

literacy  
begins at  
home

When you send them back  
to school, give your children  
the gift of a lifetime...

TEACH THEM  
TO READ



**National Institute for Literacy**

Dear Parents:

You are your child's first and most important teacher. When you send them back to school, give your children the gift of a lifetime...

## **TEACH THEM TO READ.**

The National Institute for Literacy has developed the *Shining Stars* booklet series for parents of children in preschool through grade three who are getting ready or learning to read. To order free copies: write to EdPubs, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794-1398 or call 1 (800) 228-8813 or e-mail: [edpubs@inet.ed.gov](mailto:edpubs@inet.ed.gov). These and other booklets on reading instruction can also be downloaded. Visit <http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/publications.html>.



# Checklist for Parents of TODDLERS



*Here are some ways you can help your child “get ready to read” during the ages of 2 and 3.*

- I read with my child every day, even if it’s only for a few minutes.
- I encourage my child to bring his favorite books to me so that we can read together.
- I point to pictures and name them out loud, and encourage my child to point to pictures while we read.
- I watch to see if my child sometimes makes eye contact with me when I read aloud. That tells me she is paying attention to me and the story.
- I talk with my child throughout the day about things we are doing and things that are happening around us.
- I try to be patient when my child wants to read the same book over and over again.
- I encourage my child to “play” with books—pick them up, flip them from front to back, and turn the pages.
- Sometimes I listen when my child “pretends” to read a book—he holds the book, goes from page to page, and says words, even though they’re not the words on the page.
- I give my child paper and crayons so she can scribble, make pictures, and pretend to write.



# Checklist for Parents of PRESCHOOLERS



*Here are some ways you can help your child “get ready to read” during the ages of 4 and 5.*

- I help my child hear and say the first sound in words (like “b” in boat), and notice when different words start with the same sound (like “boat” and “book”).
- I help my child hear words that rhyme (like moose, goose, and caboose).
- I introduce new words to my child, like “bow” and “stern,” which mean the front of a boat and the back of a boat.
- I talk with my child about the letters of the alphabet and notice them in books, like “c” for canoe.
- I point out signs and labels that have letters, like street signs and foods in the grocery store.
- I encourage my child to find the joy and fun in reading. Usually, I let my child choose the books we read.
- I let my child pretend to read parts of the book when we read together.
- I talk with my child about stories and make connections to things that happen in our own lives.
- I ask “what,” “where,” and “how” questions when I read with my child to help her follow along and understand the stories.
- I help my child write notes or make books (like an alphabet book), even if his writing only looks like scribbles or marks.



# Checklist for Parents of KINDERGARTENERS

*These skills usually develop when a child is in kindergarten.  
Talk with your child's teacher if you have questions.*

- My child listens carefully to books read aloud.
- My child knows the shapes and names for the letters of the alphabet and writes many uppercase and lowercase letters on his own.
- My child knows that spoken words are made of separate sounds.
- My child recognizes and makes rhymes, can tell when words begin with the same sound, and can put together, or blend, spoken sounds.
- My child can sound out some letters.
- My child knows that the order of letters in a written word stands for the order of sounds in a spoken word.
- My child knows some common words such as a, the, I, and you, on sight.
- My child knows how to hold a book, and follows print from left to right and from top to bottom of a page when she is read to.
- My child asks and answers questions about stories and uses what she already knows to understand a story.
- My child knows the parts of a book and understands that authors write words and text and illustrators create pictures.
- My child knows that in most books the main message is in the print, not the pictures.
- My child predicts what will happen in a story and retells or acts out stories.
- My child knows the difference between "made up" fiction and "real" nonfiction books and the difference between stories and poems.
- My child uses what he knows about letters and sounds to write words.
- My child writes some letters and words as they are said to her and begins to spell some words correctly.
- My child writes his own first and last name and the first names of some friends and family.
- My child plays with words and uses new words in her own speech.
- My child knows and uses words that are important to school work, such as the names for colors, shapes, and numbers.
- My child knows and uses words from daily life, such as street names and the names for community workers—teacher, mail carrier, etc.



# Checklist for Parents of FIRST GRADERS



*These skills usually develop during first grade.*

*Talk with your child's teacher if you have questions.*

- My child knows all the letters of the alphabet.
- My child knows the difference between letters and words, and knows there are spaces between words in print.
- My child knows that written words represent speech and can show how words are represented by letters arranged in a specific order.
- My child knows some punctuation marks and where sentences and paragraphs begin and end.
- My child is beginning to understand and explain why people read.
- My child can put together (blend) and break apart the sounds of most one-syllable words and can count the number of syllables in a word.
- My child can sound out words he doesn't know, and recognize some irregularly spelled words, such as have, said, you, and are.
- My child reads first grade books aloud, and can tell when she cannot understand what she is reading.
- My child reads and understands simple written instructions.
- My child uses what he already knows to enrich what he is reading.
- My child predicts what will happen next in a story
- My child asks questions (how, why, what if?) about books she is reading and can describe what she has learned from a book.
- My child uses invented spelling in his writing and also understands that there is a correct way to spell words.
- My child uses simple punctuation marks and capital letters.
- My child writes for different purposes—stories, explanations, lists, letters—and reads and revises her writing.
- My child uses language with more control, speaks in complete sentences, and uses more formal language at school than at home and with friends.
- My child is curious about words and uses new words when he speaks and writes.
- My child is beginning to see that some words mean the same thing (synonyms) and some mean the opposite (antonyms).
- My child is learning that words play different roles in sentences—that nouns name things and verbs show action, for example.

# Checklist for Parents of SECOND GRADERS

*These skills usually develop during grades two and three.  
Talk with your child's teacher if you have questions.*

- My child reads and understands second grade fiction and nonfiction, and compares and connects information from different sources.
- My child reads for specific purposes and specific questions, and explores topics of interest on her own.
- My child answers "how," "why," and "what-if" questions, and recalls information, main ideas, and details after reading.
- My child interprets information from diagrams, charts, and graphs.
- My child takes part in creative responses to stories, such as dramatizations and oral presentations.
- My child pays attention to how words are spelled and correctly spells words he has studied.
- My child spells a word the way it sounds if she doesn't know its spelling.
- My child writes for many different purposes and writes different types of compositions (for example, stories, reports, and letters).
- My child makes thoughtful choices about what to include in his writing.
- My child takes part in writing conferences, revises and edits what she has written, and attends to the mechanics of writing (spelling, capitalization, and punctuation) in her final versions.
- My child learns new words and shares them at school and at home.
- My child uses clues from the context and his knowledge of word parts (roots, prefixes, suffixes) to figure out what words mean.
- My child is increasing his vocabulary with synonyms and antonyms.
- My child uses parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) correctly.
- My child learns new words through independent reading.



# Checklist for Parents of THIRD GRADERS



*These skills usually develop during grades two and three.  
Talk with your child's teacher if you have questions.*

- My child uses what he knows of phonics and word parts (prefixes, roots, suffixes) to sound out unfamiliar words.
- My child reads third grade level texts (stories, non-fiction, magazine articles, computer screens) with fluency and comprehension.
- My child explores topics of interest and reads longer stories and chapter books independently.
- My child can explain the major points in fiction and non-fiction books.
- My child identifies and discusses words or phrases she does not understand.
- My child asks "how," "why," and "what if" questions and discusses the themes or messages of stories.
- My child uses information he has gathered and his own reasoning to judge explanations and opinions and distinguishes cause from effect, fact from opinion, and main ideas from supporting details.
- My child understands and reads graphs and charts.
- My child uses context to gain meaning from what she reads.
- My child correctly spells words he has studied.
- My child gathers information from a variety of sources, including books, articles, and computers, and uses it in his writing.
- My child reviews her own written work for errors and works with teachers and classmates to edit and revise her work to make it clearer.
- My child is starting to use metaphors and other literary forms in his writing.
- My child discusses her writing with other children and responds helpfully to their writing.
- My child develops his vocabulary and knowledge through independent reading.
- My child builds her vocabulary through synonyms and antonyms.
- My child uses parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) correctly.

