

Language Arts Placement Evaluation for Early Readers



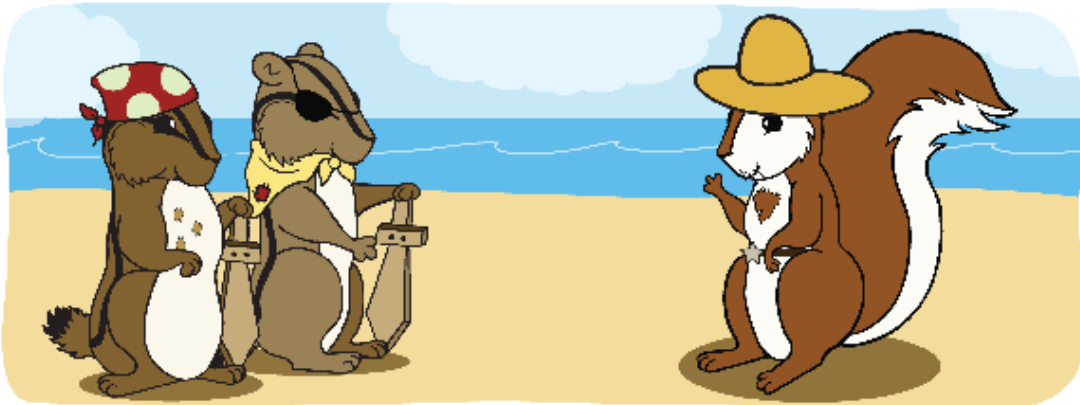
Consider the level at which your student is working in their language arts and answer the following questions. Put a check mark next to those that are true for your student. Please read all of the questions, even if they appear to be beyond your student's level. If you are hovering in your answers near the very end of the page, you may want to also complete our Elementary Readers Placement Evaluation.

STARTING READER QUESTIONS - Choose one or more in this section.

1. My student shows very little interest in reading for himself, although he enjoys listening to me read aloud.
2. My student shows interest in trying to "read" words that he or she has really memorized from reading aloud.
3. My student knows all the names of the alphabet, but none of the sounds.
4. My student knows all the names of the alphabet, and some of the sounds. (Don't check this if #5 is true).
5. My student knows all the names of the alphabet, but knows some or none of the sounds, yet he is an older student. I have been waiting for him to show readiness before beginning, and he's begun to express interest in the alphabet and reading.
6. My student is still quite young, but has been quick to pick up whatever I give him as far as any letter names, letter sounds, or word recognition. I think he might be self-teaching or learning from older siblings, too, because of how curious and motivated to learn he is in this area. I haven't really started a formal program, though.
7. None of these are true for my student. He's knows all his alphabet and all (or most) of his letter sounds.

HANDWRITING ISSUES - Choose one in this section.

8. My student recognizes the letters of the alphabet by sight, but has difficulty with writing the letters.
9. My student knows all the sounds of the alphabet and can say them for me, but has difficulty with writing them.
10. My student is progressing nicely in reading and comprehension, but clearly struggles with handwriting more than the other topics.
11. My student is progressing nicely in reading and comprehension, but is not doing well with handwriting, is frustrated by it, and often ends up in tears when I force him to do the assignments at his grade level.
12. My student can write his letters, but they lack good formation, and he is having trouble (or I know he would have trouble) writing them in the small lined paper you provide with your program
13. My student is progressing well with his handwriting, and he is right where I'd expect him to be for his grade.



PROGRESSING READER QUESTIONS - Choose one in this section.

14. ___ My student has been completing a different phonics program, and I do not feel very confident about how well my student learned the sounds of the alphabet, and I'm thinking that I might need to start all over again.
15. ___ My student is now reading easy three-letter words such as bat, win, or pot, with the "soft vowel sounds," but we are switching from another program and he does not know any other vowel sounds.
16. ___ My student has been completing a horizontal phonics program, and has learned only the "soft" or "first" vowel sounds, and has also demonstrated gaps in learning other sounds as well.
17. ___ My student is now reading easy three-letter words such as bat, win, or pot, with the "soft vowel sounds," and we have completed a vertical phonics program such as WP's "Letters to Little Words," so he knows most other sounds well.
18. ___ My student can read simple three-letter words and has progressed on to four-letter words, some involving silent "e," but does not decode words fluently or easily, and is not really reading sentences yet.
19. ___ My student can read three- to five-letter words easily and is reading simple sentences quite well, but slowly, and he's still in need of a lot of guidance to complete any reading.
20. ___ My student can read four- to six-letter words with ease and is reading simple sentences quite fluently, although he's still in need of my presence to complete any reading.
21. ___ My student is reading three- to six-letter words and sentences with ease, yet if I ask him questions about what he read, he is unable to tell me what the sentence meant.
22. ___ My student is reading sentences fairly well with guidance, and is starting to be able to spell words aloud that he has encountered before in his reading.
23. ___ My student is reading short paragraphs with a little guidance, but is lagging behind in spelling and comprehension skills.
24. ___ My student is reading short paragraphs on his own, but I do feel that he is ahead in reading and am concerned that his other language skills, such as spelling, comprehension, and advanced phonics are lagging behind.



Scoring the LA Evaluation for Early Readers



As you look through the answers to your evaluation, you may encounter the terms “horizontal phonics” or “vertical phonics.” These are two different approaches to phonics instruction. Horizontal phonics introduces vowel and consonant sounds one at a time for each letter, so that your student would learn all the “soft” sounds of all the vowels, and all the “hard” sounds of all the consonants first before progressing on to the additional sounds each letter makes. Vertical phonics takes the approach that it better serves the child to learn all the most common sounds a letter makes at the time he first learns the letter, so that he can more easily decode and is willing to try different options to decode a new word. Additionally, vertical phonics includes introduction of several-letter phonograms that help eliminate many common spelling rules which are broken as often as they are kept. WinterPromise uses the vertical method, and thus, some parents encounter some bumps in the road when switching to the vertical methodology, as often students using the vertical method decode more complicated words more quickly. The questions you’ve completed should help you to pick the program that will work best for your student.

STARTING READER QUESTIONS	
IF YOU CHECKED:	CONSIDER THIS:
1	Consider waiting to start instruction with your child. Even if he is as old as five, you will most likely encounter enough resistance that you will find yourself and your student frustrated. Many children do better if formal phonics instruction waits until they are six years old. For now, keep reading aloud with your student and wait for cues that he is ready to begin. Cues include asking about what the letter’s name is, how to spell one’s own name or other familiar words, or trying to read a word for themselves. You may want to invest in our “I’m Ready to Learn” Preschool program, which provides readiness activities in phonics that may increase his curiosity and help him progress toward readiness to begin formal study.
2 OR 3 OR 4	Your student is ready to use our “Letters to Little Words” Program. This program provides in-depth instruction in phonics that can be paced to meet a student’s needs. Even if your student knows some of the sounds, there is enough instruction here that he will need this program and is not ready for our “Syllables to Sentences” program. This program includes advanced phonics instruction in 2- and even 3-letter phonograms, such as “ai,” “oa,” and “dge.”
5 OR 6	You can begin with our “Letters to Little Words” if you think you need to take it slow, HOWEVER , we’d really recommend that you start with our “Syllables to Sentences” program, which moves more quickly through the vowel sounds and then progresses to blends and more difficult phonograms towards the end of the year. This is an 18 week program that can be sped up or slowed down depending on your student. If you student progresses quickly through “Syllables to Sentences” the program that follows after it is “Paragraphs to Pages.” This program focuses on more difficult phonograms and blends. It will also cover the vowel sounds but very briefly before moving onto more complex phonograms. Completing these two programs in a year or just over a year is perfect for older students who need to cover the basics. These shorter programs provide flexibility if your student needs to progress through the material at a faster rate as they demonstrate an eagerness and aptitude for language arts.
7	Your student is most likely progressing in his reading enough to move into a higher level of language arts. Use the advice for statements that most fit your child in the sections below.

HANDWRITING QUESTIONS

IF YOU CHECKED:

CONSIDER THIS:

8

Your student may be experiencing a normal lag between a child's ability to recognize a shape and reproducing it in print. Your student is most likely in the earliest stages of their phonics instruction, so there's no reason to worry too much at this stage. Keep working on handwriting, but always stop before your student reaches a point of frustration.

9 OR 10

Many students experience some difficulty in producing letters, even as they progress in their reading and decoding. This is because writing is a fine motor skill, and many children do not gain proficiency in this skill until well after they are able to read and decode. It's always good advice to keep working on handwriting, so that you are still expecting the student to be exposed to the discipline, but always stop before your student reaches a point of frustration. If you'd like to help your student progress in fine-motor development, pick up a book of mazes in which the routes are fairly small, and challenge your student to stay within the lines. This utilizes the same fine-motor skills used when writing. Finally, if you are quite worried, read the advice in the two boxes below.

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Your student has clearly not developed the fine-motor skills necessary for completing his handwriting assignments. Many parents attribute this behavior to a bad attitude or disinterest, but in the vast majority of cases it is a lack of fine-motor skills that is the culprit. Usually kids will do fine in the other areas of language arts, but falter or get frustrated when called upon to write. This is often especially true for boys, as gender-wise, boys are proven to develop major motor skills early and fine-motor skills later. Girls are often quite the opposite, concentrating early development on fine-motor skills and mastering major-motor skills later. This is why your boy can zoom around on a bicycle like a terror on wheels -- a virtual master of balance, technique, and hand-eye coordination -- yet cannot work a pencil without extreme effort. It is also why many girls from an early age can write and draw well, yet are trembly and cautious on a bicycle. Don't try to force the issue early. Just as you can see your girl might not be ready to go without training wheels until she is 6 or even 8, go slow with boys in the area of writing until they are demonstrating these fine-motor skills essential to writing. You'll save both you and your student a lot of tears, frustration and early discouragement. Also--read the next box.

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Many parents are concerned that their child's lack of writing proficiency is directly related to the size of the lines on the writing paper we provide. If, however, larger lined paper (3/4 to 1 inch) is used for learning writing skills, (such as the type you'd find in grocery store aisles), your student will not be using the fine-motor skills needed for proper letter formation. Instead, these larger lines allow (and in fact, force) students to use their shoulder and entire arm to produce letters, as the size of the lines requires them to do. This is not using proper technique for writing. Most writing is produced by movement of the fingers and wrists, not the arm and the shoulder. Try to write a letter an inch tall yourself. Is it easy or hard? How much of your arm must move to produce the letter? Most adults find producing larger letters difficult because you are not using the muscles designed and trained by years of practice for this task. (This is why your garage sales signs never look as good as if you could write it in your normal script). If this is true, what good are you doing your child to train muscles they shouldn't be using to write by using larger-lined paper? In fact, this can be harmful to the student by forming habits that will be harder to break later on. If your student is having trouble with the lined paper, find ways to help him progress in his fine-motor skills. Get a book on mazes in which the routes are fairly small, and challenge your student to stay within the lines. Try our product, "Ed Emberly's Animal Drawing Book," from our "Animals and Their Worlds" younger program which also helps to work these skills in a fun way.

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That's great! You'll probably be able to place your student with some of the statements in the last section on this form.

PROGRESSING READER QUESTIONS

IF YOU CHECKED:	CONSIDER THIS:
14	If you are not sure about what sounds your student has, or has not mastered, take the time to go through the alphabet with him and evaluate what he truly is able to recall. Also, determine whether or not the program used horizontal or vertical phonics. (See definition at top of page). Once you've determined how much of the alphabet he has down pat, consider going one of the two routes following. Our 1st Choice: start back with "Letters to Little Words" program, which will provide some fantastic review of all the sounds and will lay an excellent foundation even though it contains some review. It would be expected that he will complete the program in under a year. Our 2nd Choice: Purchase our Phonics Cards set, and review and teach your student so that any "holes" are overcome with review. Then, move on to "Syllables to Sentences" when you are confident your student has mastered all the alphabet sounds in the Phonics Cards set. Choice one is best if your student knows less than half of the alphabetical sounds or is a kindergartner, age-wise. Choice two is probably best if your student knows more than half of the alphabetical sounds (according to the vertical method) and is older than a kindergartner.
15 OR 16	Your student is technically ready to begin our "Syllables to Sentences" program, however, you may encounter some bumps along the way because of the differences between the horizontal and the vertical phonics methods (see definitions and differences at top of page). We would recommend that you purchase the "Syllables to Sentences" program with the Phonics Learning Set, and start using the Phonics Cards set ahead of when you begin the program. You can review and teach through the phonics cards so that any "holes" are overcome with review. Included games in the Phonics Cards set will help you to make it fun for your student.
17 OR 18	Your student will move easily right into "Syllables to Sentences" program this year.
19	Your student is technically between or in the middle of our "Syllables to Sentences" and "Paragraphs to Pages" programs. We would recommend using both programs as your student will need to cover the phonograms covered in the latter half of the "Syllables to Sentences" program. Your student may progress quickly through this program but the additional reading practice and phonogram coverage will be vital in developing in your student their decoding skills. It will also build their reading comprehension as well. If they do complete these two 18 week programs in less than a year it will give them more time to complete our "Stories to Short Chapters" program where they are expected to read 2-3 pages containing 1-2 paragraphs each with guidance. If you feel this pace is too quick for your student, we recommend you purchase the "Syllables to Sentences" program, knowing that you may move more quickly through some parts of it which are more review, and finish this along with "Paragraphs to Pages" program in a year.
20	The answer for this question is basically the same as for #19, however, there is more reason to believe that you should place your child in "Paragraphs to Pages" and continue with "Stories to Short Chapters" when he is ready. It is unlikely that your student would be challenged sufficiently by "Syllables to Sentences."
21	Your student's decoding skills have outrun his comprehension skills, so it's time to slow down -- or -- drop back and punt, in football lingo. This may be a good time to simply practice reading and decoding with some easy readers. If your student hasn't completed our "Syllables to Sentences" program, try purchasing only the "Romp in Pine Nut Park Readers Set," and ask him questions as he is reading, and when he finishes his reading for each session. In this way, you can help train him to be thinking about what he is reading, and slow him down in his decoding enough to absorb the meaning. It's time right now to break these habits and replace them with good reading comprehension. When you feel he's back on the right track, he should be able to start "Paragraphs to Pages" program. It may also help to know that "Paragraphs to Pages" does work quite heavily on comprehension skills.

PROGRESSING READER QUESTIONS CONTINUED. . .

IF YOU CHECKED:	CONSIDER THIS:
22	Your student should be able to move seamlessly into “Stories to Short Chapters.” In this program students will be expected to read 2-4 pages containing 1-2 paragraphs each with guidance. In the unlikely event that you find he has trouble with decoding some of the words as you begin, purchase our Phonics Cards set, and review and teach your student so that any “holes” are overcome as you move along with “Stories to Short Chapters.”
23	Your student is experiencing a jump in their reading skills, but that does not necessarily mean he is keeping pace with the other “lateral” language arts skills. These “lateral” skills are always a little behind the reading skills (after all, you can read a word before you can spell it), but should still keep a general pace with reading skills. If your student’s reading skills continue to progress, but those “lateral” skills do not improve, your student will have increasing difficulty completing their language arts program. It is at this time that you should begin choosing your program not just on reading ability, but based upon all the language arts skills. Your student should be able to move fairly well into “Stories to Short Chapters.” In this program students will be expected to read 2-4 pages containing 1-2 paragraphs each with guidance. HOWEVER, you should expect to spend extra time on spelling and comprehension skills. You can work on comprehension skills with the strategies outlined in response to question #21, and “Stories to Short Chapters” does offer a lot of work on comprehension. As to spelling, oral or written drill or games will usually do the trick.
24	The answer here is basically the same as for question #23, but you may want to be more aggressive in working on the skills that you feel are in question for your student. Use the strategies mentioned in #23, but also consider purchasing one or more resources from “Paragraphs to Pages” (if you’ve not completed it) in areas that you feel do need work. Supplement throughout the year, or before the school year begins with these resources and move into the “Stories to Short Chapters” program.