

Concepts of Print

Targeted skill

Young children are expected to understand concepts of print, which connect reading with print awareness. Understanding them is fundamental to beginning to learn to read.

Materials

- ◆ a book, magazine, or other printed material (simple, familiar books are best)

What to do

Helping your child understand concepts of print is an ongoing activity. Every time you sit down with your child to read, remind him or her of one of the following concepts. Suggest them in informal situations, praise your child when he or she uses a correct term, and consistently use the correct terms yourself—in general, take advantage of every opportunity to acquaint your child with reading.

Hand your child a book with the cover facing away from him or her. Ask how he or she knew to turn the book to the front. Say, “Yes, the cover of a book shows us the front.”

Point out the ways in which the title page and the cover are similar. Show your child that the title page sometimes includes more information, such as the publisher, the city where the book was published, and the copyright.

Begin reading by moving your finger under the words on the page. When you reach the end of the page, ask, “Where do I go next?” As your child indicates the next page to the right, say, “Yes, when we read we start on the left and go to the right. That’s what readers do.”

Call your child’s attention to the illustration on a page. Discuss with him or her how features of the picture match the words on the page. You might isolate a particular word (using your fingers to block out the other words). Say, “Wow! You found a dog on the page and this word says *dog*. That matches!”

Use the terms author and illustrator to help your child understand who writes the words and draws the pictures. *(We talk about this in class).*

Concepts of Print (continued)

Extending the activity

- ❖ Compare two books by the same author and illustrator. Discuss that the illustrator usually draws in a similar style or that the author usually writes about similar characters. *Try: Eric Carle, Dr. Seuss, Jane Yolen, Audrey Wood, Lois Ehlert*
- ❖ Spread out several books in front of your child. Ask him or her to find the same element in each book. Point out that most books have the same elements, but they may not look the same from book to book.
- ❖ Sometimes young children are intrigued by the copyright date of a book. They like to compare the age of the book with their age. You could place several books by the same author or illustrator in chronological order and look to see how that author's or illustrator's style has changed over time.

More questions to ask

As your child understands the cover, the way words move from left to right on the page, the difference between the illustration and words, and so on, begin to introduce more sophisticated concepts. Ask your child to slide the pointer finger of each hand along to indicate one word or one letter. Point to a period and ask what it is used for, explaining if your child doesn't know or understand. Continue with an exclamation point, question mark, and comma.

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they should be able to find these marks.

What your child is practicing

“Concepts of print” is a complicated way of saying that young children understand that the writing on a page represents spoken words and that it has meaning. It also refers to children's understanding of such writing conventions as moving left to right across the page, separating words with spaces, distinguishing between one letter and a whole word, knowing the difference between capital and lowercase letters, and recognizing that readers use capital letters and punctuation to help with the meaning. Further, it also includes teaching children the names and purposes for the parts of a book, such as the cover, title page, and table of contents.