

Helping Your Child Become a Successful Reader

An Abeka Reading Guide for Families (Kindergarten–Third Grade)

Dear Parents,

Learning to read is one of the most important skills your child will develop. At Monclova Christian Academy, we use the Abeka phonics and reading program, which teaches students to become strong, independent readers by applying phonics skills, developing fluency, and building comprehension.

Reading development happens in stages. Just as children learn to crawl before they walk and walk before they run, they learn to read in a progression. Understanding these stages can help you support your child at home.

The goal of this guide is to introduce common Abeka reading terminology and provide practical strategies you can use to support your child's reading growth.

Reading Development Progression

Grade Level	Reading Focus
Kindergarten	Learning letters, sounds, and blending
First Grade	Building accuracy and beginning fluency

Second Grade

Developing fluency and comprehension

Third Grade

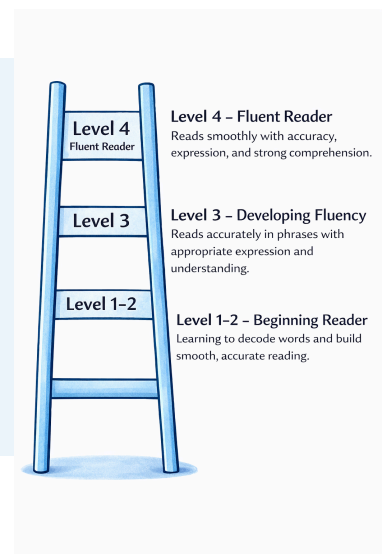
Becoming a fluent, independent reader

Understanding the Reading Growth Ladder

The Reading Growth Ladder illustrates how reading skills develop from Kindergarten through Third Grade. Each stage builds upon the skills learned in the previous stage. Just as a child must learn letter sounds before reading words, students must develop accuracy before they can become fluent readers.

As students move up the ladder, the focus shifts:

- Kindergarten: Learning sounds and blending
- First Grade: Building accuracy and applying phonics skills
- Second Grade: Developing fluency and comprehension
- Third Grade: Becoming a fluent, independent reader



Remember: every stage is important. Children should not be expected to master advanced reading skills before they have developed strong foundational skills.

Understanding Abeka Reading Vocabulary

1. What Is a Special Sound?

In Abeka, a special sound occurs when two or more letters work together to make a sound (e.g. st, ch, th, ck, ay, gr, the). Students circle the special sound before reading the word (e.g., stop, church, three).

💡 Parent Prompt:

"Do you see a special sound?"

2. What Is a Blend?

In Abeka, students learn to blend consonants and vowels together to form syllables and words (e.g., bă, bā, rǒ, rō). Students practice blends using both short and long vowel sounds.

💡 Parent Prompt:

"Blend the sounds together." or

"Let's say the blend first."

3. The One-Vowel vs. Two-Vowel Rule

- ✓ When there is one vowel in a word, it usually says its short sound (e.g., cǎt, hǒp, sīt, rŭn).
- ✓ When there are two vowels in a word, the first one usually says its long sound and the second one is silent (e.g., rāke, bōat, sēat, cāke).

 Parent Prompt:

"How many vowels do you see?"

4. What Is a Syllable?

A syllable is a word part containing one vowel sound. Breaking words into syllables helps students read longer words (e.g., pic/nic, Bi/ble, play/ing)

Parent Prompt:

"Can we break that word into smaller parts?"

5. What Does "Sound It Out" Mean?

When teachers ask students to sound out a word, they are encouraging students to:

1. Find any special sounds.
2. Identify the vowel sound.
3. Blend the sounds together.
4. Read the word smoothly.

Example:

shĭp

Special sound: sh

Sounds: /sh/ /ĭ/ /p/

Blend together: ship

Kindergarten

Learning Sounds and Blending

What They Are Learning	Parent Focus Areas
• Letter names • Letter sounds • Special sounds • Blending sounds together • Beginning sight words • Listening comprehension	✓ Practice letter sounds daily ✓ Review special sounds ✓ Practice blending ✓ Read aloud together ✓ Build confidence

Parent Prompts:

- What sound does that letter make?
- Do you see a special sound?

- Let's say the sounds together.
- Blend the sounds.

Avoid

- ✗ Focusing on speed
- ✗ Expecting fluent reading

At this stage, accuracy and sound recognition are most important.

First Grade

Building Accuracy and Beginning Fluency

What They Are Learning	Parents Focus
• Applying phonics rules • Identifying special sounds • Reading one-vowel and two-vowel words • Decoding (sounding out) unfamiliar words • Reading in phrases • Beginning to observe punctuation • Developing comprehension skills • Building fluency through repeated reading	✓ Encourage sounding out words ✓ Practice special sounds ✓ Practice one-vowel and two-vowel rules ✓ Encourage reading in phrases ✓ Notice punctuation ✓ Reread short passages ✓ Ask simple comprehension questions

Helpful Parent Prompts

- Do you see a special sound?
- Is this a one-vowel or two-vowel word?

- What sound does the vowel make?
- Can you sound it out?

Building Fluency and Automaticity

One of the best ways to help first-grade readers is through repeated reading.

Students often need to read a passage multiple times before reading becomes smooth and automatic.

First Reading: Focus on accuracy.

Second Reading: Focus on reading smoothly in phrases.

Third Reading: Focus on expression and punctuation.

Repeated reading builds both fluency and automaticity, allowing students to recognize words more quickly and focus on understanding what they read.

Second Grade

Developing Fluency and Comprehension

What Second Grade Readers Are Learning	What Parents Should Focus On
• Reading smoothly in phrases • Observing punctuation consistently • Reading with expression • Increasing reading rate • Improving comprehension • Applying phonics skills automatically	✓ Reread passages ✓ Practice smooth reading ✓ Encourage expression ✓ Discuss story details ✓ Ask comprehension questions

Parent Prompts:

- Read that sentence again smoothly.
- What punctuation do you see?
- How should your voice sound?
- Why did the character do that?
- What was the problem in the story?

- How was the problem solved?

The Power of Rereading

Read the same passage:

1. For accuracy
2. For smoothness
3. For expression

Repeated reading develops fluency, confidence, and automaticity.

Third Grade

Becoming a Fluent, Independent Reader

What Third Grade Readers Are Learning	What Parents Should Focus On
• Fluent reading • Natural expression • Strong comprehension • Reading longer selections • Vocabulary development • Supporting answers with evidence from the text	✓ Encourage independent reading ✓ Discuss story meaning ✓ Ask inferential questions ✓ Build reading stamina

Parent Prompts:

- What lesson did the character learn?
- Why do you think that happened?
- What evidence from the story supports your answer?
- What was the author's message?
- **Encourage Text Evidence. One of the best questions you can ask is:**

"How do you know?"

- This encourages students to support their thinking with information from the text.

Comprehension Questions You Can Ask at Home

Kindergarten

- Who was in the story?
- What happened?
- What was your favorite part?

First Grade

- Who was the story about?
- Where did the story take place?
- What happened first?
- What happened at the end?

Second Grade

- What problem did the character face?
- How was the problem solved?

- Why did the character make that choice?

Third Grade

- What lesson did the character learn?
 - What evidence supports your answer?
 - Why do you think the author included this event?
-

Reading Success Tips for Every Grade

Read Every Day

Just 10–15 minutes of reading practice each day can make a tremendous difference.

Praise Strategies, Not Just Results

Instead of:

"You're so smart!"

Try:

- I like how you sounded that out.
- You found the special sound.
- You remembered the vowel rule.
- You fixed your mistake.
- You reread that sentence smoothly.

When Your Child Struggles

1. Stay calm.
2. Give wait time.
3. Ask guiding questions.
4. Encourage phonics strategies.
5. Help when frustration becomes excessive.