



Language Arts: Kindergarten

The *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts* emphasize the critical importance of building nonfiction background knowledge in a coherent and sequenced way within and across grades. This can be accomplished most effectively, at each grade level, by integrating the topics from history, geography, science, and the arts in the *Core Knowledge Sequence* into the language arts block. Note that in the *Sequence*, there are many cross-curricular connections to history and science topics within Language Arts (e.g., poems, stories, and sayings), as well as to visual arts and music, which can and should be integrated into the applicable domain of study.

For Kindergarten, domains include: An Overview of the Seven Continents; Native American Peoples, Past and Present; Early Exploration and Settlement; Presidents, Past and Present; Plants and Plant Growth; Animals and Their Needs; The Human Body; Introduction to Magnetism; Seasons and Weather; Taking Care of the Earth.

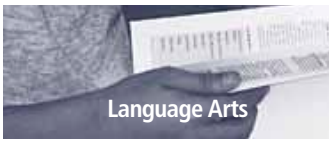
NOTE: The objectives listed in sections I–IV of Language Arts below are consistent with the *Core Knowledge Language Arts* program and embed all of the skills and concepts within the *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts*.

I. Listening and Speaking

Teachers: Shortly after a baby is born, an amazingly complex, interactive communication process begins between the infant and others in his/her environment. While it may seem like an obvious statement, it is nonetheless worth making the point that listening and speaking are the primary means of communication throughout the early years of a young child's development. It should be equally obvious that reading and writing competencies are predicated on competencies in listening and speaking. When a child enters kindergarten, however, traditional language arts instruction has typically accorded little, if any, attention to the ongoing development of children's listening and speaking ability. We have acted as if listening and speaking competencies are fully and firmly established and can be left behind, as reading and writing instruction begins. Nothing could be further from the truth. This omission in language arts instruction has been a serious oversight. We must remedy this oversight, deliberately elaborating and extending listening and speaking skills, while we simultaneously begin to introduce reading, and then writing. Children who are fortunate enough to participate in language arts instruction that recognizes the importance of continuing to build listening and speaking competency while also beginning reading and writing instruction will, in the end, be far more literate adults.

A. CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

- Participate in age appropriate activities involving listening and speaking.
- Speak clearly with volume appropriate to the setting.
- Use agreed-upon rules for group discussions, i.e., look at and listen to the speaker, raise hand to speak, take turns, say "excuse me" or "please," etc.
- Ask questions to clarify conversations, directions, exercises, and/or classroom routines.
- Carry on and participate in a conversation over four to five turns, staying on topic, initiating comments or responding to a partner's comments, with either an adult or another child of the same age.
- Identify and express physical sensations, mental states, and emotions of self and others.
- Understand and use language to express spatial and temporal relationships (*up, down, first, last, before, after*, etc.).
- Understand and use narrative language to describe people, places, things, locations, events, actions.
- Understand and use common sayings and phrases such as "Better safe than sorry" and "Look before you leap" (see page 11).



B. PRESENTATION OF IDEAS AND INFORMATION

- Follow multi-step, oral directions.
- Give simple directions.
- Provide simple explanations.
- Recite a nursery rhyme, poem or song independently.

C. COMPREHENSION AND DISCUSSION OF READ-ALOUDS—ALL TEXTS

Teachers: Written text makes use of richer vocabulary and more complex syntax than conversational language. It is important that young children be exposed not only to the language of everyday conversation but also to the richer and more formal language of books. This can be done through frequent reading aloud. Helping young children develop the ability to listen to and understand written texts read aloud must be an integral part of any initiative designed to build literacy.

At the kindergarten level, a child's ability to understand what he hears far outpaces his ability to independently read and understand written text. By listening to stories or nonfiction selections read aloud, children can experience the complexities of written language without expending cognitive energy on decoding; they can likewise access deeper and more complex content knowledge than they are presently able to read independently.

Careful consideration should be given to the selection of books read aloud to ensure that the vocabulary and syntax presented is rich and complex. Leveled texts will not provide the rich language experience desired during read-alouds and should only be used as a starting point with students for whom English is a second language.

Grade appropriate read-aloud selections for poetry and fiction are included on pages 9–11. Nonfiction read-alouds should be selected on the basis of the history, science, music and visual art topics identified for kindergartners in the *Core Knowledge Sequence*, with emphasis on history and science read-alouds. It is strongly recommended that daily read-alouds focus on a single topic over a sustained period of time—about two weeks—rather than intermingling read-alouds on a variety of subjects. Careful consideration should be given to the order in which nonfiction read-alouds are presented to ensure that knowledge about a topic builds in a progressive and coherent way.

Following any read-aloud, children should participate in rich, structured conversations with an adult in response to the written text that has been read aloud. In this way, they can begin to orally practice comparing, analyzing, and synthesizing ideas in written text in much the same way as they will be expected to do as independent readers in the later grades.

- Listen to and understand a variety of texts read aloud, including fictional stories, fairy tales, fables, historical narratives, drama, informational text, and poems.

Grasping Specific Details and Key Ideas

- Describe illustrations.
- Sequence four to six pictures illustrating events in a read-aloud.
- Answer questions requiring literal recall and understanding of the details and/or facts of a read-aloud, i.e., who, what, where, when, etc.
- Retell key details.
- Ask questions to clarify information in a read-aloud.
- Use narrative language to describe people, places, things, locations, events, actions, a scene or facts in a read-aloud.

Observing Craft and Structure

- Understand and use words and phrases heard in read-alouds.
- Compare and contrast similarities and differences within a single read-aloud or between two or more read-alouds.
- Make personal connections to events or experiences in a read-aloud and/or make connections among several read-alouds.

Integrating Information and Evaluating Evidence

- Prior to listening to a read-aloud, identify what they know and have learned that may be related to the specific story or topic to be read aloud.
- Use pictures accompanying the read-aloud to check and support understanding of the read-aloud.
- Make predictions prior to and during a read-aloud, based on the title, pictures, and/or text heard thus far and then compare the actual outcomes to predictions.
- Answer questions that require making interpretations, judgments, or giving opinions about what is heard in a read-aloud, including answering “why” questions that require recognizing cause/effect relationships.
- Identify who is telling a story or providing information in a text.

D. COMPREHENSION AND DISCUSSION OF READ-ALOUDS—FICTION, DRAMA, AND POETRY

- Retell or dramatize a story, using narrative language to describe characters, setting(s), and a beginning, a middle and an end to events of the story in proper sequence.
- Change some story events and provide a different story ending.
- Create and tell an original story, using narrative language to describe characters, setting(s), and a beginning, a middle and an end to events of the story in proper sequence.
- Distinguish fantasy from realistic text in a story.
- Demonstrate understanding of literary language (e.g., author, illustrator, characters, setting, plot, dialogue, personification, simile, and metaphor) and use some of these terms in retelling stories or creating their own stories.

E. COMPREHENSION AND DISCUSSION OF READ-ALOUDS—NONFICTION AND INFORMATIONAL TEXT

Teachers: Select nonfiction read-aloud topics from the kindergarten history, science, music, and visual arts topics listed on pages 12–21, with emphasis on history and science.

- Retell important facts and information from a nonfiction read-aloud.
- With assistance, categorize and organize facts and information within a given topic.
- With assistance, create and interpret timelines and lifelines related to read-alouds.
- Distinguish read-alouds that describe events that happened long ago from those that describe contemporary or current events.

II. Reading

A. PRINT AWARENESS

- Demonstrate understanding that what is said can be written and that the writing system is a way of writing down sounds.
- Demonstrate understanding of directionality (left to right, return sweep, top to bottom, front to back).
- Identify the parts of books and function of each part (front cover, back cover, title page, table of contents).
- Demonstrate correct book orientation by holding book correctly and turning pages.
- Recognize that sentences in print are made up of separate words.
- Understand that words are separated by spaces.
- Distinguish letters, words, sentences, and stories.
- Demonstrate understanding of basic print conventions by tracking and following print word for word when listening to text read aloud.
- Demonstrate understanding that the sequence of letters in a written word represents the sequence of sounds in the spoken word.
- Recognize and name the 26 letters of the alphabet in both their upper-case and lower-case forms.



- Say the letters of the alphabet in order, either in song or recitation.

B. PHONOLOGICAL AND PHONEMIC AWARENESS

- Identify environmental sounds, e.g., keys jingling, scissors cutting, clapping.
- Identify whether pairs of environmental sounds are the same or different.
- Count the number of environmental sounds heard, e.g., clapping, rhythm band instruments.
- Orally segment sentences into discrete words.
- Demonstrate understanding that words are made up of sequences of sounds.
- Demonstrate understanding that vowel sounds are produced with the mouth open and airflow unobstructed, whereas consonant sounds involve closing parts of the mouth and blocking the air flow.
- Given a pair of spoken words, select the one that is longer (i.e., contains more phonemes).
- In riddle games, supply words that begin with a target phoneme.
- Indicate whether a target phoneme is or is not present in the initial/medial/final position of a spoken word, e.g., hear /m/ at the beginning of *mat* and /g/ at the end of *bag*.
- Listen to one-syllable words and tell the beginning or ending sounds, e.g., given *dog*, identify initial /d/ or final /g/.
- Recognize the same phoneme in different spoken words, e.g., /b/ in *ball*, *bug*, and *big*.
- Identify whether pairs of phonemes are the same or different, including pairs that differ only in voicing, e.g., /b/ and /p/.
- Orally blend two to three sounds to form a word, e.g., given the sounds /k/.../a/... /t/, blend to make *cat*.
- Segment a spoken word into phonemes, e.g., given *bat*, produce the segments/b//a//t/.
- Given a spoken word, produce another word that rhymes, e.g., given *hit*, supply *bit* or *mitt*.
- Identify the number of syllables in a spoken word.

C. PHONICS: DECODING AND ENCODING

Teachers: Learning to read requires understanding and mastering the written English code through explicit and systematic phonics instruction. Research suggests that phonics instruction is most effective when specific letter-sound relationships are taught and reinforced by having children both read and write the letter-sound correspondence being studied. Reading and writing—decoding and encoding—are complementary processes that ensure mastery of the written code.

- Demonstrate understanding that a systematic, predictable relationship exists between written letters (graphemes) and spoken sounds (phonemes).
- Blend individual phonemes to pronounce printed words.
- Understand that sometimes two or more printed letters stand for a single sound.
- Read and write any CVC word, e.g., *sit* or *cat*.
- Read and write one-syllable words containing common initial consonant clusters such as tr-, fl-, dr- and sp- and consonant digraphs such as ch-, sh-, th-, etc.
- Read and write words containing separated vowel graphemes, such as *late*, *bite*, *note*, *cute*.
- Read tricky spellings that can be sounded two ways, e.g., the letter 's' sounded /s/ as in *cats* and /z/ as in *dogs*.
- Read and write chains of one-syllable words in which one sound is added, substituted, or omitted, e.g., read at > cat > bat > bad > bid.
- Read at least 15 words generally identified as very high frequency words.

CONSONANT SOUNDS AND SPELLINGS TAUGHT IN KINDERGARTEN

/b/ spelled 'b' as in *boy*, 'bb' as in *tubby*
 /d/ spelled 'd' as in *dog*, 'dd' as in *madder*
 /f/ spelled 'f' as in *fun*, 'ff' as in *stuff*
 /g/ spelled 'g' as in *get*, 'gg' as in *egg*
 /h/ spelled 'h' as in *him*
 /j/ spelled 'j' as in *jump*
 /k/ spelled 'c' as in *cat*, 'k' as in *kitten*, 'ck' as in *sick*, 'cc' as in *moccasin*
 /l/ spelled 'l' as in *lip*, 'll' as in *sell*
 /m/ spelled 'm' as in *mad*, 'mm' as in *hammer*
 /n/ spelled 'n' as in *net*, 'nn' as in *funny*
 /p/ spelled 'p' as in *pet*, 'pp' as in *happy*
 /r/ spelled 'r' as in *red*, 'rr' as in *earring*
 /s/ spelled 's' as in *sit*, 'ss' as in *dress*
 /t/ spelled 't' as in *top*, 'tt' as in *butter*
 /v/ spelled 'v' as in *vet*
 /w/ spelled 'w' as in *wet*
 /x/ spelled 'x' as in *tax*
 /y/ spelled 'y' as in *yes*
 /z/ spelled 'z' as in *zip*, 'zz' as in *buzz*, 's' as in *dogs*
 /ch/ spelled 'ch' as in *chop*
 /sh/ spelled 'sh' as in *ship*
 /th/ spelled 'th' as in *thin*
 /th/ spelled 'th' as in *then*
 /qu/ spelled 'qu' as in *quick*
 /ng/ spelled 'ng' as in *sing*, 'n' as in *pink*

VOWEL SOUNDS AND SPELLINGS TAUGHT IN KINDERGARTEN

/a/ spelled 'a' as in *cat*
 /e/ spelled 'e' as in *get*
 /i/ spelled 'i' as in *hit*
 /o/ spelled 'o' as in *hot*
 /u/ spelled 'u' as in *but*
 /ae/ spelled 'a_e' as in *cake*
 /ee/ spelled 'ee' as in *bee*
 /ie/ spelled 'i_e' as in *bike*
 /oe/ spelled 'o_e' as in *note*
 /ue/ spelled 'u_e' as in *cute*
 /er/ spelled 'er' as in *her*
 /ar/ spelled 'ar' as in *car*
 /or/ spelled 'or' as in *for*

D. ORAL READING AND FLUENCY

- Read decodable stories that incorporate the specific code knowledge that has been taught.
- Use phonics skills in conjunction with context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.
- Demonstrate understanding of and use commas and end punctuation while reading orally.
- Read aloud, alone, or with a partner at least 15 minutes each day.



E. READING COMPREHENSION—ALL TEXTS

Teachers: It is important to recognize that kindergartners are taught only some of the many letter-sound correspondences a reader needs to know to read a wide range of printed material. As a result, many kindergartners will be able to read independently only the simplest written text. At this grade level, mental energy will be primarily directed to the act of reading, i.e., decoding. A focus on the mechanics of decoding is appropriate and desirable at this early stage in the reading process. In kindergarten, attention to reading comprehension should be directed to ensuring a fundamental understanding of what has been read. At this grade level, it will generally be more effective and efficient to devote time to higher level thinking and comprehension skills at the listening and speaking level in response to written texts that are read aloud.

- Demonstrate understanding of simple decodable text after reading independently.

Grasping Specific Details and Key Ideas

- Answer questions requiring literal recall and understanding of the details and/or facts (i.e., who, what, where, when, etc.) about a text that has been read independently.
- Retell or dramatize a story, using narrative language to describe characters, setting(s), and a beginning, a middle and an end to events of the story in proper sequence.
- Use narrative language to describe people, places, things, locations, events, actions, a scene or facts from a text that has been read independently.

Observing Craft and Structure

- Understand and use words and phrases from a text that has been read independently.

Integrating Information and Evaluating Evidence

- Prior to reading, identify what they know and have learned that may be related to the specific story or topic to be read.
- Use pictures accompanying the written text to check and support understanding.
- Make predictions prior to and while reading, based on the title, pictures, and/or text read thus far and then compare the actual outcomes to predictions.
- Identify who is telling a story or providing information in a text.

III. Writing

Teachers: It is important to recognize that of all the communication skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—writing is the most demanding and challenging, especially for kindergartners who are just learning not only the code, but the fine motor skills and letter strokes necessary to put something down on paper. Kindergartners can, however, express themselves in writing by drawing pictures and, as they begin to learn some of the code, copying or writing words, phrases, and sentences.

In addition, students can also participate in shared writing exercises modeled and scaffolded by an adult. The focus in shared writing should be on encouraging the students to verbally express themselves coherently and in complete sentences, as the teacher serves as a scribe.

Writing to Reflect Audience, Purpose and Task

- Draw pictures to represent a text that has been heard or read independently.
- Draw pictures to represent a preference or opinion.
- Write narratives, informative and explanatory texts, and offer an opinion through shared writing exercises.
- With assistance, add details to writing.
- Create a title or caption to accompany a picture and/or shared writing.

IV. Language Conventions

- Form letters, words, phrases and sentences to communicate thoughts and ideas.
- Apply basic spelling conventions.
- Use basic capitalization and punctuation in sentences to convey meaning.

A. HANDWRITING AND SPELLING

- Hold a pencil with a pincer grasp and make marks on paper.
- Trace, copy, and print from memory the 26 letters of the alphabet accurately in both their upper-case and lower-case forms.
- Write own name.
- Write from left to right, leaving spaces between words, and top to bottom using return sweep.
- Begin to write phonemically plausible spellings for words that cannot be spelled correctly with current code knowledge, e.g., write *bote* for *boat*, *sum* for *some*, *hunee* for *honey*.
- Write words, phrases, and sentences from dictation, applying phonics knowledge.

B. PARTS OF SPEECH AND SENTENCE STRUCTURE

- Use and understand question words, i.e., what, where, when, who, how.
- Form regular plural nouns by adding 's' or 'es', i.e., dog, dogs, wish, wishes.
- Demonstrate understanding of frequently occurring prepositions, i.e., *to/from*, *in/out*, *on/off*.
- Produce and expand complete sentences orally and in shared writing exercises.

C. CAPITALIZATION, AND PUNCTUATION

- Capitalize the first word in a sentence, the pronoun *I*.
- Identify and use end punctuation, including periods, question marks, and exclamation points.

V. Poetry

Teachers: Children should be introduced to a varied selection of poetry with strong rhyme and rhythm. Children should hear these rhymes read aloud, and should say some of them aloud. Some rhymes may also be sung to familiar melodies. The poems listed here represent some of the most popular and widely anthologized titles; children may certainly be introduced to more Mother Goose rhymes beyond the selection below. Although children are not expected to memorize the following rhymes, they will delight in knowing their favorites by heart, and will experience a sense of achievement and satisfaction in being able to recite some of the rhymes.

A. MOTHER GOOSE AND OTHER TRADITIONAL POEMS

A Diller, A Dollar
 Baa, Baa, Black Sheep
 Diddle, Diddle, Dumpling
 Early to Bed
 Georgie Porgie
 Hey Diddle Diddle
 Hickory, Dickory, Dock
 Hot Cross Buns
 Humpty Dumpty
 It's Raining, It's Pouring
 Jack and Jill
 Jack Be Nimble
 Jack Sprat
 Ladybug, Ladybug
 Little Bo Peep
 Little Boy Blue

Note Regarding PRESCHOOL Content:

Some of the poems and stories specified here are appropriate for preschoolers. Indeed, one would hope that most preschoolers would come to kindergarten having heard, for example, some Mother Goose rhymes or the story of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears." However, as not all children attend preschool, and as home preparation varies, the *Core Knowledge Sequence* offers a core of familiar rhymes and stories for all kindergarten children. See also the *Core Knowledge Preschool Sequence*, available from the Core Knowledge Foundation.



Little Jack Horner
Little Miss Muffet
London Bridge Is Falling Down
Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary
Old King Cole
Old Mother Hubbard
One, Two, Buckle My Shoe
Pat-a-Cake
Rain, Rain, Go Away
Ride a Cock-Horse
Ring Around the Rosey
Rock-a-bye, Baby
Roses Are Red
See-Saw, Margery Daw
Simple Simon
Sing a Song of Sixpence
Star Light, Star Bright
There Was a Little Girl
There Was an Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe
This Little Pig Went to Market
Three Blind Mice

Note: The poems listed here constitute a selected core of poetry for this grade. You are encouraged to expose children to more poetry, old and new. To bring children into the spirit of poetry, read it aloud and encourage them to speak it aloud so they can experience the music in the words.

B . OTHER POEMS, OLD AND NEW

April Rain Song (Langston Hughes)
Happy Thought (Robert Louis Stevenson)
I Do Not Mind You, Winter Wind (Jack Prelutsky)
Mary Had a Little Lamb (Sara Josepha Hale)
The More It Snows (A. A. Milne)
My Nose (Dorothy Aldis)
Rain (Robert Louis Stevenson)
Three Little Kittens (Eliza Lee Follen)
Time to Rise (Robert Louis Stevenson)
Tommy (Gwendolyn Brooks)
Twinkle Twinkle Little Star (Jane Taylor)

VI. Fiction

Teachers: While the following works make up a strong core of literature, the content of language arts includes not only stories, fables, and poems, but also the well-practiced, operational knowledge of how written symbols represent sounds, and how those sounds and symbols convey meaning. Thus, the stories specified below are meant to complement, not to replace, materials designed to help children practice decoding and encoding skills (see above, II. Reading and III. Writing).

The following works constitute a core of stories for this grade. In kindergarten, these stories are meant to be read-aloud selections. Expose children to many more stories, including classic picture books and read-aloud books. (In schools, teachers across grade levels should communicate their choices in order to avoid undue repetition.) Children should also be exposed to nonfiction prose: biographies, books on science and history, books on art and music, etc. And, children should be given opportunities to tell and write their own stories.

A. STORIES

The Bremen Town Musicians (Brothers Grimm)
Chicken Little (also known as “Henny-Penny”)
Cinderella (Charles Perrault)
Goldilocks and the Three Bears
How Many Spots Does a Leopard Have? (African folktale)

King Midas and the Golden Touch
 The Legend of Jumping Mouse (Native American: Northern Plains legend)
 The Little Red Hen
 Little Red Riding Hood
 Momotaro: Peach Boy (Japanese folktale)
 Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
 The Three Billy Goats Gruff
 The Three Little Pigs
 A Tug of War (African folktale)
 The Ugly Duckling (Hans Christian Andersen)
The Velveteen Rabbit (Margery Williams)
 selections from *Winnie-the-Pooh* (A. A. Milne)
 The Wolf and the Kids (Brothers Grimm)

B. AESOP'S FABLES

The Lion and the Mouse
 The Grasshopper and the Ants
 The Dog and His Shadow
 The Hare and the Tortoise

C. AMERICAN FOLK HEROES AND TALL TALES

Johnny Appleseed
 Casey Jones

D. LITERARY TERMS

Teachers: As children become familiar with stories, discuss the following:

author
 illustrator

Note: Children will read more American folk heroes and tall tales in grade 2.

VII. Sayings and Phrases

Teachers: Every culture has phrases and proverbs that make no sense when carried over literally into another culture. For many children, this section may not be needed; they will have picked up these sayings by hearing them at home and among friends. But the sayings have been one of the categories most appreciated by teachers who work with children from home cultures that differ from the standard culture of literate American English.

A dog is man's best friend.
 April showers bring May flowers.
 Better safe than sorry.
 Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
 The early bird gets the worm.
 Great oaks from little acorns grow.
 Look before you leap.
 A place for everything and everything in its place.
 Practice makes perfect.
 [It's] raining cats and dogs.
 Where there's a will there's a way.