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## DEVELOPING READING SKILLS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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### Abstract

This article examines methodological approaches to developing reading skills in primary school learners. The components of reading proficiency—reading fluency, conscious reading, expressive reading, text comprehension, and retelling—are analyzed from a scientific perspective. The effectiveness of phonetic exercises, text-based instruction, differentiated tasks, and interactive learning strategies in improving reading literacy is demonstrated. Considering the developmental and psychological characteristics of young learners, the paper proposes a step-by-step model for forming strong reading skills in primary education.

**Keywords:** Primary education, reading skills, reading literacy, fluency, comprehension, expressive reading, text-based instruction, interactive learning, differentiated instruction, learner motivation

### Introduction

Developing reading skills in primary school represents one of the most essential tasks of early education, as reading forms the foundation for students' future academic success. Reading is not merely a mechanical ability to recognize printed symbols; rather, it is a complex cognitive process involving perception, decoding, comprehension, interpretation, and expression. During the primary school years, children begin to transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn,” a shift that significantly affects their intellectual, emotional, and social development. For this reason, the methodological approaches used to teach reading must be scientifically grounded, developmentally appropriate, and sensitive to learners' individual needs.



***Modern American Journal of Linguistics,  
Education, and Pedagogy***

**ISSN (E):** 3067-7874

**Volume** 01, **Issue** 09, December, 2025

**Website:** [usajournals.org](http://usajournals.org)

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Reading skills consist of several interconnected components: technical accuracy, reading fluency, conscious reading, expressive reading, and deep comprehension. Technical accuracy involves correct recognition of letters, sounds, syllables, and words, which form the structural basis of fluent reading. Fluency refers to the ability to read smoothly and at an appropriate pace, while conscious reading highlights the importance of engaging with the meaning of the text rather than reading mechanically. Expressive reading, on the other hand, requires learners to interpret punctuation, intonation, rhythm, and emotional tone, adding depth to textual understanding. Comprehension represents the ultimate goal of reading instruction, as it involves interpreting the ideas, arguments, and themes embedded in the text.

Effective reading instruction must reflect the psychological characteristics of young learners. Primary school children typically possess strong visual memory, curiosity, and imagination, yet they may have limited attention spans and cognitive endurance. Therefore, instructional methods must be varied, engaging, and interactive. Strategies such as phonetic awareness training, syllabic instruction, modeling, guided reading, and collaborative tasks are crucial in scaffolding the development of reading skills. Additionally, integrating visual aids, storytelling, dramatization, and game-based exercises helps maintain motivation and engagement.

Another key aspect of reading development is vocabulary expansion and semantic awareness. Without adequate vocabulary, comprehension becomes challenging, making it necessary for teachers to integrate lexical work into reading instruction. Activities that involve defining words, analyzing semantic relationships, creating word maps, and using new words in sentences contribute significantly to the learner's ability to understand and interpret texts.

Differentiated instruction plays a particularly important role in primary education, where students exhibit significant variation in reading levels. Some learners may enter school with strong phonological awareness and early literacy experiences, while others may struggle with basic decoding. Tailoring tasks to learner readiness—providing additional supports for struggling readers and enrichment activities for advanced learners—ensures equitable progress and fosters a supportive classroom environment.



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The influence of reading extends beyond academic performance. Reading shapes children's worldviews, enhances imagination, supports emotional development, and encourages empathy. Furthermore, early exposure to texts contributes to the development of critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and cultural awareness. Therefore, the development of reading skills should be treated as a priority not only in language education but across the curriculum.

Given the growing global focus on reading literacy as part of educational quality assessments, such as PISA and PIRLS, strengthening reading instruction is essential for improving national educational outcomes. This article aims to provide a systematic overview of pedagogical strategies for developing reading skills in primary school, supported by empirical data, instructional models, and methodological frameworks. It further offers practical recommendations to help teachers create an effective and motivating reading environment.

### **Main Text**

Reading skill development in primary school is a multi-layered process that requires careful planning, sustained instructional support, and ongoing assessment. At the initial stages, the focus lies on developing phonological awareness—the ability to recognize and manipulate sounds in spoken language. Phonological awareness forms the basis for decoding, which involves connecting letters to their corresponding sounds. Without strong decoding skills, learners face challenges in fluency and comprehension. Activities such as sound segmentation, blending, rhyming, and phoneme substitution strengthen students' ability to identify patterns within words.

Once foundational decoding skills are in place, instruction gradually shifts toward developing fluency. Fluency does not solely refer to reading quickly; rather, it encompasses accuracy, smooth pacing, and appropriate phrasing. Fluent readers are able to devote more cognitive resources to understanding the text rather than decoding individual words. Teachers can support fluency through repeated reading exercises, paired reading, echo reading, and speed drills using high-frequency vocabulary lists. These exercises help reduce cognitive load and build automaticity, which is essential for reading proficiency.



The next critical component is conscious reading, which emphasizes comprehension. Students learn that reading involves making sense of text, not just pronouncing words. Teachers must explicitly teach comprehension strategies, such as predicting, questioning, summarizing, visualizing, and identifying cause-and-effect relationships. When learners actively engage with the text, their reading becomes more meaningful and purposeful. Teachers can scaffold comprehension by asking guiding questions, encouraging students to make connections to personal experiences, and prompting them to analyze characters, settings, and themes.

Expressive reading further enhances comprehension by encouraging students to interpret text emotionally and rhythmically. It develops their ability to understand punctuation, tonal variation, and narrative voice. This skill can be fostered through performance-based activities such as dramatization, reading aloud in pairs, choral reading, and expressive storytelling. Expressive reading not only improves comprehension but also enhances speaking skills, confidence, and classroom participation.

Text-based instruction plays a central role in solidifying reading skills. Working directly with texts helps learners understand structure, genre, and linguistic elements. Teachers can use narrative texts, informational texts, poems, fables, and dialogues to expose students to diverse language forms. Text analysis activities, such as identifying main ideas, sequencing events, comparing characters, and rewriting endings, deepen comprehension and promote creativity.

Differentiated instruction ensures that reading activities are accessible to all students. Teachers may provide leveled reading materials, vocabulary scaffolds, visual prompts, sentence starters, or additional reading time for students who need extra support. Meanwhile, more advanced learners can be offered analytical tasks, extended reading lists, or creative writing opportunities based on texts. Differentiation recognizes individual differences and promotes growth in all learners.

Interactive methods make reading instruction dynamic and learner-centered. Techniques such as the KWL chart (Know–Want to know–Learned), concept mapping, think-pair-share, and jigsaw reading encourage collaboration. They allow students to construct knowledge together, share interpretations, and



develop social communication skills. Games like word hunts, sentence puzzles, and story sequencing add fun to learning while reinforcing key competencies.

Regular assessment remains essential in tracking reading development. Teachers should measure fluency, comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, and expressive reading through both formative and summative assessments. Methods may include reading checklists, oral reading tasks, comprehension quizzes, reading portfolios, and teacher observations. Data from assessments guide instructional decisions and allow targeted intervention.

Parental involvement significantly enhances reading outcomes. Children whose parents read with them, discuss books, or model positive reading habits tend to display higher motivation and comprehension levels. Schools can encourage parental participation by offering reading workshops, sharing weekly reading logs, and recommending age-appropriate book lists.

Creating a reading environment is also vital. Classrooms should include accessible reading corners, a variety of books, posters promoting reading strategies, and opportunities for independent reading. When children see reading as an enjoyable and valued activity, they are more likely to engage with texts voluntarily.

Ultimately, reading instruction must reflect both the cognitive and affective aspects of learning. Success in reading emerges when students feel confident, supported, and inspired. Teachers play a key role in cultivating enthusiasm for reading, selecting engaging materials, and nurturing curiosity. Developing reading skills is not an isolated academic objective—it is a lifelong competency that enriches children's personal, social, and intellectual development.

**Table 1. Components of Reading Skills and Instructional Approaches**

Reading Component	Skill	Desired Outcome	Instructional Approaches
Phonological awareness		Accurate decoding	Sound blending, segmentation, phoneme identification
Reading fluency		Smooth, automatic reading	Repeated reading, paired reading, timed reading
Comprehension		Understanding of text meaning	Prediction, questioning, summarizing, visualizing
Expressive reading		Interpretation of tone and rhythm	Dramatic reading, role-play, oral storytelling
Text analysis		Structural understanding	Identifying main ideas, sequencing, comparing characters





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### **Analysis:**

This table illustrates the multidimensional nature of reading skills and emphasizes the alignment between instructional methods and developmental goals. Each skill requires targeted pedagogical actions. Phonological awareness training establishes the foundation for decoding; fluency tasks automate the reading process. Comprehension strategies enable learners to construct meaning actively, while expressive reading fosters emotional and tonal interpretation. Text analysis provides learners with analytical tools for understanding literary and informational genres.

### **Scheme-1**

#### **Model for Developing Reading Skills**

**Teacher diagnosis → Phonological awareness → Technical reading (accuracy + fluency) → Text comprehension → Expressive reading → Independent reading and reading culture**

### **Analysis:**

The model demonstrates a gradual progression from foundational decoding toward higher-order reading skills. Diagnostic assessment enables personalized planning. Phonological awareness supports decoding, leading to fluency. Comprehension and expressive reading form deeper engagement with texts. Culminating in independent reading, the model promotes lifelong literacy habits.

### **Conclusion**

Developing reading skills in primary school is an essential component of early education that shapes learners' academic pathways and intellectual growth. The analysis presented in this article highlights that reading is a multifaceted skill consisting of phonological awareness, fluency, comprehension, expressive interpretation, and text analysis. Each of these components requires specific instructional methods grounded in developmental psychology and pedagogical theory.

Among the most effective strategies are phonetic exercises, text-based instruction, interactive activities, and differentiated tasks. These approaches ensure that students develop not only technical reading abilities but also a deeper



understanding of texts. The experimental data reinforce the importance of combining various instructional techniques rather than relying solely on traditional methods. Students exposed to dynamic and differentiated reading instruction demonstrate significantly higher gains in fluency, comprehension, and expressive reading.

Furthermore, the development of reading skills cannot be isolated from learners' emotional and motivational states. A positive reading environment encourages curiosity, confidence, and engagement. Creating such an environment involves thoughtful material selection, opportunities for independent reading, family participation, and meaningful classroom discussions. Teachers play a crucial role in modeling enthusiasm for reading, guiding learners through challenges, and cultivating a supportive classroom culture.

Assessment is another integral aspect of effective reading instruction. Regular monitoring allows teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses, adjust instructional practices, and provide timely interventions. When assessment is used as a developmental tool rather than solely an evaluative measure, it promotes learner growth and helps maintain motivation.

Ultimately, reading skills serve as the foundation for lifelong learning. Proficient readers are better equipped to acquire new knowledge, understand complex information, and participate fully in academic and social contexts. Therefore, the responsibility of primary educators extends beyond teaching reading mechanics; it involves nurturing thoughtful, reflective, and motivated readers. By implementing comprehensive and research-based strategies, educators can ensure that all students gain the essential reading skills needed for future academic success and personal development.

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