

Parental Strategies for Assisting Your Child

Parents can engage in some of the following activities at home to help their child who have reading difficulties including students who may have characteristics consistent with dyslexia. Each of the activities below requires the parent to practice with their child until the child can do the activity independently. Technical terms for each activity are in parentheses to help parents identify vocabulary commonly used in schools by teachers. Any letters within slashes (called virgules) means the reader should say the sounds within the slashes. Using /t/ as an example, the reader would say the sound of “t”, instead of saying the name of the letter.

Activities adapted from the Florida Center for Reading Research at Florida State University have been denoted with (FCRR). For more information and additional resources please visit www.fcrr.org.

Phonological Awareness

Recognize and produce rhyming words

- Sing rhyming songs.
- Match pictures of objects that rhyme.

Recognize and produce words beginning with the same sound (alliteration)

- Match your child’s name with a describing word that begins with the same sound (e.g., Terrific Tony) or with things like (Eileen likes Ice Cream). (FCRR)
- Using pictures, have your child make up stories using phrases in which each word in the phrase has the same beginning sound.
- Use your child’s name to show a link between letters and sounds. Say, “John, the word ‘jump’ begins with the same sound as your name. John. Jump. And they both begin with the same letter ‘j.’” (FCRR)

Segment sentences into their individual words

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- Count the words in sentences and stack cubes for each word counted. (FCRR)
- Record your voice slowly reading a story. Your child listens to the story and moves a game piece on a game board each time a word is heard. (FCRR)

Segment syllables into words

- Use four cards with a number on each card (1, 2, 3, 4). Collect a stack of pictures of known objects. Your child matches these picture cards with the correct number of syllables of the object (e.g., a picture of a tiger has two syllables; it will be placed next to the card with a “2”). (FCRR)
- Say words and count syllables using fingers.

Separate the beginning consonant sound from the rest of the sounds in a word

- Make first sound cards (e.g., c, s, t, n) and final sounds cards (rime) (e.g., ap, ip, op). Practice putting the cards together to make words, including nonsense words. (FCRR)
- Use picture cards and say the initial sound (onset), pause, then say the final sounds (rime) (e.g., /r/ /ing/, /k/ /ite/). (FCRR)
- Say a word and tell your child “the first sound of the word is ... and it rhymes with” (e.g., the first sound is /f/ and it rhymes with “run” (Answer “fun.”) If your child struggles, give them more clues until they come up with the answer (e.g., “It begins like “fog” and ends like “sun”). (FCRR)

Match sounds in words (phoneme matching)

- Give your child a number of cards with pictures on them. Ask them to match up the cards that have the same first sound. (FCRR)
- Put a happy face on one box and a sad face on another. Tell your child they are looking for objects that have the same sound as a target sound (e.g., tell them the target sound is /t/ like “tiger”). Ask your child to place any object into the happy face box that has that sound anywhere in it. Objects that don’t have that sound can be placed in the sad face box. (FCRR)
- Play go fish with picture cards. Say, “Do you have a card that begins with the sound /m/? If not, the child should say “go fish.” The same can be played for the sound the word ends with. (FCRR)

Find the first, middle, and ending sounds of words (phoneme isolating)

- Put items in a box. When your child takes out an item, ask them to say the name of the word and its beginning sound, middle sound, or ending sound. (FCRR)
- Cut a picture of something with three sounds into thirds, so the picture has a beginning, middle, and end (e.g., in a picture of a bird, the head sounds like /b/, the wings and body sound like /ir/ and the tail sounds like /d/). Give your child picture cards and ask them to match up cards with the beginning sound that is the same as the beginning sound of /b/ with the head of the bird. Picture cards with the middle sound like /ir/ would go with the picture of the middle of the bird (e.g., burn, third, stir). Pictures that end with the /d/ sound go with the picture of the tail of the bird, since /d/ is the ending sound of bird. (FCRR)

Segmenting sounds in words (phoneme segmenting)

- Using picture cards, sound out each sound in a word. You can also draw boxes for each sound in the word and ask your child to move a penny or another small object into each box as they say each sound. (FCRR)
- Using picture cards, show your child how to say each sound in a word as you tap your fingers. Then, stack cubes for the number of sounds heard. (FCRR)

- Using chalk or number cards, create a hopscotch pattern on the ground. Using picture cards, ask your child to count each sound in the word using their fingers, then hopscotch that number of sounds. (FCRR)

Phoneme segmenting and blending

- Using picture cards, help your child to segment the word of the picture card into each of its sounds. Then say the sounds of the word together to make the word. (FCRR)

Moving sounds around in words (manipulating phonemes)

- Using picture cards, ask your child to say the name of the picture, then drop the beginning sound to make another word (e.g., “pants” becomes “ants” and “tie” becomes “eye”). (FCRR)

Basic Reading and Spelling Skills

Letter recognition

- Name and match letters of the alphabet using pairs of letter cards turned over. (FCRR)
- Write the letters of the alphabet in an arc across the top of a piece of paper. Using plastic letters, or cards with letters on them, help your child match each letter card or plastic letter to the letter on the alphabet arc. (FCRR)
- Write upper case letters in a circle and cut out the circle. Write lowercase letters on clothespins. Help your child match lowercase letter clothespins to uppercase letters on the circle. (FCRR)
- Give your child magazines and catalogues and ask them to cut out letters of various shapes and sizes. Sort and group those letters (all “As” together, a;; “Bs” together, and so on) and glue all letter groups onto a piece of paper. (FCRR)

Letter-sound correspondence

- Label 26 paper bags with each of the 26 letters of the alphabet. Give your child catalogs and magazines and ask them to cut out pictures. Tell your child to place the picture into the bag with the letter that makes the same sound as the first sound of the picture (e.g., a picture of a horse goes into the bag labeled “h”). (FCRR)

Spelling and sounding out words (encoding and decoding)

- Cut out the shape of a star. Label each point of the star with a vowel (a, e, i, o, u). Write a three-letter word in the middle of the star, but place an underline where the vowel should go. Tell your child to write out a list of words he or she can make using the star onto a piece of paper. (FCRR)
- Using three blank cubes, write consonants on two of the cubes, and vowels on one of the cubes. Roll the dice until a word can be made of the three letters. Sound out the word and write it down on a piece of paper. Make a list of ten words. (FCRR)
- Make a spinner with ch, th, sh, wh (these are called digraphs and represent two letters making one sound) for beginning sounds. Make another spinner with vowel sounds for the middle sound. Make a third spinner with ending sounds. Spin the spinners. Sound out the words made and write them down. (FCRR)
- Using a deck of picture cards with one-syllable words and a deck of letter cards including consonants, vowels, and digraphs (ch, th, wh, sh), say the sounds of the word of the picture with the letter cards. (FCRR)

Advanced phonics—variety of spelling patterns for one sound (variant correspondences, e.g., long a spelled a, a_e, ai, ay)

- Use word cards with double consonant endings (ll, ff, ss, zz). Draw a game board with a number of spaces on it. Arrange the word cards in a path along a table like a game board. Your child rolls the dice and moves a game piece the number of spaces rolled. Your child has to read the word and the sound of the target letters (ff, ll, ss, zz). For example, if they land on “boss” say, “boss, ss, /s/.” If they cannot read or identify the sound, they have to go back to the original spot. (FCRR)
- Make four boxes at the top of a piece of paper. Write a word that begins with soft “g” (such as giant), a hard “g” (such as gift), a soft “c” (such as center), and a hard “c” (such as candy) in

- each box. Write words with hard and soft “g” and “c” on index cards. Read the words with your child, helping them sort the words based on the sounds the “g” and “c” make. (FCRR)
- Write words on index cards that represent the short and long sounds of each of the five vowels (e.g., snip, stripe, help, seed, tap, lake, stop, soak, tuck, tune). Write additional words onto cards with the short and long vowel sounds. Read the words with your child and help them to sort these into the proper categories. (FCRR)
 - Write cards with the various spellings of each long vowel sound. Write examples of words with these long vowel spellings onto index cards. Help your child to sort cards with the same spelling pattern into the correct categories. (FCRR)
 - Write words with vowel teams onto index cards (e.g., bay, real, cause; for a definition of the word digraph, see the glossary). Play go fish with your child. (FCRR)
 - Sort and separate words with vowel + “-r.” These include words with ar, er, ir, or, ur, such as “card,” “herb,” “bird,” “torn,” “turn.” (FCRR)
 - Using the vowel teams with “o” (diphthongs)—oi, oy, ou, ow, write out several words with these spellings. Help your child to sort the words based on these spellings and say the words out loud. (FCRR)
 - Using words with silent letters (e.g., comb, gnat, scent, autumn, wrote). Help your child to sort the words based on these spellings and say the words out loud. (FCRR)

Segmenting syllables into words (syllable segmenting)

- Using a stack of word cards with words of many syllables (or multi-syllabic words) (e.g., “carbohydrate,” “unimaginable,” “autobiography”) and a game board, you and your child take turns saying the word and counting the number of syllables in each word, moving the game piece for each number of syllables counted. (FCRR)
- Use a stack of multi-syllabic words, help your child to read the words and write each syllable from the word card with a hyphen separating the syllables (e.g., af-ter-wards for the word afterwards). Your child counts the number of syllables and records the number of syllables to the right of the word. Make a list of these words. (FCRR)

Meaningful parts of words (morpheme structure)

- Create your own set of two and three syllable words (e.g., “modify,” “harness”) and another set of endings of words (-s or -es, -ing, -ed). The student chooses one card each and writes the two parts plus the new word onto a piece of paper, making a list (e.g., modify + -ed = modified. (FCRR)
- Create header cards that say “Prefix,” “Suffix,” “Prefix and Suffix,” and “None.” A prefix goes at the beginning of a word that can stand on its own (e.g., “reappear” has the suffix “re-” on the word “appear,” which can stand on its own without the prefix “re-”). A suffix goes at the end of a word that can stand on its own (e.g., “definitely” has the suffix “-ly” on the word “definite,” which can stand on its own without the suffix “-ly”). Create a stack of words from a text used in your child’s classroom. Sort these with your child according to the header cards. Make lists of prefixes and suffixes used. Gradually add to the words used with each new text from your child’s class. (FCRR)

Reading Fluency

Letter recognition

- Use two pages to write identical rows of letters across the pages, one page for the child, one page for you. Time your child for one minute while they read the names of the letters to you. On your own copy, mark each sound as correct or incorrect. Date the page and place the total correct at the top.

Speed and accuracy in letter-sound correspondence

- Use two pages to write identical rows of letters across the pages, one page for the child, one page for you. Time your child for one minute while they read the sounds the letters make out loud to you. On your copy, mark each sound as correct or incorrect. Date the page and place the total correct at the top. Since some letters have more than one sound (e.g., c, g, s, x, y, and all vowels), it is suggested that when you are timing, students say only one sound per letter. (FCRR)
- Use two identical pages to write rows of two letters that together make one sound (e.g., oo, ph, ch, ay, kn) across a page. Time your child for one minute while they read the sounds the letters make to you. On your copy, mark each sound as correct or incorrect. Date the page and place the total correct at the top.

Word parts

- Write the word “yes” and the word “no” on index cards. Divide words from your child’s classroom text into syllables and write them on index cards. Using a one-minute timer, have your child say the word’s syllables and then the word. If they say the word correctly, they put it on the “yes” card; if they say it incorrectly, your child places it on the “no” card. Total the number of cards in the “yes” and “no” piles. This can be repeated until the child has mastered a set of words. (FCRR)
- Make a list of prefixes and suffixes found in words from your child’s home and school reading materials. Write these words on a piece of paper with spaces in between them. Time your child for one minute to see how many of them your child pronounces the way they are pronounced in words. (FCRR)

Words

- Find a list of rimes (see onset and rime in the phonetic awareness section above, or in the glossary). Make four header index cards with ten different rimes. Now make several word cards that have the rime in them (e.g., for the rime “ade,” you might create words such as “parade,” “invade,” “cascade,” “crusade,” “everglades,” “motorcade,” “blockade”). Start the timer and have your child time him- or herself to see how long it takes to sort the words into the correct pile. Repeat this with additional rimes. (FCRR)
- Write six high-frequency words (see above or check the glossary) onto an index card. Make several of these cards with different words. Start the timer. Your child reads all the words on the card. If your child struggles with a word, count to five. If they still cannot read the word, tell them the word; then your child places the card on the bottom of the stack. When the timer goes off in three minutes, count the number of words read and record it on a piece of paper with the date. Repeat, until all words are read within three minutes. (FCRR)

Phrases

- Create header cards with the words “yes” and “no” on them. On index cards, write down three-word phrases such as “remember to include,” “never say never,” “between the pages.” You might use the newspaper or books from your child’s home or school to generate ideas. Use graph paper to record the total number of words possible on the left side of the graph and the date along the bottom of the graph. Use a one-minute timer to see how many of these words you can read in a minute and use that as the maximum number of words to read. Your child graphs the number of words read in one minute each time this is attempted. Your child can practice reading the words in between timed sessions. This may be repeated with additional words. (FCRR)

Chunked text (prosody)

- Use a reading passage that is not too challenging for your child, place slash marks in between phrases where the text naturally pauses (e.g., What started out / as a typical day / would soon turn into / one of the most unusual days / Harry ever had. // His mom came in / and got him up at 7:00 / so he could get ready for school. //) Place two slashes at the end of each sentence. You can also create your own stories and place slash marks in the appropriate places. You will also need a copy of the text without the slash marks. Set the timer for one minute. See how many words your child can read, reading with pause after each slash mark. Once this has been mastered, move to the text without the slash marks. This helps your child to read the way people speak. (FCRR)

Connected text

- Using a text, reading passage, or story, make a list of moderately challenging words from the story on a piece of paper. Practice this word list, reading each word up to three times each. Then, focusing on speed and accuracy, take turns reading paragraphs with your child. If your child is working with a friend, the two children can alternate reading paragraphs in the story. (FCRR)
- Photocopy several selected paragraphs from reading passages from your child’s class. Put these in a stack, face down. Your child practices reading a passage silently, then reading it to you out loud for proper phrasing and expression. Repeat with additional passages. (FCRR)

Vocabulary

Word Knowledge

- At the top of a piece of paper write: I am _____, _____, and _____.
You are _____, _____, and _____.
Talk with our child and create a list of at least 10 adjectives that describe you and your child. Have your child pick 3 words that describe you and 3 words that describe them. Then, have your child write out the sentence using the picked adjectives. Example: I am smart, happy, and hilarious. You are tall, nice, and caring. (FCRR)
- Write out and draw a set of memory cards that contain matching words and symbols/objects. Place the cards face down. Taking turns, select two cards and read them aloud. Determine if the cards match. If there is a match, pick up the cards, place to the side, and take another turn (e.g., seven, 7). If cards do not match (e.g., house,) return them to the board. Take turns until all cards are matched. Card ideas: numbers in word form i.e. one, two, three, and the number symbols, 1,2,3.... Shapes, square, circle, Abbreviations, Sun. Mon. Sunday and Monday. (FCRR)

Word Meaning

- Write 1 word on 10 post-its or small pieces of paper. Fold up each paper and place into a cup/bowl. Take turns with your child and act out the word. After guessing the word, talk to your child about other ways the word could be used. Example, bug, an insect or to bother someone.
- Draw a triangle in the middle of a page, divide the triangle into 3 parts. In part 1, write a word, in part 2, write the first meaning of the word, in part 3, write the other meaning of the word. Example: Part 1: Bat, Part 2: a flying mammal, Part 3: what we hit a ball with in baseball

Morphemic Elements

- Use any materials/labels/mail to create a compound words scavenger hunt. Set a timer for 5 minutes and see how many compound words each person can find. Ready, set, go!
- Collect 17 index cards, write one word/word parts on 10 full cards (cheap, code, act, cook, loud, form, spect, struct, tect, press). Cut 7 index cards in half and write the following affixes, one on each half card (de, er, ed, re, ful, pre, un, mis, es, in, con, ing, pro, im). Take turns creating words with multiple parts. Example: inspect- inspecting- cooking- louder

Comprehension

Sentence Meaning

- Write out sentences on strips of paper (for example, “The boy is playing with a fire truck.”) Draw or print out small pictures that match each sentence. Place the sentence strips face down in a stack, and the picture cards in a row face up. Taking turns, select a sentence strip and read it. Find the picture that matches the sentence and place the strip under it. (FCRR)
- Write out basic sentences on strips of paper (for example, “Jump two times.”) Place the sentence strips face up in rows. Select a sentence without touching it, read it silently, and act out the sentence (without speaking). Your child will watch, and then find the sentence that matches, and read the sentence out loud. If correct, they will take the sentence strip. If incorrect, they will try again. Take turns with the rest of the sentences. (FCRR)

Narrative

- Choose a storybook from home. Write one sentence from each page on separate strips of paper. Place the sentence strips face up in a pile. Have your child read the sentences and place them in order. After all sentences are in order, retell the story by reading the sentence strips out loud. (FCRR)
- After reading a story together, have your child name a character in the story and write the name in the middle of a sheet of paper. Have them draw a picture of the character, and then write words that describe the character’s appearance and actions all around the character. (FCRR)
- Have your child read a story. Fold a sheet of paper into four squares. In the first box, your child should write the title and author of the story. In the second box, they should write all the events of the beginning of the story. In the third box, they should write all the events of the middle of the story. In the fourth box, they should write all the events of the end of the story. (FCRR)
- Have your child read two different stories. Fold a sheet of paper into three columns. In the first column, have your child write the title and author of the first story. In the middle column, write “shared.” In the third column, have them write the title and author of the second story. Have your child describe both stories to you. As you discuss, have them decide which details go with which story, and which details the stories have in common, and write them on the chart in the correct column. (FCRR)

Informative Text

- Read a nonfiction book or article together. On a strip of construction paper, create 4 squares. In the first square, have your child write or draw the topic of the article. Discuss the most important facts about the topic. In the other three squares, have your child write or draw 3 of the most important facts. (FCRR)
- After reading a nonfiction book or article together, have your child re-read and decide which words and phrases helped them understand the article the most. Have them highlight or underline those important words and phrases. When they are finished, have them write a main idea sentence based on the words they highlighted or underlined. (FCRR)