

Five Areas of Reading

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness is the ability to notice, think about, and work with the individual sounds in spoken words. Before children learn to read print, they need to become aware of how the sounds in words work. They must understand that words are made up of speech sounds or phonemes. Phonemes are the smallest parts of sound in a spoken word that make a difference in the word's meaning. (page 2)

Phonics

Phonics instruction teaches children the relationships between the letters (graphemes) of written language and the individual sounds (phonemes) of spoken language. It teaches children to use these relationships to read and write words. The goal of phonics instruction is to help children learn and use the alphabetic principle—the understanding that there are systematic and predictable relationships between written letters and spoken sounds. (page 12)

Fluency

Fluency is the ability to read a text accurately and quickly. When fluent readers read silently, they recognize words automatically. They group words quickly to help them gain meaning from what they read. Fluent readers read aloud effortlessly and with expression. Their reading sounds natural, as if they are speaking. Readers who have not yet developed fluency read slowly, word by word. Their oral reading is choppy and plodding. Fluency provides the bridge between word recognition and comprehension. (page 22)

Vocabulary

Vocabulary refers to the words we must know to communicate effectively. In general, vocabulary can be described as oral vocabulary or reading vocabulary. Oral vocabulary refers to words that we use in speaking or recognize in listening. Reading vocabulary refers to words we recognize or use in print. Vocabulary is very important to reading comprehension. Readers cannot understand what they are reading without knowing what most of the words mean. (page 34)

Comprehension

Comprehension is the reason for reading. If readers can read the words but do not understand what they are reading, they are not really reading. As they read, good readers are both purposeful and active. Text comprehension can be improved by instruction that helps readers use specific comprehension strategies. (pages 48-49)

excerpts from *Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read Kindergarten Through Grade 3*
(entire booklet can be downloaded from <http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/k-3.html>)