independently they continue using their intuitive knowledge of spoken language, their growing knowledge of written language, and their knowledge of the topic of the text to construct meaning. Consequently, beginning readers read words in the context of a story with familiar language on a familiar topic better than they read words out of context, as in lists or on flash cards.¹⁰ For example, a beginning reader may read *horse* as *house* when encountering it in a list but read it correctly in a story about cowboys. Beginning readers also comprehend stories with familiar language better than stories with unfamiliar language such as unfamiliar “book” language¹¹ or contrived language such as the language in decodable texts.¹²

At the same time, as children learn to read more and more words in context, they use their developing knowledge of patterns of letter-sound correspondences in familiar words to figure out how to pronounce unfamiliar words.¹³ For example, children who have learned to read *small* and *smile* and *cart* and *part*, can figure out that *sm-* is pronounced /*sm*/ and *-art* is pronounced /*art*/ and then figure out how to pronounce *smart*.

The more children read, the better readers they become.¹⁴ Children read more when they have access to engaging, age appropriate books, magazines, newspapers, computers and other reading materials. They read more on topics that interest them than on topics that do not interest them.

Reading supports writing development¹⁵ and writing supports reading development.¹⁶ For example, through reading readers learn the power of a strong introduction and eventually use such knowledge as they write their own pieces. Conversely, writing develops awareness of the structures of language, the organization of text, and spelling patterns which in turn contributes to reading proficiency.

Learning to read in one language accelerates learning to read in other languages.¹⁷ When readers learn to read text written in a language they understand, they transfer an intuitive understanding of what reading is and how to read when reading in other languages.

Children vary in the experiences they bring to learning to read, including different cultures, background knowledge, oral and written languages, experiences with print,¹⁸ and access to print.¹⁹ Nevertheless, all readers use their life experiences, their knowledge of the topic, and their knowledge of oral and written language to make sense of print and all learners benefit from instruction that helps them make sense of print.²⁰