

The “D” and “F” of reading (decoding and fluency)

In second grade, decoding and fluency are the most important skills for the developing academic. Decoding is the ability to use patterns to decode words and decipher the separate sounds in words. Fluency is, quite simply, the ability to read quickly and accurately, something that many second graders begin to do by the end of the school year. Our second graders learn to distinguish between short and long vowel sounds when reading common one-syllable words. They become more familiar with vowel teams (e.g. *ai* in *aid*, *oo* in *moon*, *ie* in *pie*, *oa* in *boat*, *ue* in *blue*). They decode regularly spelled two-syllable words with long vowels (e.g. *table*, *because*, *spider*, *open*, and *music*) and decode words with common prefixes like *un-* (e.g. *unlock*, *unhappy*) or *re-* (e.g. *redo*, *retell*) and use base words they know, such as *add*, as a clue to decoding new words, such as *addition* or *additional*. Second graders also need to recognize grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words, too. (e.g. Words with letters that don't make their usual sounds, like *said*.)

With regards to fluency, second graders need to read silently with enough accuracy and fluency to support comprehension. When reading aloud, kids need to read grade-level text with expression and refine their delivery with each reading.v Second graders build fluency and comprehension by reading both fiction and nonfiction.

Building a knowledge bank

Students learn big ideas from every book they read and relate that information to what they already know. Think of it like using reading comprehension skills to build a knowledge bank: with every poem, story, passage, or book they read, there's a main point, message, or key fact that your child learns, relates to their experiences or prior

knowledge, and “banks” for future use.

Key skills that’ll help your second grader build their knowledge bank:

- Reading quietly and aloud with enough accuracy, expression, and speed to support understanding.
- Being able to retell stories in a way that covers the central message or lesson.
- Describing how characters respond to events and challenges.
- Recognizing a book’s structure and how the beginning introduces what comes next and how the ending concludes the writing.
- Understanding that different characters, narrators, and authors tell stories from different points of view.
- Comparing two or more versions or accounts of the same story (e.g. *Cinderella* versus *Ella Enchanted*, or civil rights as explained by a person versus a description in a text book).

Second graders learn to use a table of contents, glossary, and website navigation menus and icons to find information.

We guide and support 2nd graders to:

- Ask and answer questions about the five W’s — who, what, when, where, and why — to show understanding and the ability to find answers in a book’s text or illustrations.
- Identify the main topic in a longer text and say what the main point of each paragraph is.
- Understand how an author uses reasons to support an idea.

An expanding world of words

Now is the time to expose your second grader to plenty of age-appropriate but challenging texts with new and interesting words. Why? The more words a child this age knows, the better she develops great word recognition, a valuable skill for becoming a great reader and learner. Second graders should be able to use root words and the context of what they read to figure out the meaning of challenging new words. They'll rely on skills like using prefixes as clues, using known words to predict the meaning of new compound words (e.g. *lighthouse*, *bookmark*), and using the rest of the sentence to figure out what a new word means. Second graders will also begin to recognize the shades of meaning between closely related verbs (e.g. *toss*, *throw*, *hurl*) and adjectives (e.g. *thin*, *slender*, *skinny*, *scrawny*). The more your child reads — and the more you discuss books with your child — the more words your child will learn.