



Q. My nephew is in the 2nd grade and his parents think his reading skills are adequate. I think he is reading below grade level when I compare him to my son but I'm not a teacher and I don't know what his reading skills should be for 2nd grade. Can you get that information for me?

A. Sure! In the lower grades (Pre-K to 2nd grade) kids develop skills at different stages. Around 3rd grade academic skills begin to level evenly.

Since learning to read is a long and complex process, some students hit college only to discover their skills aren't where they should be. The

GreatSchools.org

website reports the following skills that 2nd

graders should have:

1. Building fluency and meaning

In second grade, children begin reading for meaning, not simply as a way of sounding out simple sentences. Classrooms should give children many opportunities to read — silently on their own, aloud in groups, and aloud with a partner. Second grade curriculum should also include listening to books read aloud. Students often reread stories to increase their fluency, or their ability to read quickly and accurately with expression.

2. Decoding words

Your second-grader should be able to recognize a growing number of words, using knowledge of word structures and letter-sound relationships and a variety of strategies to read. Not only do second-graders develop skills to hear and say separate sounds in words, but they also use patterns to decode words. Second-graders should be able to read new words by breaking them into syllables. A strong reading curriculum should include learning the meanings of many prefixes and suffixes.

3. Reading chapter books

As second-graders graduate to more complex material, they learn to read across subject areas, including social studies, science, and math. They begin to read books that have several chapters and develop a larger vocabulary.

In second grade, kids are taught to use different parts of a book to find information, including the table of contents, index, glossary, title page, introduction, and preface. Second-graders should know that there are different purposes for reading: for pleasure, to get directions, and to gather information.

Second-graders should be able to choose their own books based on their interests, but reading specialist Jennifer Thompson recommends using the "five-finger test" to help them choose a book at the appropriate reading level. "Have your child open to any page," she says. "If she finds five words that she does not know, the book is too difficult."

4. Doing research

Second-graders learn to use books to research different subjects and answer questions about a topic. They may use encyclopedias, informational books, and the Internet to dig up facts.

"Reading informational text is critical for second- and third-graders," explains Thompson. "Most of the federally mandated tests contain a great deal of nonfiction reading. Children need to learn to read nonfiction for understanding and need to be taught how to use all of the conventions of nonfiction to assist with understanding. These include the table of contents, index, glossary, captions, illustrations, bold print, diagrams, charts, and graphs."

5. Reading aloud

By second grade the emphasis should be on students reading their own material, but they should still get many opportunities to listen to books read aloud. Not only does this offer kids a model of fluency, but it also fosters the love of books. It should also help your child understand vocabulary and language patterns in more complex texts. By discussing books before and after they are read aloud, teachers and parents can increase literacy no matter what a child's reading level is.

6. Reading for meaning

In second grade, children learn strategies to draw meaning from what they read. They should be able to recognize the sequence of events in a story, as well as anticipate the possible outcome. Important skills should include retelling familiar stories, summarizing the main ideas and plot, and identifying the characters and settings. Kids may be asked to compare and contrast characters in stories to their own lives. They may also be asked questions about the text, such as who, what, when, where, why, and how. Kids at this age should learn to use a dictionary and thesaurus to discover the meanings of words.

7. Shared reading

Second-graders may take part in shared reading, an interactive reading experience guided by the teacher. During the reading, the teacher demonstrates strategies students can use to read and understand a story. The teacher may pause in the reading to teach vocabulary, introduce a reading skill, or encourage the students to predict what will happen next. The book is typically read multiple times over several days. "Shared reading is a technique that is often used to develop fluency. It offers students positive guidance and support in a social context," says Thompson.

8. By the end of second grade, you can expect your child to:

- Read silently for 15 minutes and use reading to research topics
- Read simple texts fluently with expression
- Self-correct when reading
- Read words of one, two or more syllables automatically
- Recognize simple irregularly spelled words such as *said* and *where*
- Use word identification strategies to unlock the meaning of unknown words (chunking familiar parts, prefixes and suffixes)
- Identify the problem and solution in a story
- Use a table of contents and an index
- Use pictures and charts to gain meaning from text

What to look for in the classroom:

- **Decodable books**, which have the phonics elements and high-frequency words that your child has been taught in class
- **Leveled books**, which are books organized in levels of difficulty from the easy ones for a beginning reader to longer, more complex books for advanced readers (the leveling of texts allows teachers to match books with an individual student's reading ability)
- **A reading area** with a class library of books and a place for students to sit comfortably and read
- **A word wall**, which is a list of words displayed in alphabetical order on a bulletin board, used for reference and to reinforce vocabulary words

Your nephew's parents should check to see if their son has these skills or if these skills are emerging. They should connect with the teacher to collaborate with him/her and make sure to reinforce these skills over the summer months. For more information and for skills expected in other grades visit:

<http://www.greatschools.org/students/academic-skills/slideshows/second-grade-readin>

g-slides.gs?content=3566&page=11#slide

Recommended books:

[*Reading Magic: Why Reading Aloud to Our Children Will Change Their Lives Forever*](#) , by Mem Fox (Harvest Books, 2001).

[*The Read Aloud Handbook*](#) , by Jim Trelease (Penguin, 5th edition, 2001).

[*Read to Me 2000: Raising Kids Who Love to Read*](#) , by Bernice E. Cullinan (Cartwheel, 2000).

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