Module 3

3.1 Introduction to emergent literacy, reading techniques and teaching children how to read.

Learning objectives

- From an early literacy perspective, find out what the children in your library already know and where they are in their reading and writing journey. It will also be helpful for you to find out which languages the children are learning in and if these are the same languages they are using at home.
- Understand what emergent literacy is and how important it is to create a learning environment for children of all ages.
- Explore ideas and activities that will help to develop children's pre-reading skills.
- Understand the skills children need to learn to become confident readers and writers.
- Think about what you need to know about children's reading levels and what you can do to support them in reaching those levels.
- Preparing children to learn to read.
- Familiarize yourself with some methods that can be used to help children who are learning to read, or who are struggling with their reading.
- Review the library set-up and figure out how to make it language and print rich.

Introduction

What is emergent literacy?
We know now that the process of learning to read and write begins early in a child's life. Long before they start school, most children have contact with many modes of communication. This doesn't only happen in a formal learning environment, it happens when children are exposed to the world around them. This might include print and graphics on posters, fliers or billboards, advertisements on television and radio, clothes and food labels, stories people tell, books read aloud and, increasingly, digital technologies like cell phones and tablets, computers and digital games.

adidas

Image: Young boys reading on a tablet while sitting on the stairs at a library in Ethiopia (CC BY)

[Alt text: This picture shows two young boys sitting on a staircase at a library in Ethiopia. The boy on the left of the frame is holding a tablet and sharing the screen with a boy on the right. It looks like they are viewing a colourful animation.]

By the age of two to three years many children can identify signs and logos and if given reading resources, children will begin looking at pictures, making-up stories and pretending to read. In the same way, if they are given writing resources, they will begin to play and experiment with various written modes of communicating, e.g. drawing, scribbling and early attempts to write.

We call this emergent literacy. This phase of learning continues to develop gradually until children begin to read and write, increasingly in more conventional ways.

Adapted from: Source: https://fundaoer.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Literacy-Unit-4.pdf (pg 5)

Take a look at the video below that explains emergent literacy and also shows a little boy who is 'reading' the story aloud to his classmates. Please remember to turn the subtitles on!

Video Title: 35. Module 2 Emergent Literacy Emergent Reading
All videos have English subtitles. To add subtitles click the keyboard icon at the bottom of the YouTube screen, next to 'Settings

Why serve young children who are not yet readers?
As discussed in an earlier module, children who are exposed to books and reading from birth have an easier time learning to read, and have a larger vocabulary and stronger language skills than children who are not exposed to books.

Early literacy is an area that is a natural fit for libraries. Young children who are not yet in school depend on books being available in the home for their first exposure to them. **If there are no books in the home, the library is a place where books can be browsed and borrowed free of charge or for a low cost.** This also gives parents a wider selection of books for their children along with the expertise of the librarian and library staff who can recommend books that will support the development of the child's pre-reading skills.

Additional reading: Bring Books to Life: Running Child Friendly Libraries, Book Aid (https://www.africanlibraryproject.org/images/stories/BAI_guide/bbtl_running_child_friendly_libraries.pdf)

Environmental print
We cannot assume that all the children in our communities have equal access to books and reading and writing resources. We also know that resources can differ from one library to the next.

A study conducted in South Africa in 2021 discusses the use of environmental print as a stimulus material to promote emergent literacy in preschoolers in under-served preschools.

> *Children from under-served communities are at risk for delayed spoken language and literacy development. Under-served preschools frequently contend with lack of resources, especially with regard to access to age-appropriate storybooks and/or print resources.*

Given what we know about the disparities in our own communities, how do we do the best with what we have available?

The study referenced above states that:

> *…environmental print can be a particularly valuable tool for use as a stimulus, encouraging the development of certain language skills and emergent literacy in young children. Environmental print is cost-effective, easily accessible and has frequent occurrences outside the classroom. Its availability outside the classroom allows parents to continue stimulating what their child had learned at school, consolidating their learning. Cost-effectiveness becomes a pivotal aspect when considering interventions to address teaching of emergent literacy skills in the South African context, as socioeconomic disparities are evident in our society.*

So what is environmental print? Think about your immediate surroundings and all the text, media and messages you consume on your commute to work, or walking around your neighbourhood. This is 'environmental print' and it can be found in our public spaces: road signs, street pole advertising and billboards; in our shopping areas: brand labels, restaurant signs and logos; at home in our grocery cupboards: product packaging and labels; as well as what's available in the school, work and library environments: posters, directions and information notices.

The Reading Rockets website explains that for many emergent readers, environmental print helps bridge the connection between letters and first efforts to read.

You can see some examples of street-side environmental print below, but keep in mind this is just a small example. What is available on your product packaging and in your newspapers counts as well.

Image: jbdodane on Flickr (CC BY-NC)
Caption: Street signs and billboards in Accra, Ghana.

[Alt text: This picture shows a street corner in Accra, Ghana where a number of different and colourful billboards and advertisements have been erected. These reference a bottled water brand called ‘Le Country’ and the ‘Shelter of God Ministry’ amongst others.]

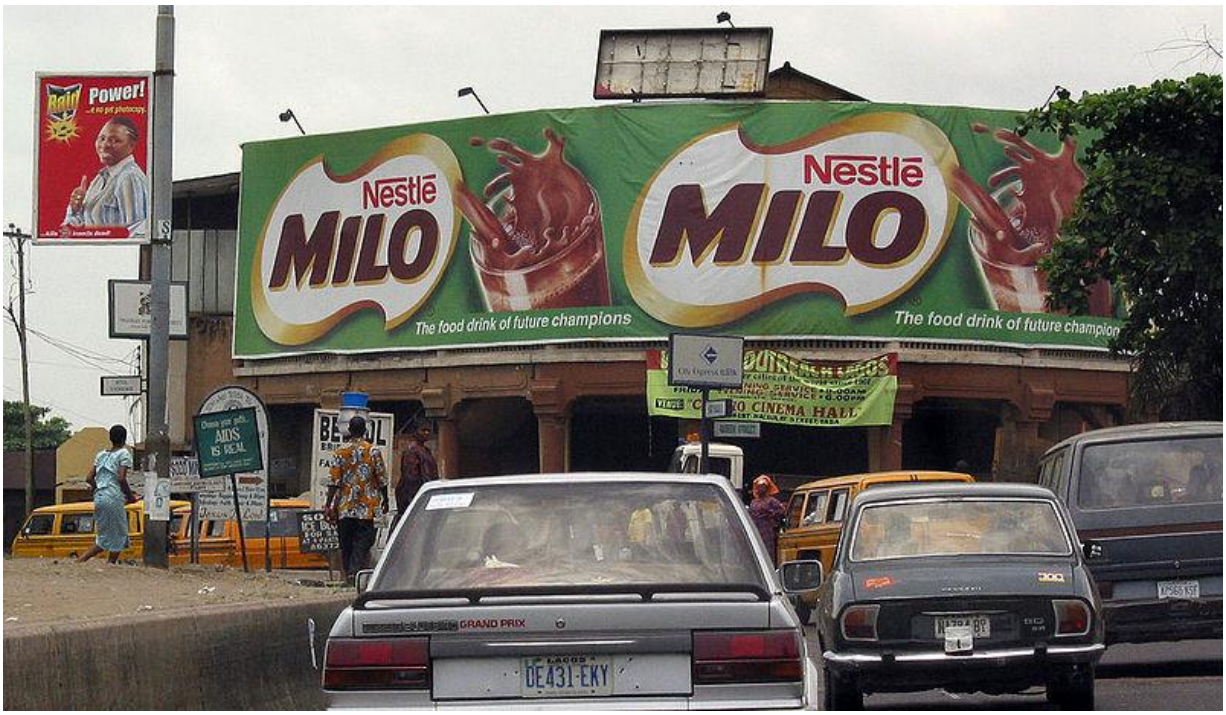


Image: Zouzou Wizman on Wikimedia Commons (CC BY)
Caption: Streetside advertising in Lagos, Nigeria.

[Alt text: This picture shows a billboard on a building in Lagos, Nigeria. The billboard is large and predominantly green and advertises Nestle's Milo drink. There are cars parked in the foreground and some people on the left hand side of the frame. There are a few other signs on the street poles as well.]

Image: jbdodane on Flickr (CC BY-NC)
Caption: Billboard advert featuring Didier Drogba in Tsumeb, Namibia.

[Alt text: This picture shows a billboard in Tsumeb, Namibia. The billboard is advertising Windhoek beer and features footballer, Didier Drogba. The billboard takes up most of the frame.]

Image: tristam sparks on Flickr (CC BY-NC-ND)
Caption: A billboard and street signs in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

[Alt text: This picture shows a bright orange billboard for a restaurant in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The street corner is also covered with bright yellow directional signs for the embassies of Congo-Brazzaville, Rwanda, Brazil, Kuwait and Japan.]

Image: Antoshananarivo on Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA)
Caption: A mural advertising the items for sale inside a grocery store in Rwanda.

[Alt text: This picture shows a building on a street corner in Rwanda. The side of the building features a mural on which a variety of grocery items have been painted, this includes toothpaste, apples, soft drinks, water, coffee, milk, detergent amongst others. On the left hand side of the frame a man is walking on the street. There is a car parked across the street in front of a building with a bright green facade.]

Image: Raffael Beier on Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA)
Caption: A Coca-Cola billboard on display at the Ngara Bus Stage in Nairobi.

[Alt text: This picture shows a busy bus terminal in Ngara, Nairobi. The minibus taxis are parked in front of the frame, while there are buildings towards the back. The top of the frame features a large billboard for Coca-Cola.]

Image: Rosino on Flickr (CC BY-NC)
Caption: A billboard advertising MCEL in Maputo, Mozambique.

[Alt text: This picture shows a billboard in Maputo, Mozambique. The billboard has a green background and advertises a mobile phone company called MCEL. The language of the billboard is portuguese. There are multi-story buildings in the background and a tree to the left of the frame.}

How do we use environmental print?

Librarians, parents and caregivers can take advantage of the words and letters that occur in our day-to-day environment by using them to talk about letters, words, and print.

> *The implication of using environmental print as a teaching material should motivate professionals working in education (especially in the preschool context) to be resourceful in the face of limited traditional resources. The high impact that environmental print offers within the classroom (or learning space) cannot be under-estimated.*
>
> - *Source: Promoting emergent literacy in under-served preschools using environmental print*

Here are a few ideas:

- Use empty packages, boxes and cans to create a display table.

- Often product packaging on boxes and canned goods is colorful and interesting to look at. Gather a few boxes and packages and then ask the children to find the first letter of their name somewhere on the box. See if they can find other letters from their name too.
- If it's safe to do so, take a walk around the library and choose a simple sign to focus on (stop sign, pedestrian crossing, one way). Ask the children to count the number of signs seen along the way. Ask the children to try and read the signs, noticing that the same sign says the same message each time. Talk about the sounds of the letters you can hear ("The S makes the /ssssssss/ sound.")
- Cut out familiar words from cereal boxes, labels from cans and from other containers. Use these individual brand labels and words to talk about capital and lowercase letters.
- Talk about the sounds of letters ("The letter T says 'tuh'") and encourage the children to read the words you've cut out.
- After you've gathered lots of pictures of signs and words, you can sort these items by their first letter. A simple alphabet book can be created using all your cutouts by organizing all the A words, B words, C words, etc.
- Use rhyming words in environmental print to write poems.

Can you think of any other ideas?

(Adapted from the Reading Rockets website and 'Children Write Their World: Environmental Print as a Teaching Tool)

Discussion prompt 3.1 – Moodle forum

Discuss these points within your cohort group and contribute towards the discussion on the Moodle forum:

1. What's happening in your communities with children aged between two and ten? Have they ever been exposed to literacy-rich environments at home, at school or at the library?
2. If they are old enough to go to school, are they attending school, or are they involved with supporting the work their parents are doing, or taking care of siblings. What can we do to support these children, and their families?
3. If the children are old enough to go to school, and attending school, how can we support the curricula, and what children are already learning in the classroom? How can we support the parents and caregivers?
4. If the children are not at school yet, how can we support parents and caregivers in supporting their children?
5. Are there any programmes being run at the library for parents and caregivers who might be struggling with literacy? How can we support them?

*This is a completion exercise, although the discussion won't be marked, feedback must be provided within the group via Moodle, this counts towards your course completion requirements.

Supporting children learning to read and write

"Bad libraries build collections, good libraries build services, great libraries build communities."
- R. David Lankes

Survey results
Being able to support children while they are learning to read and write at home and at school is an important function for librarians and library staff. When asked in the AfLIA survey which skills librarians would like to develop further, a lot of respondents indicated that they would like to support children in their early literacy education.

What's great is that because children are such sponges, and open to learning from such an early age, librarians and library staff can get a head start in promoting early literacy development for toddlers and preschoolers by incorporating the following ideas into their regular practice, and encourage parents and caregivers to do the same. If parents and caregivers are encouraged to attend these sessions with the children they can join in on the learning journey.

These ideas for activities for younger children with their parents and caregivers are adapted from Funda OER.

- Giving children access to cloth or cardboard books with colourful pictures, which can be read to children, and which children can read or look at with partners or by themselves.
- 'Environmental print' should not be discounted. The resources present in our everyday lives are also valuable to a child's learning experience.
- Reading books aloud to children. This will help them to develop an appreciation for written language at a very early age, stimulating positive attitudes towards reading.
- Reading aloud to children each day. This is one of the most beneficial ways in which a teacher, parent, guardian or librarian can promote literacy.
- Reading books that have rhyme, rhythm and repetition, for example, nursery rhymes
- Pointing out words in the environment (such as those on signs, clothing, television adverts and so on) and explaining the meaning of the words x Surrounding children with a literature-rich environment, filled with books (non-fiction, fiction, poetry), magazines, games and so on.
- Encouraging children to notice and think about printed words, and responding to questions children ask about print in their environments.
- Supporting early writing by making sure that paper, crayons and pencils are available where possible.

- Encouraging children to actively engage with books (e.g. by letting children talk about what they think is happening when looking at pictures, predicting what might happen next, linking what they see in books to other texts or to their own lives).
- Encouraging children to re-read favourite books. This helps to expand their knowledge of the world.

Source: Activities for younger children with their parents and caregivers,adapted from https://fundaoer.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Literacy-Unit-4.pdf

Activity 3.1 – Moodle

In this activity, you're going to work on your own to complete an interview with an early literacy teacher in your community. Alternatively, set up some time to speak to a parent or caregiver of one of the young children in your community who is learning to read and write for the first time.

1. Set up some time to talk to an early literacy teacher, parent or caregiver within your community to find out what they think about the role of librarians and library staff when it comes to early literacy.
2. Ask what they think librarians and library staff should be doing to support their work as teachers. If you're speaking to a parent or caregiver, ask them what their expectations are of the library, and of the librarians and library staff when it comes to their child's early literacy education.
3. Find out in which language/s children are learning to read and write, and the challenges the children and teachers face. For example, are there enough books in those languages? Are the books appropriate? Do the children have access to books at all?
4. Write a report of no more than 500 words based on what you discovered in your interview / interaction with the teacher, parent or caregiver and submit to Moodle.
5. Share the results with your cohort group and compare notes to see how your experiences are similar, or how they differ.

*This is a completion exercise, although the discussion won't be marked, feedback must be provided within the group via Moodle, this counts towards your course completion requirements.

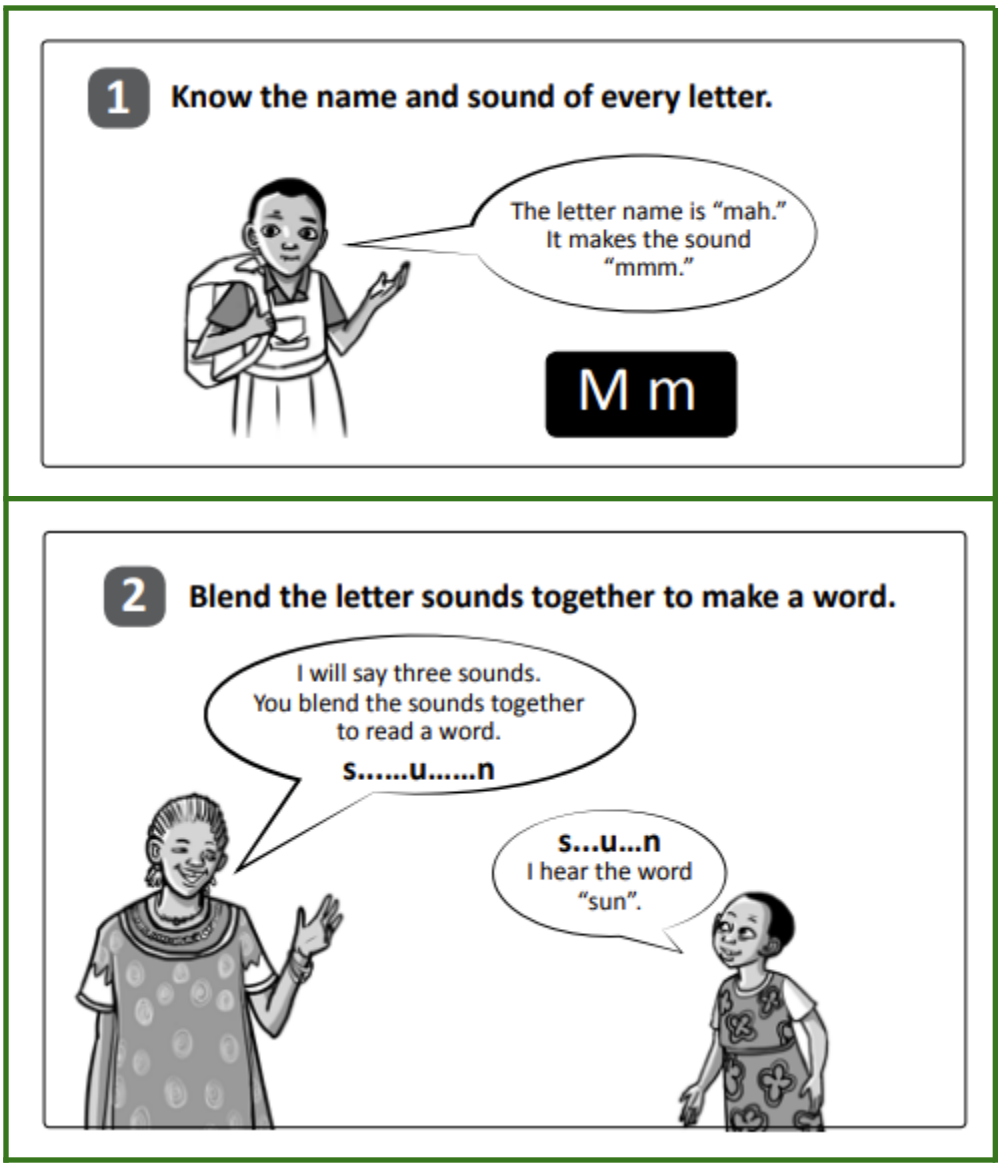
Understanding common early literacy skills

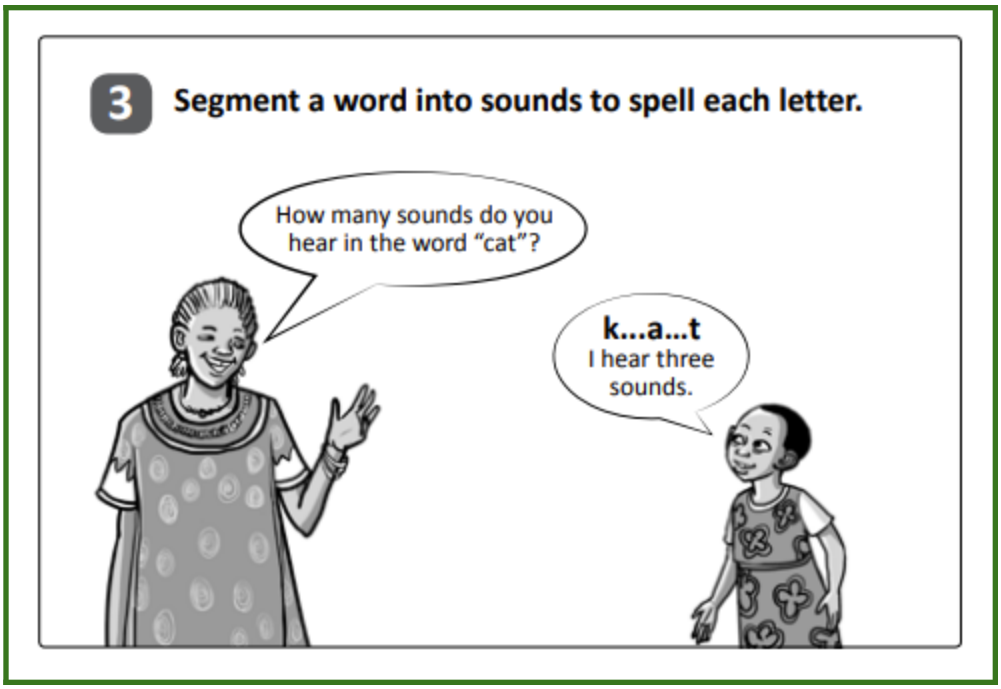
Can you remember learning to read? Do you recall a moment when you suddenly realized that you were able to read? Do you associate happiness and excitement with this memory? Think about the children who visit your library, think about the emotions that they might be experiencing as they discover the joy and wonder of reading for the first time. For children who are struggling, you might think about the frustration they are feeling at not being able to read, and not being able to understand what they are being taught.

In this module, we want to understand the process behind the learning. Familiarize yourself with some of the skills that children learn as they progress through their early literacy learning journey. Children should start to learn these skills at home and continue with them at school, and strengthen them with your help, during their library attendance.

These might be different in each language they are learning to speak.

For example, in this [Parent Literacy Guidebook For Parents Of Children Who Are Learning to Read] the authors at Mango Tree Literacy Lab have outlined three skills needed for a child when learning the Leblango language spoken in Uganda. Does this feel familiar to you? Do you think this is the same way children learn to speak in your mother tongue?





Pre-reading skills

Pre-reading skills are the building blocks of early literacy. While some of the terms sound complex, they are actually all quite simple and the methods to pass on these skills to children are often things that parents do naturally and frequently, such as talking to their children and singing songs to them. These are 'habits' you can easily adopt in the library too.

Children who have acquired strong pre-reading skills will find it much easier to learn to read because these skills provide a foundation for literacy development.

1. **Print concepts and awareness**: Children learn how different forms of print are read; they are aware that we are surrounded by print in many different contexts, such as on signs, in books, on billboards and in shops.
2. **Print motivation**: Excitement about reading is generated; children want to read books and are motivated to do so.
3. **Letter knowledge:** The ability to recognize letters and to know that words are made up of individual letters.
4. **Phonological awareness:** The awareness that words are made up of smaller sounds and that these sounds can be combined in different ways to form different words. Children learn to identify and manipulate the sounds in spoken words including skills such as oral segmenting (breaking a word down into its sounds, like c-a-t or its syllables) and oral blending (combining sounds to make a word).
5. **Letter sounds:** Children learn to say the most common sound for printed letters.
6. **Blending:** Children start to blend different sounds together to make a word.

7. **Segmenting:** Children begin to segment words into their component sounds to recognize and say each letter aloud.
8. **Irregular words**: Children learn to read high-frequency irregular words. These are the words that are difficult to sound out, which children need to learn to read as 'sight' words. The more their reading progresses, the more sight words they will add to their vocabulary. In English, these are words like: be, but, do, have, he, she, they, was, what and with.
9. **Advanced phonics**: Children learn to read word families, compound words, contractions, double-letter words, silent-letter words, -ed words and -s words.
10. **Letter combinations:** Children learn to say the most common sounds for letter combinations such as *sh* and *oa* and to decode different syllable patterns. These common sounds for letter combinations are different in different languages.
11. **Prefixes and suffixes**: Children learn the meaning of selected prefixes and suffixes and understand how they can be added to a word to change its meaning.
12. **Comprehension:** Children learn comprehension skills through read-alouds and story hour events, guided practice and application of the skills.
13. **Vocabulary**: The more words that children hear, see and know, the easier it is for them to read. Children increase their vocabulary - the number of words they know - by participating in read-alouds and story time events, using graphic organizers, like posters and word walls, to clarify meaning, and engaging in a variety of activities to expand their understanding.
14. **Narrative skills:** The ability to tell a story and to understand how a story is structured, with a beginning, middle and end.
15. **Fluency**: Children learn to read their first sentences and short passages.
16. **Letter writing:** Children learn to handwrite each letter of the alphabet. They learn to write their capital and lowercase letters.
17. **Writing:** Children learn to write individual words, short sentences and stories.

Adapted from: https://www.freereading.net/wiki/Find_Activities.html

You will get to know more about these early literacy skills in the methods for teaching section.

Think about what you've learnt so far

What can you remember about the early literacy skills children learn as they progress through their reading journey?

Match the skill type label with the correct description. Complete the exercise before you review the answers below.

1.	Phonological	A.	Children learn to read their first sentences and short passages.

	awareness		
2.	Print concepts	B.	Children learn how different forms of print are read.
3.	Fluency	C.	Children learn to say the most common sounds such as *sh* and *oa* and to decode different syllable patterns.
4.	Letter combinations	D.	Children learn to identify and manipulate the sounds in spoken words including skills such as oral segmenting (breaking a word down into its sounds, like c-a-t or its syllables) and oral blending (combining sounds to make a word).
5	Blending	E	Children start to combine different sounds together to make a word.

Answers:

1. D
2. B
3. A
4. C
5. E

What are children reading? How are they reading?

Later on in their lives, when children get a bit older, formal reading assessments typically take place in the school environment to determine a child's reading and learning level. In the library, however, simply knowing the stages of reading development will be invaluable when supporting children's early literacy learning, and choosing the right books for them to read.

Remember, early literacy starts earlier than you might think.

Even newborn babies are learning by responding to their environment and benefit from having books read aloud to them. As their motor skills develop, babies can play with board books and as their vision develops, they can focus on contrasting colours and large images in books.

Source: Adapted from https://www.africanlibraryproject.org/images/stories/BAI_guide/bbtl_running_child_friendly_libraries.pdf

Stages of reading development
Read through the stages of reading development below. Familiarize yourself with these stages so you can help children select books that suit their reading level and early literacy journey.

Pre-reader
Does not yet link sounds, words and writing. Enjoys looking at books and knows how to hold them. Knows how to tell the back of the book from the front of the book and can recognize when the book is the rigth way around.

Pre 1

- Looks at pictures.
- Does not tell the story. Might literally state what they see on the page.
- Does not link sounds with written letters.

Pre 2

- Looks at pictures.
- Tells stories so it sounds as if they are reading the story.
- May recognize some sounds, letters and words.
- Knows direction of which way texts should read (left to right, if English, right to left if Hebrew or Arabic - it all depends on the language being learnt).

"I enjoy listening to my mother's stories". Words and images taken from the book *I enjoy Doing* on the African Storybook website.

[Alt text: Illustration from a story book showing a young girl in a school uniform singing and dancing with her mother. Her mother is wearing a bright yellow dress. There is a speech bubble above her mother's head showing a picture of an antelope to show she is thinking of or singing about an animal.']

Beginning reader

Knows print contains meaning. Begins to match sounds to writing.

Beginner 1

- Knows the sounds of some letters.
- Is able to ecognize some words.
- May finger point matching words to memorized text.
- Memorizes simple patterned writing.

Beginner 2

- Knows more sight words.
- Reads patterned writing phrases with understanding.
- Knows sounds of most letters and blends sounds into words.
- Attempts new words using phonics knowledge.
- Identifies syllables in words.

"I enjoy reading picture books". Words and images taken from the book *I enjoy Doing* on the African Storybook website.

[Alt text: Illustration from a story book showing a young girl in a school uniform lying on the floor, head in hands, smile on her face, reading a picture book.]

A more independent reader

Uses phonics, look-and-say, and context to read longer text. These reading methods will be discussed further along in this module.

Independent reader 1

- Sight reads some longer words.
- Recognizes some common words.
- Uses some phonics, look-and-say, and context strategies to decode new words.
- Still makes quite a few mistakes.

Independent reader 2

- Mainly reads simple texts independently.
- Recognizes more high-frequency and common words.
- Makes fewer mistakes.
- Self-corrects.

Note. Some children will still need more practice with phonics and/or look-and-say whole-word recognition.

“I enjoy writing letters on the board”. Words and images taken from the book *I enjoy Doing* on the African Storybook website.

[Alt text: Illustration from a story book showing a young girl in a school uniform writing the letters of the alphabet from a to e on a blackboard.’]

Source: The stages of reading development above are adapted from this TESSA chart: https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/pluginfile.php/285752/mod_resource/content/3/Stages%20of%20reading%20development.pdf

Celebrating reading in our libraries

Image: Children showing off their books at the Msunduzi Public Library in South Africa

[Alt text: Group photo of children at the Msunduzi Public Library in South Africa. The children are holding books and stationary to celebrate World Book Day.]

Image: Read aloud session, Enugu State Library Board, Nigeria
[Alt text: Group photo of children with a librarian reading aloud from a picture book at the Enugu State Library in Nigeria. The librarian has a small child sitting on her lap, while the rest of the children are sitting in chairs behind them.]

Teaching reading: Preparation and methods

The following sections of the module are adapted from a course developed by TESSA (Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa) called *Teaching early reading in Africa - with African Storybook*.

Preparing to learn and teach early reading

Take a look at these ideas and resources that can be used in a library setting to help children develop their early reading skills:

- Asking and answering questions
- Thinking about daily routines
- Looking at pictures and responding to them
- Physical movement
- Songs and rhymes

Which of these activities do you do at the library already? What do they all have in common?

The golden thread that connects all of these ideas and resources is 'speaking and listening' - as children move into learning how to read, it is important that they are given a range of opportunities to talk with you and with each other. Speaking and listening underpins the successful development of their early literacy skills.

You can make a difference to their early literacy skills development by:

- Thinking about how asking children questions can develop their thinking skills
- Exploring how to develop their speaking and listening skills with pictures
- Understanding the contribution that physical movement makes to early literacy

Tips to enhance the children's corner in your library

Video title: Early Literacy Development Course - Tips to enhance the children's corner in your library
A good children's section of the library supports personal reading and academic development for children of all ages including pre-schoolers. This is done through having a variety of resources which are representative and act both as a mirror of the realities within the community and a window into worlds beyond the familiar.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67F5xo3o_84

Transcript:

What it takes to success read aloud to children

As children begin to develop language skills, they listen to learn words, ideas and concepts. Their ability to say words and to understand language more and more does not always mean that they can read in their mother tongues or in the country's lingua franca. Telling them stories at this age stirs up their imaginations and makes them want to learn. Even after they learn to read on their own, children still love to hear stories read to them.

First…

It is important to understand that libraries as literacy-rich environments play significant roles in introducing children to stories and the love for reading as stories are read aloud to them.

Plan for a read-aloud event even if it is a regular activity. Identify stories that are easy to read with words that are not so high-sounding, easy to pronounce and explain, with concepts that children can immediately relate to. For children within the African continent, it is better to choose stories about the sun, moon, stars, wind, trees, sand, colours, animals, sisters, brothers, parents, electricity rather than stories about snow, autumn, winter. As they grow older and start school, they can delve into stories with other backgrounds different from theirs. By then, their brains would have been built up to understand the differences in different environments.

Be careful about choosing wordy story books. It may be better to choose storybooks with pictures that help to explain the themes, plots, characters or objects in the story. If a book with many words is chosen, you may have to decide whether to read the entire book at once or divide into bits or leave out parts that don't add to the story.

Make reading stories a fun time for children

Reading stories to children should not be approached as a chore or as a routine that one does all the time as a library staff.

- *Make it fun, ad lib, add words where necessary including simple questions as why? How? Is it possible? This will create some elements of suspense.*

- *Use facial expressions and hand gestures to show emotions as expressed in the book whether it is fear, joy, wonderment, hunger, tiredness, agreement or distaste. This moves the story along and makes it come alive to the children.*
- *Get involved in the story. As much as possible, don't get stuck in one spot as you read stories to children in the library. Move around and flow with the story but do not let the movements distract the children from the story.*

Draw children into the story being read

Make sure that the children you are reading to are following the story. Stop intermittently to repeat a line with the prevailing emotion of that line - wonder, anger, joy or tiredness.

- *Pull kids into the story by asking questions as you read. For example, let's say you are reading the story about the race challenge between the tortoise and the hare. You can ask children as you start the story who they think will win the race while demonstrating the natural speed rate of the tortoise and the hare. Asking them and getting answers from them will make them more interested in the story. Another example is the fable from Aesop on a contest between the Wind and the Sun. The two entities needed to find out who is stronger and engaged in a contest. As the story begins, ask the children to choose who may win. Get their answers. Note that some children may not talk but have an opinion! You can think of ingenious means of overcoming that. The important thing is to try to get all of them engaged.*
- *You may add activities that engage children while reading the story. Is there a rhyme or song you can coin up or that is in the book? Repeat it as often as possible and get the children to sing along with you.*
- *If possible, show pictures in the story to all the children as you read. Drawings on cardboard sheets about objects or characters can be done and mounted where the children can also see them.*

Your voice

When children are read to, they follow the story through the voice of the reader. If your voice as the reader comes out flat, the children may likely lose interest. As much as is possible, modulate your voice to reflect the 'movement' of the story. Use your voice to build up tension, create excitement and resolution in the story. Reading the story and rehearsing before the read aloud event is advisable. Most importantly, make read aloud sessions fun for children!

Developing comprehension and thinking skills through questioning
Young children need the security and memory-building that comes from repeated activities, stories, games and songs - all of which support the development of early literacy skills.

But they also need their minds to be constantly challenged. When children are learning to read, asking questions helps them to make meaning or comprehend what's been read.

We looked at some question types in Module 2, but let's go into more detail.

Comprehension questions can be divided into two main types: closed and open ended.

Closed questions: These test children's knowledge, memory or understanding of what's been read.

Closed questions are useful because they:

- Have just one answer or a small number of possible answers.
- Develop children's confidence in knowing that they might know the correct answer.
- Can indicate how much each child understands, this is important when a child moves from learning in their home language to learning in English.
- Can indicate what a child doesn't know, so additional support can be provided.
- Can be asked to individuals, pairs or groups, or to the whole group to answer as one.

An example:
How many legs does the rat have? (Answer: 4)

Open questions: These encourage thinking, imaginative and reasoning skills.

Open questions are useful because they:

- Have many possible answers
- Allow children to be imaginative with their answers and to use their personal cultural knowledge to answer.
- Encourage a wide use of vocabulary.
- Can be followed up with 'why', encouraging children to give reasons for their answers (using the word 'because'), and to think about cause and effect.
- Ask children to return to what they've read to provide reasons for their answers.
- Can be a challenge to very able children.
- Are a good opportunity for children to work together in pairs or small groups to discuss their answers.

An example:
What do you think Emmanuel is doing in this picture? (Show a picture of a boy doing something while asking this question. It's important to provide context for this type of question.)

Look at the questions below and decide if you think they are ‘open’ or ‘closed’ questions.

Open questions	Closed questions
What's the difference between a lion and a cat?	Is that a lion or a cat?
How do you know it’s raining?	Is it raining?
What do you think will happen next?	What is the boy in the picture doing?
What is the girl hiding?	Where is the girl hiding?
What would it be like to be the frog in the story?	What was the name of the main character in the story?

When preparing your next story hour event, do some preparation ahead of time by reading through the book you’re planning to read to the children, then write out two closed questions and their possible answers and four open-ended questions and their possible answers. Remember, the open questions could have a range of different answers depending on the question and the child.

Use this template.

Closed questions	
Question 1:	Answer:
Question 2:	Answer
Open questions	
Question 1:	Answer:
Question 2:	Answer:
Question 3:	Answer:

Question 4:	Answer:

Children's everyday lives as a resource for reading
How can the everyday activities that children are already familiar with be incorporated into their early reading learning journey?

Young children will already be able to talk about many aspects of their home lives, including friends, family, food, playing, animals, weather, toys, emotions and traditional tales. Encourage children to talk about their experiences, or to 'retell' events as they happened, with you and with other children in the library to stimulate their speaking and listening skills.

If you're struggling to get a child to open up to you, or to talk to the other children, find a book in the library that tells a story similar to their own, and encourage them to 'read' this with you. Find a picture book to help them tell their story.

Wordless picture books
Do you have any wordless picture books in the library? These are books that rely on illustrations only. They tell the story through detailed pictures, but use little to no words. They are great for getting children to open up and to tell their own stories, using the pictures as a starting point.

This research paper describes some of the benefits of using wordless picture books to support emergent literacy. We will highlight some of the benefits, but you are welcome to read the paper for more information.

- Wordless books help children to develop book handling behaviours and to discover how books 'work'.
- Wordless books are well suited to contemporary children's strengths - especially where children are excited and stimulated by bright, colourful images as seen on TV or the internet.
- Wordless books adapt to special needs. Children don't need to understand the 'language' the book was 'written' in, and can find joy in the story even if they haven't learnt to read yet, or if they are experiencing learning difficulties.
- Wordless books inspire storytelling in many different forms. Children gain confidence developing their own narratives and knowing there is no right or wrong way to read the story.

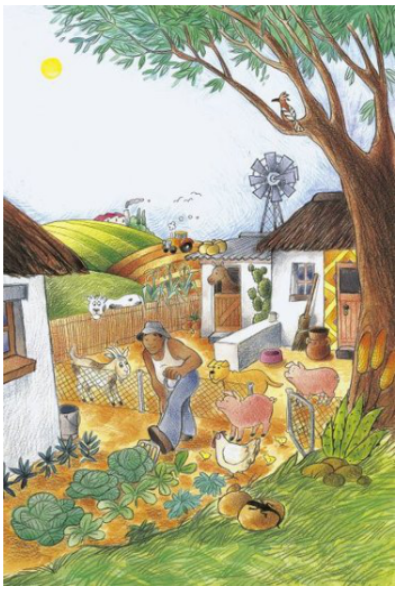
Images taken from a wordless picture book *A very important tree*, available on the Book Dash website. More wordless picture books can be found in the Book Dash archive. What do you think is happening in this story?

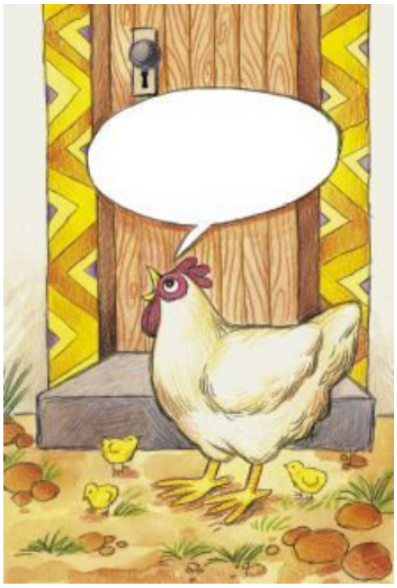
[Alt text: This is an illustration taken from a child's wordless story book. In the frame you can see a beautifully illustrated graphic showing on the left hand-side a tree with a canopy of green leaves. There is a monkey swinging from a branch. Below the monkey, standing on the ground, is a young girl in a pink dress. Her hair is tied in pig-tails. There is an adult emerging from a house to the right of the picture. He is holding a giant, sparkling cupcake in his right hand. He is smiling and wearing an apron. There is a car parked just outside the yard.]

The importance of illustrations

A good way to help children grasp the relationship between images and words on a page is through the use of pictures and picture books. Some children will have enjoyed sharing picture books from an early age at home, but others will have had limited access to any books.

As a person who works with children in the library, you play a very special role in their lives, and you need to think of different ways to give every child the opportunity to enjoy the experience of picture books. Illustrations are a very important part of telling a story, and for early readers the pictures are useful in helping to remember the sequence of the story and 'what comes next'.





The images above and below are taken from the book *Look At The Animals* available on the African Storybook website.

Activity 3.2 – Moodle

In this activity, you're going to work with your cohort group to create a simple story book for your library.

Choose one of the following picture story themes that you could use with young children: family, food, home, clothing, village, people's jobs, vehicles, household objects or games.

1. Discuss: How could you use them in a story?
2. What language will you use to tell your story? Will all the children understand the story?
3. Think about: What actions or sounds could you add? Will these actions and sounds appeal to the children? Will they be encouraged to participate in the story?
4. Make four picture cards for your chosen theme. You can draw these cards, or use materials you have on hand. Make notes of how you could use the cards during story hour. Look at this example from African Storybook, if you like it, you can download it and use it.
5. As a group, write your own story which you will read to the children. Write one simple sentence for each of your four picture cards. Add detail about the characters, the setting and the plot.
6. With your group, make note of how your story helps to support: vocabulary development, picture / text connections, reading for enjoyment, home language learning, participation and inclusion.
7. Submit the story to Moodle.
8. Use the story in your next story time event. Make notes of how the children enjoyed the story and give this feedback to your cohort group.

*This is a completion exercise, although the discussion won't be marked, feedback must be provided within the group via Moodle, this counts towards your course completion requirements.

Using physical movement to support early reading

We looked at this in a previous module when talking about options for story hour activities. Let's look at it again in more detail.

Children like to play games. Many of the games they play - especially those with songs, rhymes or actions - help them to practice early reading skills.

Learning songs and joining in are important foundations for the development of children's early literacy skills. These experiences provide the building blocks for early reading development and encourage active participation.

In order to become effective readers, children first need to be ready to read. Factors that influence children's readiness to read include:

- Having an interest in becoming a reader.
- Listening carefully for meaning, imitating sounds, practicing fine motor control with hands and fingers.
- Developing spatial awareness and whole body coordination.

Games to support readiness for reading

Listening and speaking skills

- Learning rhyming songs by hearing (hearing and predicting rhyming words is a predictor of reading ability)
- Clapping a rhythm, listening for syllables

- Singing rhyming songs
- Listening to and joining in with simple stores
- Matching words
- Using cardboard boxes, etc. for imaginative play

Image: San José Public Library on Flickr (CC-BY-SA 2.0)
Caption: Using found objects to play imaginary games in the library in San José.

[Alt text: This picture shows an adult and a child playing imaginary games in the public library in San José. They have decorated a cardboard box and are using it to mimic a space shuttle or aeroplane. The box has been covered in pink and purple paper. The library shelves are visible in the background.]

Fine motor skills

- Hand/eye coordination
- Finger rhymes
- Table games with paper, scissors and glue
- Outside play with stones, water and cutlery

Image: Jenni Sweat on Flickr (CC-BY-2.0)
Caption: A brightly coloured arts and crafts table set up.

[Alt text: This picture shows a close up of a bright yellow table cloth covered in arts and crafts supplies. Children's hands and arms are visible on the table as they look as though they are putting hand puppets together with cut out pieces of felt.]

Spatial awareness - whole body coordination

- Throwing a ball around a group during a rhyme
- Making large actions to a rhyme or song
- Running, jumping, dancing games

There are many variations of the game where a stone is thrown up in the air and a number of other stones must be picked up before the first stone falls to the ground, or is caught. These games are also great for coordination.

Image: USAG Livorno PAO on Flickr (CC-BYNC-2.0)
Caption: Adults playing games with children in a library setting.

[Alt text: This picture shows an adult holding hands with three children and moving around in a circle as they sing a sling. There are other adults seated at tables behind them, these tables are covered in picture books. There is also a wall of bookshelves in the background and child-friendly furniture.]

Group cooperation

- Clapping games in pairs and hearing syllables
- ‘Follow-my-leader’-type games to support recall of information

- Circle games, such as passing a toy around a group

Image: Jenni Sweat on Flickr (CC-BY-2.0)
Caption: Young girls are playing a clapping game.

[Alt text: This picture shows children and adults engaged in a clapping game. The young girl in the foreground is smiling and wearing a red t-shirt featuring Hello Kitty on the front. Another young girl in a striped t-shirt is sitting next to her. There are two adults in the image but their faces are not visible.]

Songs and action rhymes for reading

You might feel shy, out of your depth, or nervous to do a physical activity with the children, if you haven't done this before. Try to remember what you enjoyed doing as a child and channel that youthful energy into your efforts. Think about simple songs that you enjoyed singing, and why you enjoyed them. Focus on simple local games - especially the kind of games that have songs or rhymes attached to them - as a way to generate enthusiasm and to make the transition from speaking and listening to reading and writing.

You should remember this game. It's easy to translate the words into any language and the actions are universal…

Head Shoulders Knees and Toes Afrobeat Mix - Bino and Fino African Educational Cartoon

Get all the children to stand up and to find a little space for themselves (as they will need to do some bending over) and tell them to follow your actions as you sing. As you name each part of the body, you should touch it. Tap your head with one hand, then she tap your shoulders with both hands, then your knees and then your toes with both hands and each time, sing the word. Encourage the children to sing with you.

Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes,
Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes,
Two eyes, two ears, one mouth and one nose.
Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes.

The children really enjoy playing this game and singing this song because it:

- focuses their attention and practices vocabulary
- contains rhyme and repetition
- helps physical coordination by practicing bending, stretching and two-hand coordination
- helps children to remember ones and twos and matching pairs (ears, eyes, knees and shoulders).

As well as helping develop coordination and vocabulary, songs can help children develop phonological awareness.

Phonological awareness

Children grow up listening and hearing sounds in their environment. This is called phonological awareness.

You can help children to develop this awareness by taking them on a **listening walk** – into the grounds of the library, for example, and asking them to listen out for sounds. What can they hear? You may have cattle in the field next door or community leaders meeting outside the school fence. Maybe there's a road nearby, or children playing.

Asking children to 'tune in' to the different sounds and then – very importantly – asking them to point to where the sound is coming from is a crucial skill in learning to read. Being able to hear different sounds in the environment is the step before being able to break down sounds in words into their smaller parts. It's also fun to go outside on a listening walk. Alternatively, this can be done in the library with objects that make sounds, such as a rattle made of bottle tops.

Learning songs and rhymes

Learning songs and joining in are important foundations for children's early reading development. Songs and rhymes build children's internalization of rhyming strings. The ability to hear and predict rhymes is a predictor of reading ability. Choose songs and rhymes with words that you break down into sounds before building them back up again. Activities like this help children to feel confident in playing with letters and sounds, and supports their understanding of how words are put together.

For example, choose a song or rhyme about a cat. At some point in the rhyme, say 'CAT'. Then break it down into its three sounds, '/C/A/T/', and then build it back up again to say 'CAT'. The children can try and say the word all at the same time – this makes it fun and engaging. Try this with other simple words before moving onto words like 'DUCK'. This is a word with four letters ('D', 'U', 'C', 'K') but only three sounds ('/D/U/CK/'). At this early stage, you want children to learn about the sounds within words. Fun songs and rhymes are a good way to do this.

Video title: STORYTIME: Akili and the Cat City! | New Words with Akili and Me | African …

Planning an activity

Activity 3.3 – Moodle

For this activity you're going to work alone. Look back through this section and think about an activity that you would like to plan. Once you have decided on the activity you would like to do, share the idea and materials with your cohort group, so they can enjoy your activity too.

1. You could base your activity on a picture or object that you bring to the library, a new song or rhyme that you have learnt, a storybook that you have in the library, or a book that you have made yourself or downloaded.
2. Think about how you could use closed and open questions to promote thinking, or actions to help develop coordination skills. Don't worry if your activity is too short, but don't make it too long either.
3. If you have the opportunity, try your activity with the children at the library, and evaluate it by answering these questions. Then provide feedback to your cohort group.
    a. Did the children enjoy the activity? If yes, what do you think they enjoyed. If no, why do you think that they didn't enjoy it? What would you do differently next time?
    b. Did this activity help children to develop their early reading skills? If so, which aspects? For example, vocabulary development, speaking and listening skills, spatial awareness, fine motor skills?
    c. Did all the children take part in the activity?
    d. What would you do differently next time?
4. Submit your activity outline to moodle, as well as the evaluation feedback.

*This is a completion exercise, although the discussion won't be marked, feedback must be provided within the group via Moodle, this counts towards your course completion requirements.

Additional resources:

Find activities that relate to the various early literacy skills on this freereading wiki website. You can also look at this Book Aid International resource for activities.

Methods for teaching reading

In this section, you are going to look in detail at three methods for teaching reading and writing. The assumption is that you will be assisting with the children's learning in their home language and in a print-rich environment, and that you will involve active learning approaches in order to help children become successful and confident readers.

No single method discussed is the 'right' one. People learn to read in different ways, so one method may work with one child but not with another. If the method you are using is not working with a particular child, you can try another.

Being able to draw on all the methods will give children the best possible chance of becoming independent readers.

If you are a reader, start by sharing what you love about reading and talk about what you are reading with enthusiasm, this way, children get to see for themselves the enjoyment that reading can bring.

Activity 2 - Part 1: Preparation – Moodle

In this activity, you are going to be working in pairs, so before we move on, choose a partner from within your cohort group, then follow the steps outlined in the list below. Take note of the requirements as you read the teaching methods below.

1. There are three teaching methods outlined in the next part of the module, and an activity associated with each one.
2. Once you have selected your partner, you are going to decide among yourselves on which partnership will complete each activity.
3. Each partnership will complete one activity and present their results to the cohort group.
4. To complete this activity, each partnership will need to watch and review the activities completed by the other partnerships.
5. All work will need to be submitted to Moodle.
6. Activity details will be presented once you have completed the reading material for each teaching method.

*This is a completion exercise, although the discussion won't be marked, feedback must be provided within the group via Moodle, this counts towards your course completion requirements.

Teaching method 1: Sounds, letters and syllables

The phonics method is based on the relationship between individual letters and sounds. Children learn to match letters and sounds, such as ‘c-a-t, cat’ (English) or ‘u-b-a-b-a, ubaba’ (‘father’ in isiZulu). This method is sometimes called ‘the bottom-up-approach’ because it starts with small units and builds towards a bigger picture of reading. It involves children becoming aware of the sounds that letters or pairs of letters make (phonics) and appreciating how these fit together to make sounds within words (phonemic awareness).

This method is important because it enables young children to ‘sound out’ written words that they don’t recognise - even if they don’t understand the meaning of the word. **It’s important that you know which sounds are represented by the letters in the language the children are learning to read and write in.**

These combinations are not the same in all languages. The phonics method requires a child to learn what sounds are represented by individual letters (such as ‘a’ and ‘b’) and combinations of letters (such as ‘th’ or ‘ngq’) in order to read words. Children are usually taught with single sounds and simple words.

This approach can be useful - and fun - when it is embedded in rhyming. Hearing and predicting rhyming words and syllables is a strong predictor of reading ability.

For instance, if a child sees that certain words sound similar and have similar spellings, they don’t have to sound each one out:

Sad, mad, bad, glad, dad, had
End, lend, send, spend, friend
Bona, lona, zona, wona (isiZulu)
Rara, wura, tira, bara (Yoruba)

Groups of words like this are called ‘word families’. Can you think of more of these in languages other than English, isiZulu and Yoruba? Once the children have discovered a word family, you can write it on paper and put it on the wall. As time goes on, you can add to the word families on your wall.

In the video below, Akili explores the sounds made by the letters in the English alphabet. Do you remember learning the sounds that different letters make? Note, this is a long video, you can find shorter videos for each letter of the alphabet on the Akili & Me YouTube channel. Take note of the videos offered in different languages as well.

Video title: Akili Loves to Read | Read with Akili and Me | Educational Cartoons for Pres…
These Akili and Me videos developed by Ubongo Edutainment narrate an animated story while showing which word is being red by highlighting the captions. This is a great way to read with children if you're able to project the video on a big screen, or have smaller groups of children read along with the video on a tablet or computer. Ubongo has made many of its videos available in Kiswahili, Kinyarwanda, Hausa and other languages aside from English.

Syllables
Words with many syllables often occur in African languages - some can be almost like sentences. Children can learn to recognise and read syllables by clapping out the syllables of any word to help them distinguish the individual sounds and hear how the word is put together.

English:
A/pple - Apple
Ba/na/na - Banana

Swahili:
Cha/ku/la - Chakula (Food)
To/faa - Tofaa (Apple)

Think about some more examples of words with syllables from the mother tongue languages spoken in your communities.

Word families and words with repeated sounds and syllables are often found in songs, chants, rhymes and riddles familiar to children. The rhythms and up-and-down tones in songs and chants can help children to remember words, and to read them more easily when they are written down.

Phonemic awareness
Understanding that words are made up of basic speech sounds, and being able to play with these sounds is called 'phonemic awareness'. When children can hear and understand these sounds they know when spoken words rhyme, and they know when words begin or end with the same sound. For example, in English children may learn 'away', 'play', 'stay' and 'stray' - and be able to recognise '-ay'. Once they are familiar with initial strings such as 'st', 'str' or 'pl', they can begin to put them together and decode new words. Is this the same in the languages spoken in your communities? If so, please provide some examples.

Phonemic awareness is very important to learn to read, but it is not enough. Children also have to recognise the letters of the alphabet (alphabetic knowledge), and the sounds that those letters represent (phonics). When children are given the opportunity to recognise letters and sounds, they start to understand the relationship between spoken sounds and the letters of written language. This helps children to read and write words.

Conclusion
So phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge and phonetic awareness (knowledge of individual sounds) are all necessary for children to become literate - but they are not sufficient. The main goal is reading with understanding. Other methods such as 'look and say' and 'learning experience' are ways of helping children to make meaning of words.

Think of any chanting rhymes in English or in your mother tongue language that could help develop awareness of rhymes and letter strings. How could you use these in the library? Keep a record of these in your notebook for later use.

Teaching Method 1: Case study and activity

A librarian, Ms Mwangi is doing an after-school programme with a group of five to six year old children. English has been chosen as the medium of instruction today because the group is made up of children from many different home language groups.

Most of the children have some familiarity with English from advertising boards, packaging and television. However, for most of them, English is not their mother tongue.

Ms Mwangi teaches them a rhyme. She reads the poem aloud once and then asks two children to stand up and act out the parts. Once the children are familiar with the rhythm of the rhyme, she writes it where everyone can see it:

A fat cat sat on the mat.
The fat cat saw a rat.
The fat cat jumped for the rat.
The rat ran away.

She uses the letters, sounds and syllables approach to help them read the first few words. Pointing to the 'c', she asks what sound it makes. Working with one child who raises their hand, she asks them to sound out the rest of the word: 'C–a–t, cat'. Then she moves on to the next word, asking one child to sound it out and say it: 'F–a–t, fat'. She then asks if anyone can tell her what the next word says. A child volunteers: 'Sat'. She then points

to ‘mat’ and ‘rat’, and different children read the words. She underlines the words and asks the group if they can tell her what is the same about these words?

Children respond that they all end with ‘–at’. She points to the word ‘saw’ and helps them to sound it out (‘s–aw’), and asks someone to act out its meaning. She points to the word ‘jumped’ and claps its sounds (‘j–u–m–p–ed’), and asks someone to act out its meaning.

Ms Mwangi then reads the rhyme with the group, in chorus. They do this a few times. Now she asks two children to dramatize the rhyme while a volunteer recites it. One plays the part of the cat, the other the rat. In this way the able readers get the chance to read it on their own. She allows several pairs of children to do this.

Ms Mwangi has placed letter cards in packets. Some of the letters are single letters (‘b’, ‘c’, ‘f’, ‘h’, ‘m’, ‘p’, ‘r’, ‘s’), and one card has ‘at’ on it. She asks the children to work in pairs. They take it in turns to choose a letter and put it in front of ‘at’. The person choosing the letter reads the word and then puts the letter back. The other partner has a turn. When they have been playing this game for five minutes, she lets one pair show the rest of the children how they do it. After they are finished, she makes a wall chart for the word family of ‘at’.

In this case study, Ms Mwangi helped the children decode the words in the rhyme by sounding out the letters - ‘c-a-t’, ‘f-a-t’ and so on. She also helped them to understand the meaning behind the rhyme by asking them to dramatize it. The activity that she gave them helped the children to hear the rhyming sound ‘a’ in all the words in that family.

In all of these activities she is helping the children to understand that words are made up of basic speech sounds, and to play with these sounds. This is called ‘phonemic awareness’. When children can hear and understand these sounds they know when spoken words rhyme and they know when words begin or end with the same sound. For example, they may learn ‘away’, ‘play’, ‘stay’, and ‘stray’ - and be able to recognize ‘-ay’. Once they are familiar with the initial strings such as ‘st’, ‘str’ or ‘pl’, they can begin to put them together and decode new words.

Teaching Method 1: Activity

By now you should have selected a partner from your cohort group. Work with your partner to complete this activity.

Note: If you have done the Activity for Case Study 2, you are not required to do the activities for Case Study 1 or 3.

1. Read ***Case Study 1: Sounds and syllables*** with your partner and make notes. You will need these notes later on when you present the case study to your cohort group.
2. This case study relates to Teaching Method 1. If you need to, go back and read through your notes on this method.
3. **Answer these questions:**
    a. Why did Ms Mwangi use the letters, sounds and syllables approach to help the children read the rhyme?
    b. How did she use the similarities between some of the word-sounds to help the children sound out the word more quickly?
    c. Are there similar words in your language?
    d. Could you use this idea to help children who are learning in another language?
    e. Do the children doing Ms Mwangi's activity learn with bodies as well as minds? How do you think this has helped them?
    f. How did Ms Mwangi make the library more print-rich during this session?
4. Together with your partner, plan an activity like Ms Mwangi's and include it in your presentation to your cohort group. Now encourage everyone to try out your activity with a group of children at the library. You can also try out Ms Mwangi's activity.

*This is a completion exercise, although the discussion won't be marked, feedback must be provided within the group via Moodle, this counts towards your course completion requirements.

Method 2: Look-and-say

What do we mean by look and say?
The look-and-say method of teaching reading links whole words with their meanings without breaking them down into sounds first.

The meaning of the word and how it can be used in different contexts is very important. Children need to remember the shape and look of the word so that they recognise it when they see it again - in other words, it relies on a child's visual memory.

If this is the only method used, the child may become lost if they do not recognize the words. Therefore, a combination of the phonics method and the look-and-say method should be used.

Can you draw a cow? Yes!
Can you draw a 'when' or an 'of'? No!

The look-and-say method is very useful overall, but especially for the many words whose spellings do not match their sounds, such as the function words like 'the', 'said' or 'when' in English. When children are learning a language that has a more regular sound-symbol correspondence, it is easier to match letters to sounds. Sounds and letters in most African languages are linked in a more regular way, which makes it easier for children to learn to read using phonics.

STORYTIME: Akili & the Magic Storybook! | New Words with Akili and Me | African Educat…

In English, there are many small but very common and important sight words, such as 'the', 'of', 'for', 'to', 'said', 'when', 'is', 'are', 'was', and 'were'. We call these sight words.

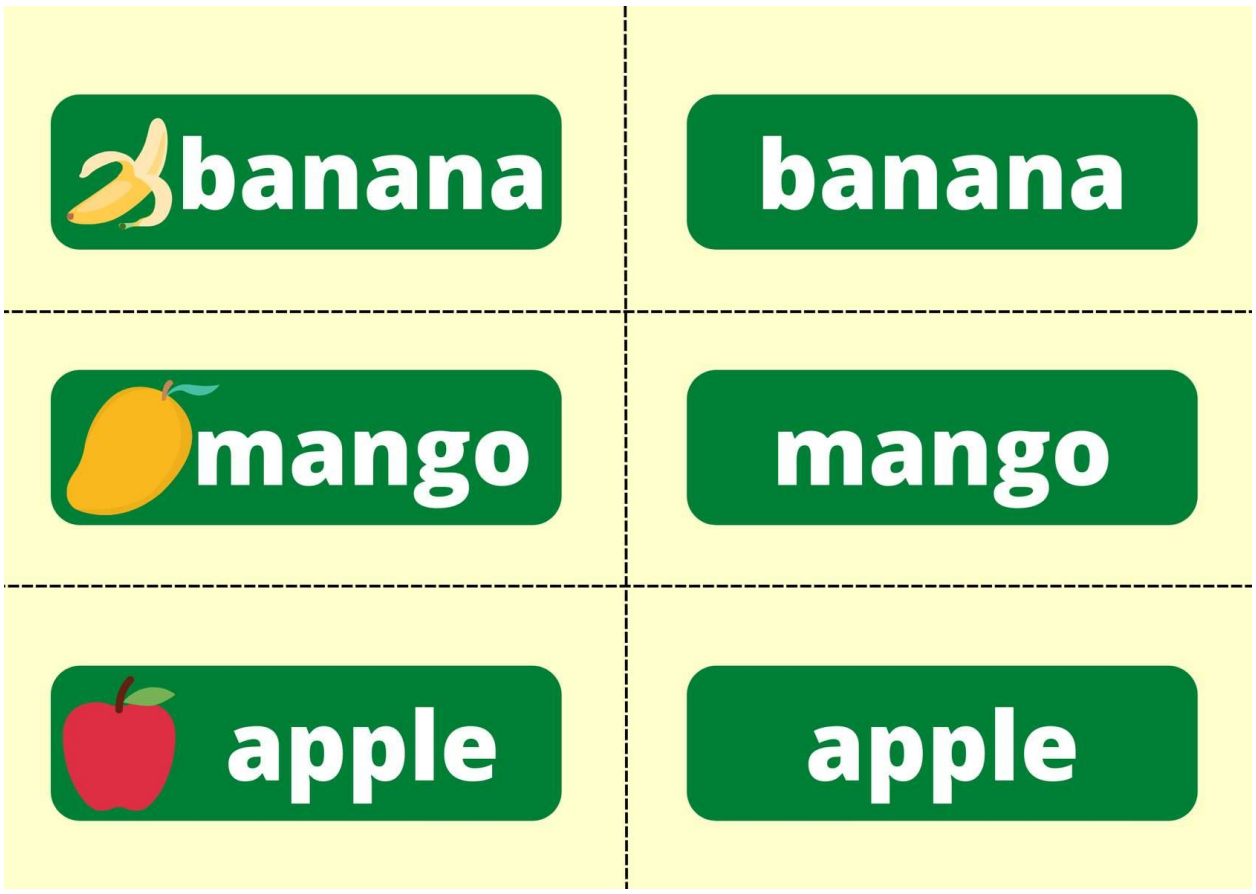
Which of these words can easily be sounded out?

You will see that only a few of them can. It is also impossible to draw pictures of these words. Most of these are therefore best learned in the context of a poem or a story as part of a look-and-say approach. As the children learn them, keep words like these in a special place on your word wall. This will help the children to 'write' them in their visual memories, where they won't be forgotten. Think of 'look-and-say' sight words in English that would be suitable for your word wall. Think about the children's home language. Does it have common words that are difficult to sound out, which the children need to know by sight? Make a list of these in your notebook so when the time comes you can add them to your word wall.

Teaching Method 2: Case study and activity

> A librarian, Mrs Appiah is doing an after-school programme with a group of children who are between seven and eight years old. She knows that most of these children have had more than a year learning to read in their mother tongue and are now learning English and building reading skills in English.

In preparation for this activity, Mrs Appiah has collected pictures of fruit and pasted them on to cards. Each card has the English name of the fruit under the picture. She has also made about 15 sets of four cards, each of which has only the name of a fruit with no picture. You can see examples of these two types of cards below, the first features the name of the fruit and a picture, while the second set features only the name of the fruit.



Mrs Appiah holds the cards (with both word and picture on them) up one by one and makes sure that the children know the names of each of the fruits: banana, papaya, pineapple, orange, mango, etc. She then shuffles the cards and holds them up in a different order, letting the children say the names of the fruit aloud together. She repeats the name and spells out the words: ‘Mango, m–a–n–g–o, mango.’ She does this a few times, encouraging the children to say it with her.

Mrs Appiah then uses a set of cards without pictures and lets children put up their hands and try to read the words. She does not break down the names of the fruits into sounds; in this activity, the children have to read the words as a whole. She goes back to the picture words once or twice and then tries the cards without pictures again. Then she sticks the cards with pictures and words on her English word wall.

Then Mrs Appiah divides the group into pairs. Each pair has a set of four cards. These cards only have the name of the fruit on them and not the picture. They try to read them, turning them over one by one and reading them to each other. They try to read them without looking at the word wall first, but if they are stuck they can get help by looking at the wall where the cards with the pictures have been put up. The pairs of children can exchange their sets of cards with another pair once they can read them well without looking at the word wall.

After this, Mrs Appiah can ask the children about different kinds of fruits: 'What other kinds of fruits do you know?', 'What colour is a banana?', 'How do you eat a banana, do you eat it with the peel on or do you need to peel it first?', and so on. She can let them talk in pairs about the fruit they know and the ones they like the best. Then they can report back to each other about their favourite fruits, using a sentence she gives them: 'I like to eat (bananas)', 'my sister does not like mangos'. As they say their sentence, they hold up the word. Later, she reads a story about fruit to the children.

Teaching Method 2: Activity

By now you should have selected a partner from your cohort group. Work with your partner to complete this activity.

Note: If you have done the Activity for Case Study 2, you are not required to do the activities for Case Study 1 or 3.

1. Read ***Case Study B: The look-and-say method*** with your partner and make notes. You will need these notes later on when you present the case study to your cohort group.
2. This case study relates to Teaching Method 2. If you need to, go back and read through your notes on this method.
3. **Answer these questions:**
    a. How is Mrs Appiah using the look-and-say method?
    b. How does Mrs Appiah use this method to help the children to read the names of the fruit?
    c. How does she make sure that each child is actively involved in this activity?
    d. How does she make sure that the children understand the meaning of the words they read?
    e. How do you think Mrs Appiah made her picture cards? Where could she have found pictures to cut out? Could she or the children have drawn the pictures of the fruit? Can you think of other ways she could have collected the pictures?
    f. Where could Mrs Appiah have found cardboard to stick the pictures on? Are

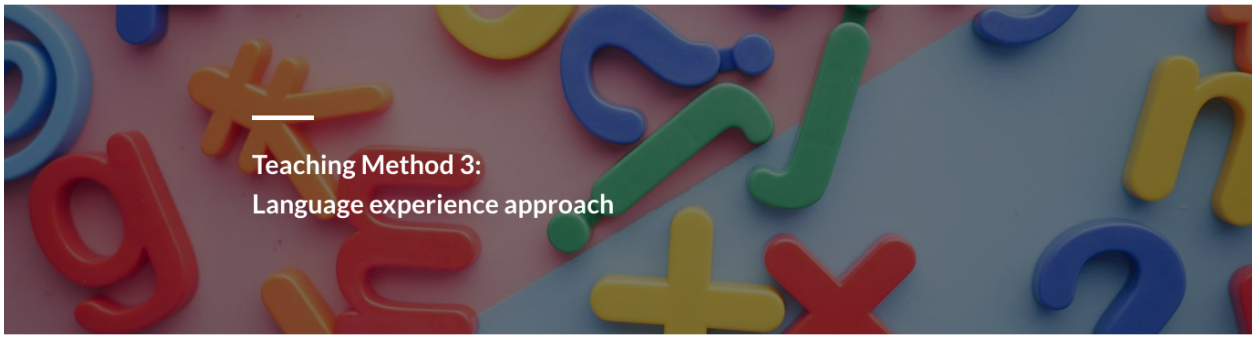
there boxes in your area that you can collect and cut up for flash cards and charts?

g. What other kinds of objects could you use when hosting an activity like this?
h. Do you have a book in the library about fruit that you could use to continue this activity?

4. Together with your partner, plan an activity like Mrs Appiah's and include it in your presentation to your cohort group. Now encourage everyone to try out your activity with a group of children at the library. You can also try out Mrs Appiah's activity.

*This is a completion exercise, although the discussion won't be marked, feedback must be provided within the group via Moodle, this counts towards your course completion requirements.

Method 3: Language experience approach



The language experience approach focuses on children's experience and enables them to read about their own lives, in their own words. Skills for reading are based on their knowledge of the language they are using and on their home and community backgrounds, the people they know and the experiences they have. Children work with whole words and sentences rather than letters and parts of words. It allows children to speak before they read and write.

This approach consists of the following steps:

1. **Experience:** Children do many things at home and at school, usually with people.
2. **Description:** Children talk about what has happened to them.
3. **Transcription:** Children write about the experiences they have described. Before their writing skills have developed, they can draw or try out writing, or have someone else

write out what they want to say. Children should never be discouraged from 'pretending' to write. They are learning as they do it.

4. **Reading:** The children read what they have written to their group within the library.

Teaching Method 2: Case study and activity

A group of children between the ages of five and eight have joined an after school library programme hosted by Mr Ngwenya. These children predominantly speak the same home language, but it's not English.

Mr Ngwenya decides to try a new activity with the children, he calls this activity 'The News'. First, he asks the children to talk about what they did the day before. Each child is given a chance to talk and they present their 'news' in their home language. He then asks them to draw a picture of what they have told the rest of the group and to write a short sentence under the picture, describing an aspect of their news – 'My dog barked a lot'. If the children can't write the sentence themselves, Mr Ngwenya will help them. When they have finished, the children partner up and each child shows their picture to their partner and reads the sentence they have written. Then two pairs exchange pictures. Each pair 'reads' the two pictures in front of them and the words written on the two pages.

Mr Ngwenya then asks the children to return the pictures to their owners. Each child stands up one at a time, shows their picture to the group and 'reads' their pictures and sentences aloud. The group takes a moment to applaud each child's work. Without criticizing any child's picture or writing, Mr Ngwenya writes the key words that the children have written where everyone can see them.

He encourages the group to read the words aloud together. Later Mr Ngwenya sticks the drawings up on the library wall and adds some of the new words the children have used to the word wall.

Teaching method 3: Activity

By now you should have selected a partner from your cohort group. Work with your partner to complete this activity.

Note: If you have done the Activity for Case Study 2, you are not required to do the activities for Case Study 1 or 3.

1. Read ***Case Study C: The language experience approach*** with your partner and make

notes. You will need these notes later on when you present the case study to your cohort group.

2. This case study relates to Teaching Method 3. If you need to, go back and read through your notes on this method.
3. **Answer these questions:**
    a. What has this case study shown you about the language experience approach? How does Mr Ngwenya use this method to help the children to read?
    b. How does this approach ensure that each child is actively involved in the activity?
    c. How does the approach ensure that the children understand and are interested in what they read?
    d. How else could Mr Ngwenya enable the children to write down their story?
    e. Can you think of another way a storybook could be used as a starting point for an activity using the language experience approach to reading?
4. Together with your partner, plan an activity like Mr Ngwenya's and include it in your presentation to your cohort group. Now encourage everyone to try out your activity with a group of children at the library. You can also try out Mr Ngwenya's activity.

*This is a completion exercise, although the discussion won't be marked, feedback must be provided within the group via Moodle, this counts towards your course completion requirements.

Bringing it all together

Combine the different methods
Helping children learn to read is usually most effectively done when all these methods are used together.

You can do this by finding stories that:

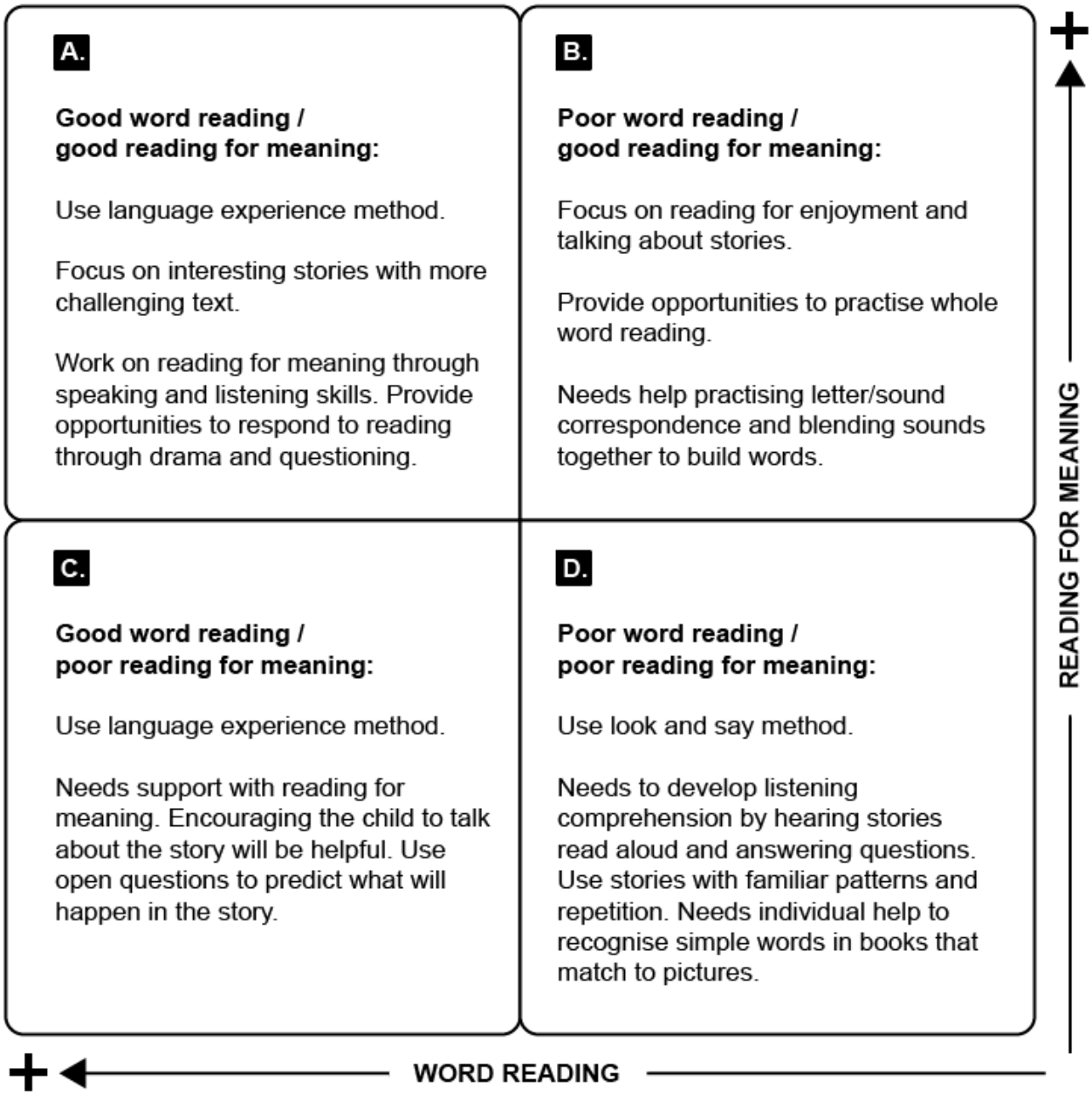
- Will appeal to the children
- Have some repeated and rhyming words
- Have words where they can use pictures (the look-and-say approach)
- Have a picture of what is happening in the story (the language experience approach)

Can you look through the books in your library to see if you have any storybooks that go hand in hand with these methods? Keep a record of these in your notebook for later use.

Using one method over another
If you notice that certain children are struggling to learn to read, you might find that concentrating on one particular method might help them overcome their difficulties.

To be a good reader, you need to have **good word reading** and **good reading for meaning** skills. Some children may understand more easily than others what they read, but may have difficulty sounding out words and working out what they are. Others may be able to work out and recognize words, but have difficulty in understanding what they have read.

Take a look at the diagram below that explains the relationship between word recognition and good comprehension.



https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/pluginfile.php/287299/mod_oucontent/oucontent/41303/b294f168/3bbc955a/tper_1_new4.png

Now read more about each quadrant

More info: A
The first quadrant: **Good word reading / good reading for meaning**, tells you about children who have good comprehension and good word recognition skills. These children do not need extra help, but you should give them some more difficult and challenging stories so they can continue to improve.

More info: B
The second quadrant: **Poor word reading / good reading for meaning**, tells you about children who have good comprehension and poor word-recognition skills. They understand quite easily but battle to work out what certain words say. You can support them by emphasizing reading for pleasure by choosing stories that will motivate them. You can also provide extra help, by helping them to recognize the different sounds in a word.

More info: C
The third quadrant: **Good word reading / poor reading for meaning**, tells you about children who have poor comprehension but good word recognition skills. They can tell you what the words are but don't know what the words and sentences mean. This can sometimes indicate other developmental problems that should be monitored. These children should benefit from writing and reading about their one lives and experiences. This will mean that what they read has meaning to them.

More info: D
The fourth quadrant: **Poor word reading / poor reading for meaning**, tells you about children who have poor comprehension and poor word recognition skills. They are battling with all aspects of reading. They need texts that will motivate and make them feel enthusiastic about reading, and which are related to their everyday lives. They will benefit from your support, and the use of the look-and-say method.

Discussion prompt 3.2 – Moodle forum

Discuss these points within your cohort group and contribute towards the discussion on the Moodle forum:

1. Try and think of some of the children who you have read with in the library, or a child you know who is learning to read.
2. If you look at the chart above, can you think about which quadrant (A, B, C or D) the child would fit into?
3. Think about which teaching method would work best for the child.
4. Discuss this with your cohort group: describe the child, and how they are reading at

the moment, and how you think your chosen method will help them.

5. You don't have to do this for every child you encounter, but it will be helpful to refer to these notes if you encounter a child that is struggling to make progress with their reading, or who does not want to read.

*This is a completion exercise, although the discussion won't be marked, feedback must be provided within the group via Moodle, this counts towards your course completion requirements.

3.2 How can libraries create a print-rich learning environment?

What is a print-rich learning environment?
As well as helping children to feel safe and comfortable, the library can be a resource to support reading, and to do this it needs to be supportive and print rich.

> *To give children positive experiences of books and the library, there should not be too many rules. This is a chance for children to explore what's available and discover the power of reading!*
>
> - *Book Aid International*

A supportive learning environment encourages all children to learn. The children need to:

- Feel that they can make mistakes and take risks without being punished
- Feel that their ideas and feelings are valued
- Be encouraged to talk, listen and actively participate
- Be allowed to be noisy as well as quiet
- Have a chance to learn with their minds (thinking), bodies (moving) and hearts (feelings).

Ideally a child should have access to a print-rich environment in their classroom at school or even at home. But this is also something you can do in the library to continue to enhance their learning. Not only does it help the child to learn, it also creates an interactive, colourful learning environment.

Some examples of a print rich environment
Here are some examples of a print rich environment at the National Library of Uganda, and from a library in Ethiopia. Take note of the posters on the wall, the numbers and letters of the alphabet, the way the books are displayed on the shelves to make the most of the colourful covers and the innovative way they are strung up above the children's seating area. It's wonderfully colourful, exciting and appealing!

Image: Print rich children's room at the National Library of Uganda (CC-BY-2.0)

[Alt text: This picture shows a child friendly room in the National Library of Uganda. There are a number of colourful books on display in shelves against the wall, while some books are beautifully strung up along the ceiling. There are also a variety of colourful posters and pictures on the wall, these include an alphabet mural and an alphabet chart. There are child-height tables in the room and bright blue chairs.There are children reading on the carpet and sitting in the chairs.]

Image: Print rich children's room at the National Library of Uganda (CC-BY-2.0)

[Alt text: This picture shows a child friendly room in the National Library of Uganda. There are a number of colourful books on a carpet on the floor. Four children are reading the books. There are more books beautifully displayed on shelves against the wall so that the front covers are all visible for the children to see.]

Image: Print rich children's room at the National Library of Uganda (CC-BY-2.0)

[Alt text: This picture shows a child friendly room in the National Library of Uganda. There are a number of colourful books on display in shelves against the wall, while some books are beautifully strung up along the ceiling. There are also a variety of colourful posters and pictures on the wall. There are child-height tables in the room and bright blue chairs.]

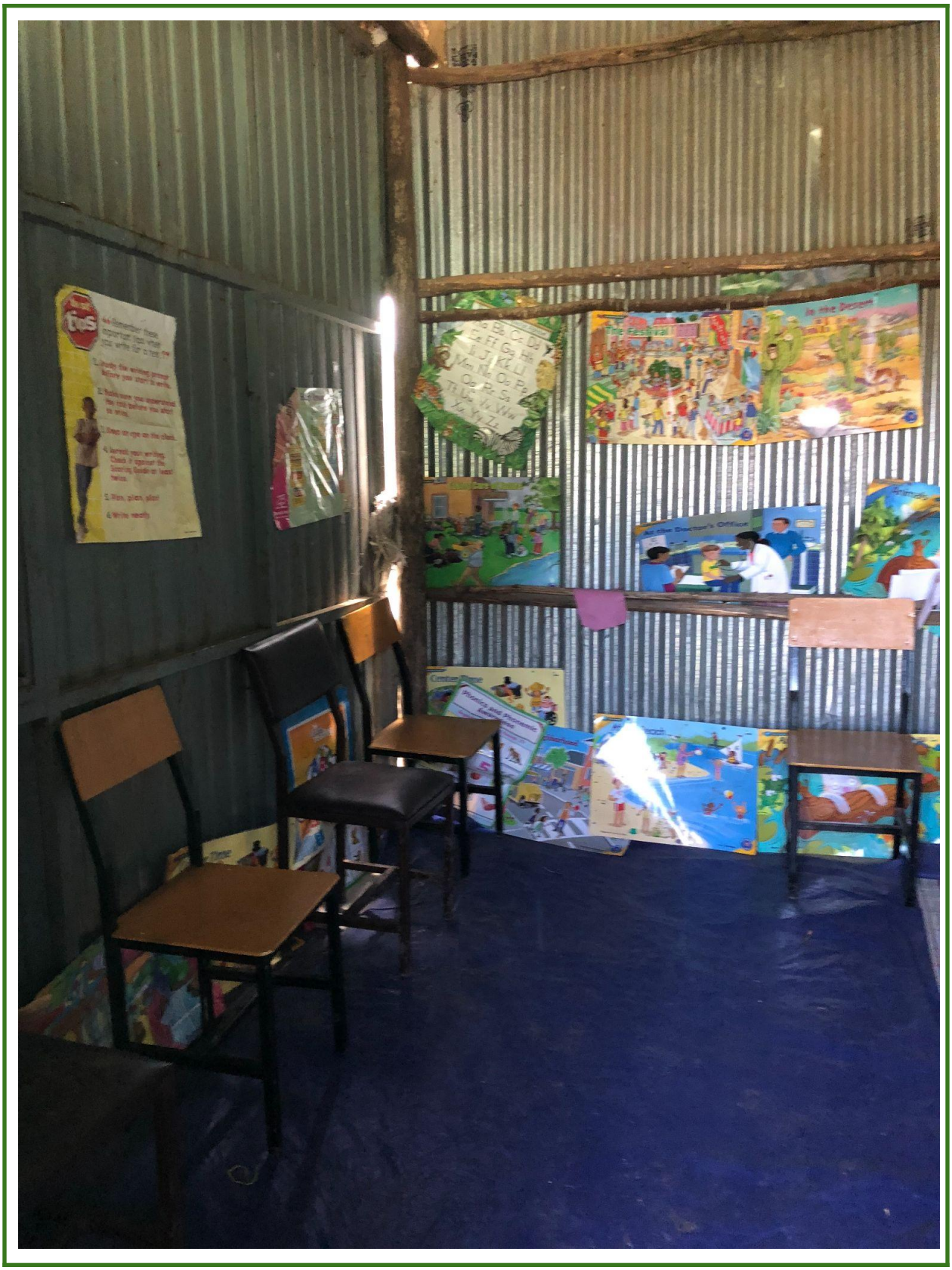


Image: Print rich children's library in Ethiopia (CC-BY-2.0)

[Alt text: This picture shows a child friendly room in a library in Ethiopia. There are a number of colourful books on display in shelves against the corrugated iron walls. You can also see desks and chairs in the foreground.]

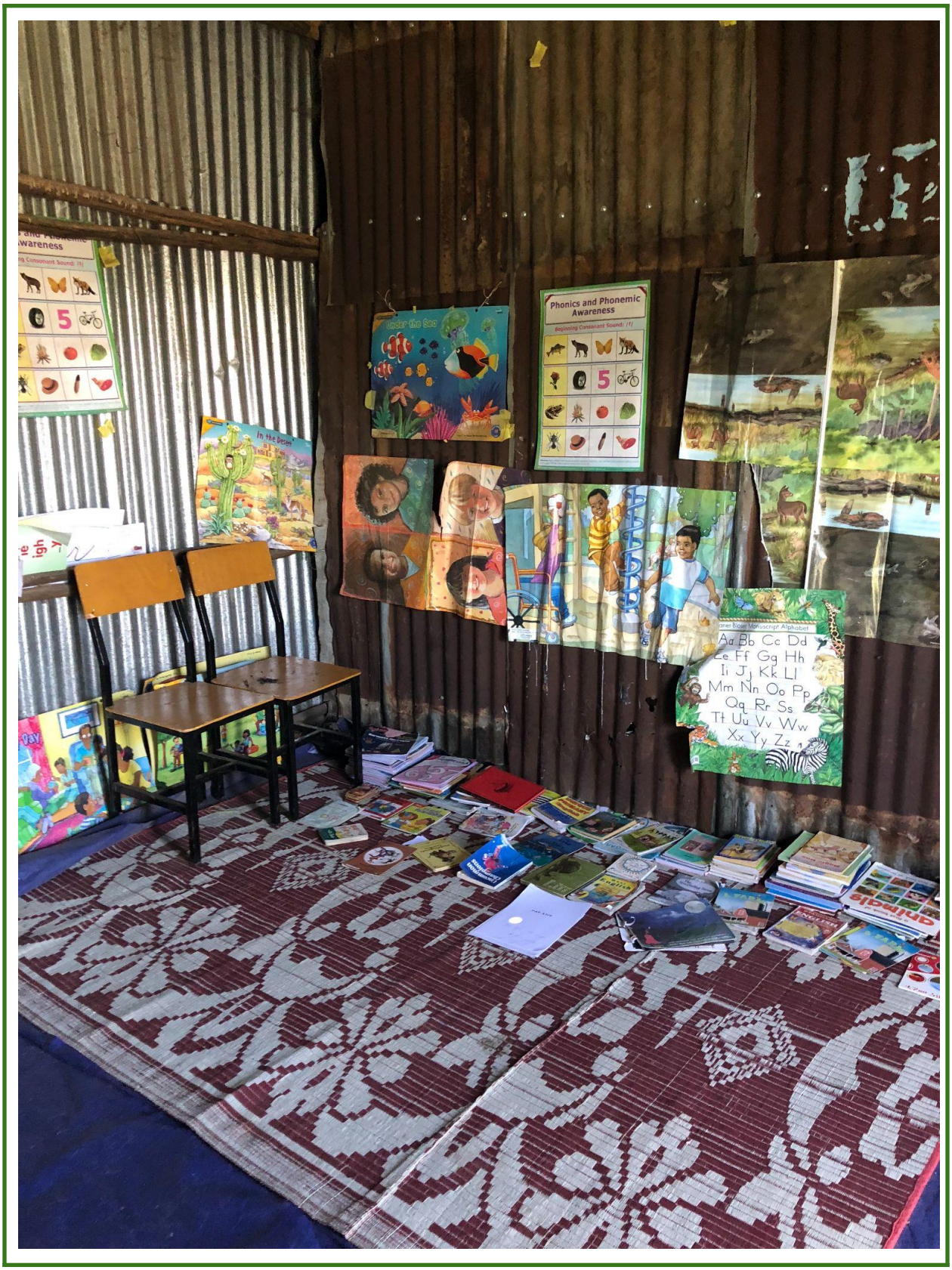

Phonics and Phonemic Awareness
Beginning Consonant Sound: /f/
Under the Sea
In the Desert
Aa Bb Cc Dd
Ee Ff Gg Hh
Ii Jj Kk Ll
Mm Nn Oo Pp
Qq Rr Ss
Tt Uu Vv Ww
Xx Yy Zz

Image: Print rich children's library in Ethiopia (CC-BY-2.0)

[Alt text: This picture shows a child friendly room in a library in Ethiopia. There are a number of colourful books on display on a carpeted section of the floor, while the corrugated iron walls are covered in various colourful posters, these included illustrations of children playing as well as an alphabet chart. You can also see chairs against another wall.]

Throughout this course we would like to encourage you to take photos of your library space and share them with your cohort group. As discussed in Module 2, a Wiki has been set up so that you can continue to work with the networks you have created as a community of practice and to share your experiences. Do you have any photos you'd like to share that show your child-friendly library space, and your innovative use of books and colour?

One of the most important aspects of teaching literacy is to create a learning environment that interests children and supports them in developing different literacy skills. A print-rich or language-rich learning environment has as many examples of language in written form as possible.

Aside from books, the examples could be simple - food packaging, pictures from old magazines or children's comics - or if you have the resources, posters and pictures. You can even ask the children to help you make or gather resources. Remember that displays should be changed regularly; if the library is supporting what the children are learning in their school curriculum, these changes can reflect what's happening in the curricula. If not, the library can select its own themes and topics.

Use online resources like the Ubongo Toolkits to find posters and other resources to help with setting up the early literacy print rich environment in your library. These posters, videos and other resources are free to download and use, you will just need to register on the Ubongo Toolkits platform.
LInk: https://toolkits.ubongo.org/

Alphabet poster English: https://toolkits.ubongo.org/2020/01/20/alphabet-poster/
Alphabet poster Swahili: https://toolkits.ubongo.org/2020/01/20/bango-la-herufi/

Alphabet

akili baby cat dog

elephant family goat house

insect jump kite lion

mountain night ocean please

quiet rainbow sun tiger

up village wind box

yellow zebra

www.youtube.com/akiliandme

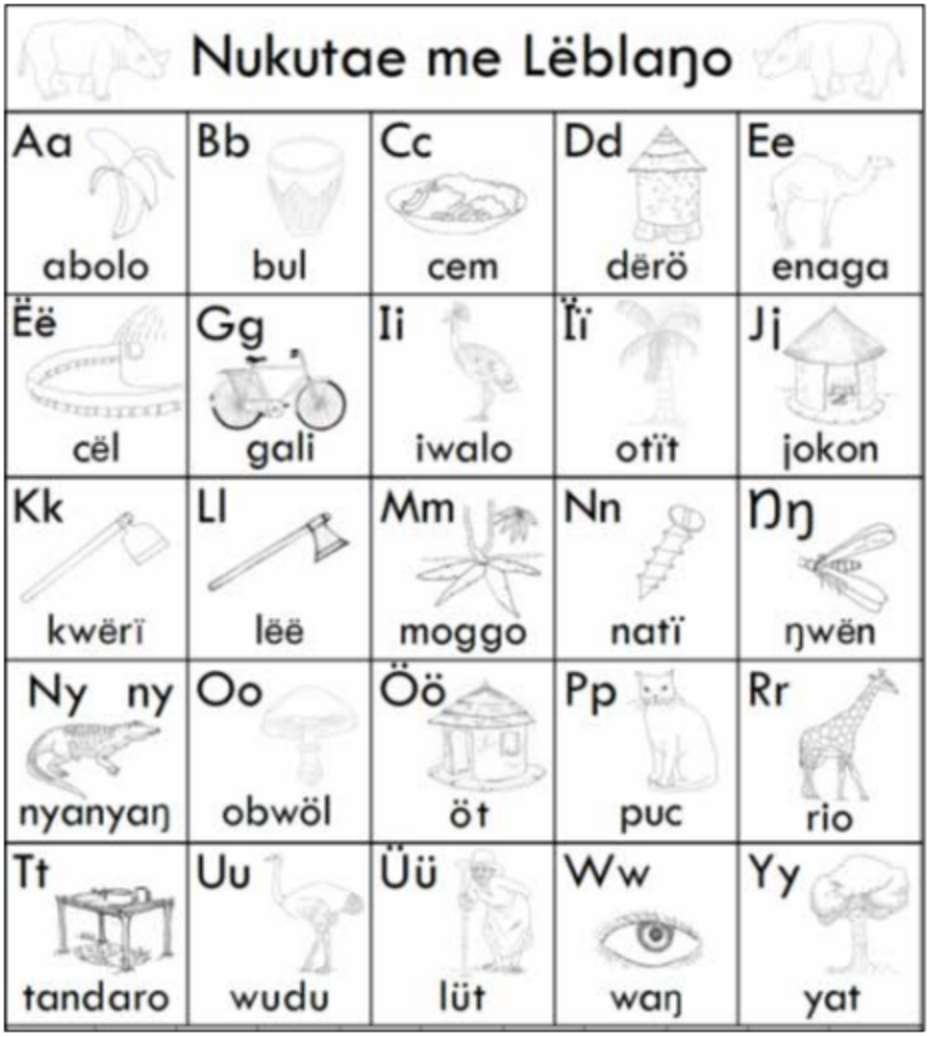
funded by HDIF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INNOVATION FUND UKaid from the British people

While the Ubongo CC licence (CC-BY-NC-ND) doesn't allow you to change the posters in any way, you can use them as they are or draw inspiration from them for your own creation.

Feel inspired to go ahead and make your own alphabet chart in the mother tongue languages that are used in your communities. Stick it on the wall, take photos of it and share it with your cohort group.

Alternatively, use this example created by the Mango Tree Literacy Lab. It was created as part of their *Parent Literacy Guidebook for Parents of Children Who Are Learning to Read*. Although this guidebook references the Leblango language spoken in Uganda, it is a great resource and can be used as a template for anyone wanting to create a similar guidebook in their own mother tongue language.

You can encourage the children at the library to draw and colour-in the images you have selected to correlate with the letter of the alphabet.



Additional reading: [Mango Tree Literacy LabParent Literacy Guidebook].

A print-rich environment checklist
Here are some ideas for things you can include in the library to make it a print-rich environment. In your next activity, we have included this list as a table which you can download.

- ☐ Alphabet chart or poster (you can use the examples above, or make your own).
- ☐ Different kinds of charts for birthdays, or height for example.
- ☐ A calendar
- ☐ Card games
- ☐ A colour chart

- ☐ A shape chart
- ☐ Empty boxes, packages and containers with writing on them. Create a grocery display, or a 'kitchen' or a 'workshop'.
- ☐ TV or computer screen made of cardboard. The children can use this to act out TV shows or to do news reports. They can search for 'results' on 'YouTube' etc. Use your imaginations.
- ☐ Labels
- ☐ Magazines and newspapers (including advertisements)
- ☐ Photographs and pictures - find these in magazines and brochures. Make posters or collages, relevant to particular topics and themes.
- ☐ Picture storybooks
- ☐ Puzzles
- ☐ A weather chart - you can use this as a daily activity with the children at the library. Ask them to look outside and describe the weather to you. Change the chart accordingly.
- ☐ Word Wall - Collect pieces of cardboard (old packages) and cut into cards. For each new topic, or story time event, create an area of the wall where you can add all the new vocabulary. The more stories you read, the more your word wall will grow. If you have children in different age groups, have more than one word wall.

Activity 3.5 – Moodle

In this two-part activity, you're first going to work on your own and then you're going to work as a group.

Part 1:

Go and take a seat in the children's section in your own library. Sit yourself down where the children usually sit on the carpet or at the table, put yourself in their 'shoes' and answer these questions.

1. Look at the children's section in your own library. Think about how a young visitor to the library would describe it. Do you think they would see it as a language and print-rich learning environment?
2. What have you got in the library already that makes it print rich?
3. Where will you get the resources to create a print-rich environment, or to enhance your existing print-rich environment?

Part 2:

4. Share photos of your children's library section with your cohort group. Work together to choose three new print-rich resources to enhance this section, and to make it as exciting and colourful and educational as possible. See the table below for ideas.
5. Discuss these ideas with your cohort group, so each person in the group is assigned

three resources from the table below. These can be the same or different.

6. Create these resources and upload them to Moodle. In the next Module we will discuss open licensing and how you can share these resources you've made in a way that they can be adapted and used, by anyone, again and again.
7. Once you've displayed your new resources in the library, take photos and upload them to Moodle to share with your cohort group.

*This is a completion exercise, although the discussion won't be marked, feedback must be provided within the group via Moodle, this counts towards your course completion requirements.

Use this table to complete the activity as a group.

What is it?	Where could I get it from? Could I find it or make it? (Give as much detail as you can. Two examples are provided to help you.)
Alphabet chart or poster (you can use the examples above to make your own)	
Charts (birthday or height)	You can do these if you have the same group of children coming to the library on a regular basis.
Calendar	
Card games	
Colour chart, shape chart	
Empty boxes and containers (with writing on them)	
TV or computer screen made of cardboard.	The children can use this to act out TV shows, or news reports. To search for 'results' on YouTube etc.
Labels	
Magazines and newspapers (including advertisements)	
Photographs and pictures	Find in magazines and brochures. Perhaps make charts or collages, relevant to particular topics.

Picture storybooks	
Puzzles	
Weather chart	
World wall	Collect pieces of cardboard (old packages) and cut into cards. For each new topic, or story time event, create an area of the wall where you can add all the new vocabulary. The more stories you read, the more your word wall will grow. If you have children in different age groups, have more than one world wall.

STORYTIME: A Book For Happy Hippo | New Words with Akili and Me | A…

This is a great video to share with the children. It shows Akili and her friends' excitement about writing a book for their friend, and then reading the book aloud together. It shows that this is possible and fun!

The benefits of reading for pleasure

What do we mean by reading for pleasure?
While all reading should be pleasurable for children, the reality is that reading is often associated with the negative, repetitive aspects of learning, and they don't enjoy it.

> *Children who are not introduced to books and reading until they start school have already missed out on fundamental stages of literacy development. If children learn how to read using only school textbooks, there is a risk that they will associate reading with memorization and exams rather than pleasure. It is essential to create time for independent reading both in and out of school, and to allow children to choose their own reading materials. To practice their literacy skills outside school lessons, children need a place where they can develop the joy of reading.*
> *- Using libraries to support national literacy efforts*

UK reading and writing charity, Booktrust have put together this list of the benefits of reading for pleasure. These illustrate the many benefits that exploring books and building a reading habit

can bring. Why not try displaying some of these around the library for everyone to see when they come in?

- Reading for pleasure has many non-literacy benefits and can increase empathy, improve relationships with others, reduce the symptoms of depression and improve wellbeing throughout life. - The Reading Agency, 2015
- Reading for pleasure has social benefits as well and can make people feel more connected to the wider community. Reading increases a person's understanding of their own identity, improves empathy and gives them an insight into the world view of others. - The Reading Agency, 2015
- Children with more positive attitudes towards reading are more likely to read at or above the level expected for their age. - Clark, 2014
- There is a strong association between the amount of reading for pleasure children say they do and their reading achievement. - Twist, 2007
- Children who read for pleasure make significantly more progress in vocabulary, spelling and maths than children who read very little. - Sullivan and Brown, 2013
- Adults who encourage children to read books of their choice for pleasure is a major contribution towards children developing a positive attitude towards reading and a life-long interest in reading. - International Reading Association, 2014

Discussion prompt 3.4 – Moodle forum

Discuss these points within your cohort group and contribute towards the discussion on the Moodle forum:

1. Thinking about what you've read, have you observed the benefits of reading for pleasure?
2. How have you observed this in your own libraries?
3. How have you observed this at home, with yourself and your own children?
4. Do you have 'reading-for-pleasure' books available in the mother-tongue languages within your community?

*This is a completion exercise, although the discussion won't be marked, feedback must be provided within the group via Moodle, this counts towards your course completion requirements.

Now that you've got more of an understanding of the benefits of reading for pleasure, what can we do to make reading for pleasure the norm for children who are new to reading, and encourage children who don't like reading to learn to enjoy it?

Here are a few suggestions:

Be a reading role model

Children's attitudes to reading are strongly influenced by the adults around them. This could include their parents and caregivers, their teachers, and their favourite librarians. Note, the children in your community might have parents who are also struggling to read. Encourage them to attend as many story time events and other events at the library as possible. Gently try to find out what their situation is like so you're able to support reading within the family and not only for the children.

Image: Adults reading with the World Reader tablets at the Nakaseke Community Library in Uganda. (CC-BY-2.0)

[Alt text: This picture shows a group of adults sitting at a table in the Nakaseke Community Library in Uganda. They are reading from World Reader tablets. One adult wearing an orange shirt is standing up. The others are concentrating on what they are reading.]

Activities for younger children and parents

If parents are not equipped or aware of the ways that they can support their kids' development in these critical years of life, then we are already setting up the next generation for failure from the very start. Early reading experiences, opportunities to build vocabulary, and literacy-rich environments are the best ways to support the development of pre-reading and cognitive skills that ensure children are prepared for success in school and life. Parents who can't read don't think they can help their children read. Furthermore, there is a need for caregiver content that specifically targets parents who have not gone to school/cannot read and write and how they can help their kids learn. Caregivers can help children develop early literacy skills through reading and learning together. Research shows that promoting home learning activities and effective teaching strategies can foster early learning and improve school readiness.
- Ubongo

Develop activities for parents / caregivers and children
If you're providing a programme of activities for very young children, use this opportunity to share ideas with parents and caregivers as well. Collaborate with them on how to encourage early literacy skills and the use of books.

The rhymes and songs that you do during story sessions can be used again by parents and caregivers at other times to entertain the child. Parents and caregivers can also facilitate story hour events, if they are not comfortable reading, encourage them to share stories, rhymes and songs orally. Share your knowledge of the importance of rhymes, songs and exposure to books at an early age in establishing children's pre-reading skills.

These sessions can also give parents and caregivers a chance to get together and socialize with their children and each other.

Source: Adapted from Book Aid International

Encourage book talk
Whenever possible, talk about the books the children in the library are reading. Ask questions to stimulate conversations about books. Find out why they chose a particular book and what they liked about it. Was it the illustrations? The story? The characters? If they didn't like the book, ask them why. Don't forget to participate in the conversation, give your opinion about the book too.

Encourage reading in pairs
Reading together can be more beneficial than reading alone, and it can also be fun. Paired reading offers a supportive, collaborative reading experience that is ideal when one child is not as confident a reader as the other. Children can be very capable and sensitive 'teachers'. Set this up by giving two children a book and ask them to take turns to read a sentence, paragraph or page. If one of them is struggling, the other child should be encouraged to help them. Explain to the children that if one of them is having difficulty with the reading, they should wait a few seconds before trying to help

Start a reading book club
Collaborate with teachers from a school or a church group to encourage the young people to join a book club at the library. Use the library as a resource for the books as well as a meeting place for the children. Book Club's are also great for older children and teens who might not want to spend time with the younger children at story hour. Children should read the same book at the same time and a discussion should be hosted about the story once they have finished reading. If the library does not have enough copies of a book, try and theme the books and base the discussion around the theme rather than the specific story. Encourage the children to finish the book, or part of the book before the next book club meeting and come up with the discussion points to get their book-related conversations started.

Choose the right stories
Let the children's interests guide your story selection. If they are not able to read the book themselves, read it to them. Show them that there are things they like and people like them in story books.

Module 3 references

The following resources were consulted in the development of this module.

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