



# The RITES FACTS

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## Is Your Child Struggling to Learn to Read?

Did you know that 17-20% of children have difficulty reading? Recent research from the National Reading Panel has shown that with most children this difficulty is not due to lack of intelligence or desire to learn. The problem often lies in a child's inability to understand individual sounds. As with speaking, many children learn this important skill naturally. However, those who do not would benefit from explicit instruction in phonemic awareness. The National Panel of Reading concluded that "explicit instruction in phonemic awareness improves a child's reading and spelling skills." Since a basic phonological weakness can block higher-level language skills such as reading comprehension and make it hard for a child to be successful in school, early intervention is key.

### How do I know if my child is having difficulty reading?

Parents can look for signs of a problem at home. Children who have trouble reading often have difficulty pronouncing and remembering new words as well as learning the names and sounds of the letters. These children may find it hard to break words into sounds and blend sounds together into words. You may notice that your child is reluctant to read and does not enjoy it. Sometimes a struggling reader has trouble expressing himself/herself verbally or comprehending an oral question, while others may also be poor spellers. In addition, children who find it difficult to read may be easily distracted, restless or find it hard to follow directions or routines.

### What do I do if I think my child is having difficulty?

Maintain close contact with your child's teacher. Ask your child's teacher what he/she sees at school. Together you may decide to have the teacher refer your child for an evaluation. If the teacher does not see the need, and the problem persists, parents have the right to make a written request to the school principal for an evaluation referral. You may also have your child tested by an independent evaluator. Once your child is evaluated and a diagnosis made, it is time to get your child the help that he/she needs.

### What help is available?

Parents first need to inquire about the resources available at their child's school. Some schools have reading specialists who can work with your child during the school day. If the testing indicates a need, some children are also eligible for special services offered by the school. Parents may also pursue private tutoring services offered by learning centers such as Rhode Island Tutorial and Educational Services. Anyone who works with your child should be a trained professional who can teach directly to your child's specific needs. They should also use a multisensory approach to help develop phonemic awareness and decoding skills.

## What else can I do?

Parents of children with a reading difficulty can request that certain classroom accommodations be made. For example, your child may be eligible to receive extended time for completing assignments or tests. New developments in technology such as Franklin spellers as well as grammar and spell-check programs on computers can be a huge help to struggling readers.

You are your child's best advocate. Therefore, if you suspect your child is having a problem learning to read you must work to diagnose the problem and then find help for your child as quickly as possible. Research all of your options and talk to professionals as well as parents of children with similar learning differences. Give your child the emotional support that he/she needs, and let your child know you are working hard to help him/her. While it is unlikely that a child will simply grow out of a reading problem, with the right support and help these difficulties can be overcome.

Sources:

*Parenting a Struggling Reader: A Guide to Diagnosing and Finding Help for Your Child's Reading Difficulties*, Susan L. Hall and Louisa C/ Moats, Ed.D.

*The Dyslexia Puzzle: Putting the Pieces Together*, Lorna N. Kaufman, Ph.D and Pamela E. Hook, Ph.D